



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

Office of the Principal

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### **Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Academic Council of Sophia College (Autonomous) – Held via Zoom at 11 am on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

The meeting was chaired by 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 Anushree Lokur and Dr Uttara Sahasrabudhe were present. Dr M. M. V. Ramana were unable to attend. From the panel of four experts from outside the college, Dr Usha Mukundan, Ms. Padmini Somani and Ms. Zara Murao were present. Dr Rajiva Kothurkar was unable to attend. All the other members were present.

Dr. (Sr.) Ananda welcomed all the members to the fifth Academic Council meeting. She mentioned how this year had been very challenging for everyone. Also Sr. Ananda pointed out that when the last meeting was held the resolutions were not signed with the intention of doing them when the lockdown ended. Hence this time the resolutions for the last meeting and this year would have to be formally accepted.

- The minutes of the previous meeting were studied. Dr. Lokur proposed and Dr. Sahasrabudhe seconded the motion to pass the minutes, and the minutes were unanimously accepted.
- As per the Agenda, the Principal gave a brief review of the activities of the past year.
  - She mentioned that after much reflection the University asked that colleges conduct the final examination of the TY and MSc batch of 2019-20 and this was successfully done in the online mode in October 2020. It was a challenge since several students did not have access to internet connectivity, however all the exams were conducted successfully. Credit to all the faculty and also both the Exam Committees, both the previous and the current ones.
  - For conduct of online classes, the college had after a review of available LMS platforms and discussion with the faculty decided to use Google classroom (after registration for G Suite for Education) and had also purchased 40 licences for Professional Zoom which permitted all the classes to be conducted on Zoom, even the classes with a large number of students. Timetables were adjusted keeping in mind the time that the students would have to spend in front of a screen. Also staff were asked to incorporate some blended learning, combining online lectures and some topics that students would study on their own.

- As mentioned in the previous Academic Council meeting, the college has adapted a 50:50 weightage for the Internal Assessment (IA) and Semester End exams (SEEs). For the IA in the first (odd) semester, all departments were given the freedom to decide the number of tests and the mode of assessment to be employed. However, following a review and feedback from the students, in the even semester a uniform pattern was implemented where for each paper a minimum of 3 and maximum of 4 IA activities of 25 marks each were to be conducted: the two best marks that the students had been awarded would be counted towards their IA scores.
  - Similarly in the odd semester, for the SEE for TY and MSc students a 20-mark subjective component was included where students had to write the answers and upload them in the Google Classroom. However, for the even semester, only MCQs were used for the assessment of all students, with curtailed time so that students did not have time to employ unfair means.
  - Skill enhancement sessions were held for training of faculty by the management, for all the new online modes of teaching and for pedagogy and paper setting, using both in-house expertise and guest faculty. The RUSA grant was extremely helpful in funding these.
- The next item on the agenda was to present and approve any revisions made in syllabi that had been approved by the respective Boards of Studies (BOS). For each of the departments where changes had been introduced, the HOD/Coordinator was asked to briefly highlight these changes.
- BMM (which is now called BA-SCJ for the FY students from this year). All the papers have been changed and are more media-oriented. Some of the highlights were
    - The Strategic Communications paper includes marketing, advertisement, branding and media planning.
    - Journalism in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester focusses on the skill of writing, while in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester students have to write and edit a news story.
    - The Writing paper exposes students to various types of writing.
    - Understanding Cinema (in the 5<sup>th</sup> Semester) and Digital Marketing (in the 6<sup>th</sup> Semester) were stand-alone papers.
    - The Research Methodology paper emphasizes social sciences research
    - The Contemporary Issues paper includes a variety of topics including Gender, Religion, Education, the Justice system, Environmental Health and the Economy.
    - Reforms have been brought in some exams to emphasize practical work.
  - BSc-IT – In semester 5 the paper on Software Project Management has been revised and in Semester 6 a new course - Data Sciences – has been introduced instead of Ethical Hacking. The new course has both theory and practical components.
  - Economics – Changes have been made in Semester 6 – Papers V (International Economics where country specific case studies are discussed), Paper VI (Indian Financial System where reforms until 2017 are included) and VIII B

(Development Theory and Experience – introduces the concept of population demography).

- Education – Changes have been made in the practical components of both Semesters V and VI in the following papers - TYBA Paper IV Educational Evaluation; TYBA Paper V - Information and Communication Technology in Education; and TYBA Paper VI Indian Education System.
  - English – the TYBA syllabus has undergone major changes (in all the papers) following the revision in the FY and SY syllabi in the previous years. The changes include incorporation of diverse voices and texts; some theoretical concepts have been brought in, and, on the whole, the syllabus has tried to move away from texts that reflected the Colonial ideology and white male supremacy.
  - French – From the various texts and paragraphs given, only a few selected ones will be covered. These will include stories, poems, paragraphs and also games, puzzles and crosswords.
  - History - Changes have been made in the following papers:
    - FYBA History I: Ancient India from Earliest Times to 1000 CE.
    - SYBA History II: Landmarks of World History (c.1300 CE -1914 CE)
    - SYBA History III: History of Modern India (c. 1700 – 1857 CE).
    - Some papers have been shifted between semesters.
  - Life Sciences – Minor changes have been incorporated in most syllabi especially in the practical component. A section on writing of a lab record has been introduced in FYBSc and in MSc I.
  - Maths and Statistics – Changes have been made in the Maths syllabus. In FYBSc Mathematics Paper 1(Calculus), there are more applications of derivatives and the Module on Vectors has been dropped. In Paper 2 Discrete Mathematics is taught using game concept.
  - Microbiology – Some new topics have been introduced at the TY level. More student activities have been incorporated in the practicals. Overlaps between the UG and PG syllabi have been removed and the syllabus has been fine-tuned.
  - Zoology – There are no changes in the UG syllabus. However, with the introduction of a Ph.D. programme, a syllabus has been designed for the course work. The first paper is Research Methodology and Statistics. The second is Advances in Biochemistry and Toxicology (along with 2 credits for practical work). This will help prepare the students for the research projects that they will undertake. The third paper includes Research related Academic activities. Weightage for IA: SEE / Practicals will be 50:50. Dr. Roshan D’Souza also mentioned that as per requirements, a Research Advisory Committee has been constituted and the syllabus passed through them.
- Following the presentations by each of the departments, Sr. Ananda welcomed any comments/questions/suggestions from the external experts. Dr. Anushree Lokur congratulated all the departments for the effort put into curriculum design, and the innovative changes made in the syllabus. She also commended them for being so proactive in their interactions with the students. Dr. Uttara Sahasrabudhe endorsed what

Dr. Lokur said and further added that the University Departments could take a cue from the work done by the college, especially in the evaluation system. Sr. Ananda thanked them for their valuable feedback and said she was heartened that the experts were endorsing these changes which the college had brought in.

- This was followed by reading the resolutions for approval by the Academic Council. The two resolutions which were discussed for both the years 2020-21 were:
- Resolved that the proposed changes in the syllabi of the BMM/BA(SCJ), BScIT, Chemistry, Economics, Education, English, Foundation Course, History, Life Sciences, Microbiology, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Zoology be and hereby are accepted and passed. The revised syllabi will be implemented in the academic year 2020-2021.
  - Resolved that the proposal to change the ratio of SEE to IA from 75:25 to 50:50 be and hereby is adopted on an experimental basis, because of the pandemic, for the academic year 2020-2021.

The Resolutions for the academic year 2021-22 were :

- Resolved that the proposed changes in the syllabi of the BMM/BA(SCJ), BScIT, Economics, Education, English, French, History, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Microbiology, and Zoology be and hereby are accepted and passed. The revised syllabi will be implemented in the academic year 2021-2022.
- Resolved that the proposal to continue with the ratio of SEE to IA, viz. 50:50 be and hereby is adopted, for the academic year 2021-2022. The assessment may be either offline or online depending on the circumstances of the pandemic and on the notifications issued by the Government of Maharashtra and the University of Mumbai from time to time.

Dr. Yasmin Khan proposed the passing of the resolutions and Ms Padmini Somani seconded the motion. The resolutions were then unanimously accepted.

- The Principal then discussed the tentative plan for the year 2021-22.
- Since it was now evident that the lectures would be continue to be in the online mode for the immediate future, the College will continue to employ the Zoom platform and G Suite as the preferred LMS. However, everyone was waiting for the offline classes to begin, even though, given the present scenario, it would probably have to be in a staggered mode.
  - It was also mentioned that the Biochemistry department (which offers 2 papers at the TYBSc level as a double major subject) had had only one permanent faculty member (Dr. Madhavi Kaji) after Dr. Chinmoyee Vatsyayan retired last year. Dr Kaji has also resigned this year, due to personal reasons. Further, since the student numbers in the Science stream are lower than required, it might be necessary to close the Biochemistry Department for at the undergraduate level.

Since there were students currently in MSc I, the college would ensure that they completed the final PG year before the college closed the PG section as well.

- She further highlighted the problems faced by the college, since several faculty had retired in the last 2 years and several more were due to retire in the coming academic year. She mentioned that without release of NOCs by the government, the college was finding it increasingly difficult to handle the salaries of those staff being paid by the management. Since our Management is not supported by any industrial house, the only sources of revenue were the Hostel and income received by renting the premises for shooting for ads/films etc. Both these sources had dried up during the pandemic and lockdown, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the salary bill each month.
  - She mentioned that the college was initiating several new courses:
    - Food and Nutrition by the Women's Centre,
    - Diploma in Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults (for practicing counsellors). This is a 10 month online course with a 10 day offline module with actual counselling. This is being organised by the Department of Psychology in collaboration with the Centre for Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults and Sophia Centre for Women's Studies and Development
    - MA in Women's Studies and Gender studies, by the Department of Sociology and the Women's Centre
    - Add-on courses floated by each department. She said that it would be mandatory for each department to have one course each year so that students could get their extra academic credit. It was projected that some of these would be multi-disciplinary and even cross-faculty.
    - The implementation of the three non-academic credits which would have been mandatory for this current batch of students has been deferred due to the pandemic, since expecting students to do social work and engage in extra-curricular activities was not realistic. Hence these credits would not be included in the marksheet. However, those students who had completed their work for the credits would be given an additional certificate along with the marksheet.
    - Since the present mode of online examinations had worked fairly well, the examinations would continue to be conducted using Google Classroom and Zoom for proctoring. The Principal praised the staff for the effort put into the proctoring.
- The Principal then asked for any suggestions or comments. Ms. Padmini Somani said that she appreciated that there were so many challenges and she offered to work along with the college to find any solutions. Due to lack of time at present, she offered to do it at a later time.
- Ms. Swarupa Kamat added that the faculty were very lucky to have an amazing principal in Sr. Ananda. She has been extremely humane, sensitive and sympathetic in these difficult times, and has been a rock of support for staff and students. Ms Kamat mentioned that as one of the senior-most members of staff, she felt she should mention

this on behalf of all the faculty. Ms. Lavanya Varadrajan added that, as one of the junior-most faculty, she seconded the comment.

- Dr. Usha Mukundum asked if the next academic year's dates of term had been planned since that also needs to be passed by the Academic Council. Sr. Ananda mentioned that the University had sent a circular earlier, declaring a break from 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June so college would start from 14<sup>th</sup> June, but also added that we were contemplating the possibility of starting a week later and then adjusting this week later in the year. All the principals felt that the faculty has been working continuously and deserved a break. Dr. Lokur was also lamenting the fact that the MSc students going into their 3<sup>rd</sup> semester would be working through this period. Further with no clarity on the HSC exam schedule, it was uncertain when the FYs would be admitted. It would appear that the coming academic year would also have different schedules for all the various classes.
- Sr. Ananda ended the meeting by thanking everyone for their presence and valuable suggestions.



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**Dr. (Sr) Ananda Amritmahal**  
Principal, Sophia College Autonomous