



An Institution of
the Society for the Higher Education
of Women in India

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Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Academic Council of Sophia College (Autonomous) – Held via Zoom at 11 am on 3rd June 2020

The meeting was conducted by the Chairperson, Dr. (Sr) Ananda Amritmahal, Principal of the college, and was attended by the Vice-Chancellor's nominees, external members and all the Heads of Departments, the additional nominated members of staff and Dr. Yasmin Khan as Member Secretary. Of the three nominees of the University, Dr. Uttara Sahasrabudhe and Dr Anushree Lokur were present. Dr. M. M. V. Ramana were unable to attend. From the panel of four experts from outside the college, Dr. Rajiva Kothurkar, Ms. Padmini Somani and Ms. Zara Muraio were present. Dr. Usha Mukundan were unable to attend. All the other members were present.

The meeting started with Sr. Ananda welcoming all the members to the fourth Academic Council meeting. She briefly talked about the changed scenario of education and the new normal.

- The minutes of the previous meeting were studied and then Dr. Lokur proposed and Dr. Kothurkar seconded the motion that the minutes be accepted, which was passed unanimously.
- The next point was to approve and pass any revisions in the syllabi that had been approved by the respective Boards of Studies (BOS).
 - BMM – Sr. Ananda mentioned that as per University directives the course name was to be revised and it was now called a BA in Strategic Communications and Journalism at Sophia College, based on the specializations offered in the final year.
The first 12 papers for FY and SYBMM have been revised since Autonomy. These are still mostly based on subjects related to the humanities and social sciences. In the final year, the specialization in Advertising will now be termed Strategic Communication which is more encompassing.
 - BSc-IT – There were a few changes made in SYBScIT Applied Maths – there was some repetition in consecutive seminars, so COST has been brought into Sem III from Sem IV. New papers were to be introduced in Sem IV: Computer Forensic, Artificial Intelligence and IT Service Management.
 - Economics – In Papers IV, V and VI of TYBA Semester V, some topics, which were relevant to the current needs and required by students for their further studies, have been added within the main framework.
 - Education – Changes have been made in the practical component of TYBA in both Sem V and VI.
 - English – Changes have been made in a phased manner in the SYBA syllabus. Some topics have been brought from TYBA into SYBA and Mediaeval literature has been added.
 - Foundation Course – Only the project topics had been revised. In addition, the BOS had recommended starting 2 add-on courses for 30 hours each i) Understanding diversity and ii) Local Culture.

- History – There has been some revision in the FYBA syllabus – Ancient History was brought from SYBA to FYBA. Also the paper has been divided into 5 modules instead of 4, and this has changed the paper pattern.

Prof. Sahasrabudhe asked which topic replaced Ancient History in the SYBA syllabus. Ms Kamat clarified that Modern History which was formerly taught in the FYBA had been shifted to the SYBA syllabus.

- Life Science – The TYBSc Applied Component syllabus was revised slightly, based on student feedback. The module on Entrepreneurship and Accountancy was streamlined with help from the guest faculty.
- Microbiology – There were some revisions in the TYBSc (Applied Component) and the MSc I syllabi. Some topics were shifted from TYBSc to MSc since the present TYBSc syllabus was rather unwieldy.
- Philosophy – The TYBA syllabus has been partially revised. Paper names have been modified. There is now one paper on Indian Philosophy and one on Western Philosophy now. In the other papers about 15 to 20 % of the subject matter has been altered. The question paper pattern has been modified: in the single major papers, students will answer 2 out of 3 questions for 10 marks each, while in the double major papers, students will answer one question out of two for 20 marks.
- Political Science – No major changes had been introduced in the syllabi but two add – on courses have been planned i) Public speaking and ii) Training for UPSC exams.
- Psychology – Minor changes have been made in the Abnormal Psychology paper and some changes in the practicals. Instead of a workbook, an online e-manual will be used. There have also been some changes made in the internal assessment component: students will work on a small project.
- Sociology – There is one minor change in Paper VIII of Sem VI – instead of senior citizens, the topic has been changed to OBC.
- Zoology – No revision has been made. The BOS suggested that a feedback be taken from students to gauge the effectiveness of the course.
- Chemistry – All the papers of TYBSc have been changed by about 15 to 20% (to maintain continuity with the FY and SYBSc syllabi) and also similar changes have been made in the practical component (new experiments have been added and some shifted from MSc). The Applied Component paper has been renamed ‘Pharmaceutical and Colour Chemistry’ instead of the earlier ‘Drugs and Dyes’. The department has introduced a lot of application-based chemistry in this paper which will benefit students when applying for jobs in industry.

Dr Yasmin Khan raised a question about whether changing the Applied Component paper title would create a problem, since the JDs office may consider it a new subject. Both Dr. Lokur and Sr. Ananda agreed and suggested that the contents of the paper may be changed, but it would be preferable to keep

the title as per the original. A possible via media may be achieved by calling the paper ‘Drugs and Dyes: Pharmaceutical and Colour Chemistry’.

- No changes have been made in Hindi, French, Physics, Maths or Biochemistry
- A resolution accepting all the revisions suggested in the syllabi was proposed by Sr. Patricia, seconded by Ms. Padmini Somani and passed unanimously.

- Sr. Ananda informed the members that by the time the lockdown was imposed, all the teaching for the academic year 2019-2020 had been completed and most of the undergraduate practical exams were also completed. However, no theory exams had been held.
- In accordance with the directives issued by Government and University (applicable alike to both autonomous and affiliated colleges), both the FY and SY exams and the MSc I exams had been cancelled and all those students were promoted to the next class. Any pending ATKTs from previous years would be cleared at a later date.

The Academic Council endorsed the college's action in this matter.

- For the students of the TY classes and MSc II, there have been conflicting opinions. The last thing we had heard was that the Chief Minister had said that there would be no exam. Students would be awarded a grade based on their performance in previous years. Further, students would be offered the opportunity to sit for a class improvement exam at some later date, if they felt the grades they were awarded in this manner were not as they would expect. However, the college has decided to wait for a written directive from the Govt. and University before taking any action. All the Academic Council members agreed that this was the best option.
- Sr. Ananda asked the committee for suggestions on how to take forward the efforts to develop teaching in the digital mode. There is no likelihood that physical attendance will be allowed for quite a while. So possibilities of online teaching have to be explored. Even if students are allowed to attend college in person, if we are to maintain social distancing, we would need to develop a rota system for students to attend college in smaller groups. Another challenge we can envisage is that, for online teaching, we will need to ensure that each student has access to internet and a laptop, tablet or smart phone. All these considerations should be taken into account while planning the teaching.
- Ms. Padmini Somani offered some suggestions. She agreed it was a very difficult situation and it was important to keep a balance between continuity in teaching and maintaining standards. In UK for the next academic year they had opted for a blended model. There would be no large classes held, only small groups would be physically conducted in the form of tutorials. They mostly used Zoom based teaching or Microsoft Teams, which is more convenient for schools. She said she was associated with a Digital Learning company, has developed an ERP called Talent Edge where all material could be uploaded, attendance maintained and proctored exams conducted. She offered to help with a team of trainers to help with this transition. Also Zoom allows for recording, so students who miss out on one or more lectures could be given access to the recording later. Another suggestion was to give students from weaker sections help with data package as a form of scholarship. Sr. Ananda agreed that as the college helps with scholarships and fees, this could be considered, and she thanked Padmini for her help.
- Sr. Ananda raised the related issue of how assessment would take place. Some options for online assessment could be MCQs, open book tests etc. It was emphasised that a process of ongoing assessment should be included to ensure that students are keeping up with the teaching.
- Ms Lavanya Varadraján said that, in the BMM programme, the papers are quite diverse and some papers have a strong hands-on component and need the physical presence of staff and students. How would they be carried out online? They have already started with trial online classes with the students, but would have to address the need for the offline component in the course of the year.
- Sr. Ananda pointed out that all Science subjects will have a similar problem with practicals – they would have to be conducted virtually or in small groups.
- Dr. Lokur said that, at Ruia College, they were looking at similar options but finally there is no real substitute for hands-on practical experience. A possibility would be to reduce the burden of practicals

this semester and conduct them in the next semester. There are also some resources which offer a virtual experience which could be used initially.

- Ms. Zara Murao said that in the newsrooms, too, a lot of reporting had shifted to mobile photography and online communication (through Skype, Zoom and other channels/platforms), which were working well. These could be explored for the BMM. For attendance, they could try out an app using GPS, and also administer a short quiz at the end of each session, to confirm the students' presence.
- Ms Padmini Somani added that difficult as the situation was, it also offered two opportunities: i) Perhaps Sophia College could consider offering other online courses through distance learning. ii) Since virtual education seems to be rapidly becoming the norm, it would be possible to get outside speakers from anywhere in the country or even the world to address the students as part of the normal curriculum.
- Dr Andrea Coutinho suggested that for the next semester the IA marks should be from 25 and the 5 marks for attendance should not be considered, since it may be difficult to maintain proper records. Sr. Ananda responded that the marks allotted for IA could be increased, since increasing the component of continuous assessment would help to keep us connected with the students and be able to gauge their learning in this digital mode. Also, should we again be in a situation of not being able to conduct regular exams, having a greater proportion of IA marks available would enable us to give students a more realistic grade. She proposed a break-up of 50-50, since this was the distribution that had been suggested by the UGC at a recent workshop on evaluation and assessment. Perhaps this could be done in the coming academic year in view of the unusual circumstances imposed by the pandemic. The Academic Council agreed that this could be done on an experimental basis in the academic year 2020-2021.
- Ms Lavanya Varadrajan informed the members of the untimely demise of one of the members of their Board of Studies, Mr. Rakshit. A new member, Mr Sumanthro Senguptam had been invited to join in his place. Also, the last BOS had passed the introduction of an entrance exam for BMM, but due to the current pandemic situation it would not be implemented this year.
- Sr. Ananda ended the meeting by thanking everyone for their presence and valuable suggestions.



Dr. (Sr) Ananda Amritmahal
Chairperson, Academic Council
Principal, Sophia College Autonomous