

Minutes of the Governing body meeting held on 23rd January 2019

The following members were present at the Governing Body meeting:

- Chairperson: Dr. Sr. Anila Verghese (Chairperson of SHEWI, the Managing Trust);
- other members of SHEWI: Sr. Teresa Pereira, Sr. Pratibha Pinto, Sr. Charlotte Bastion;
- members of teaching staff of the College: Dr. Hemalatha Ramachandran. Dr. Perpetua Miranda;
- UGC nominee: Dr. Kumud Sharma;
- University of Mumbai nominee: Dr. Rashmi Oza;
- eminent educationist: Dr. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas;
- principal of the College: Dr. Sr. Ananda Amritmahal.

Sr. Patricia D'Souza (member of SHEWI) was not able to attend the meeting, as she was on duty at an NSS camp. The Maharashtra State Government had not yet nominated a representative to the Governing Body, so there was no member representing the Government.

1. Sr. Anila welcomed all the Governing Body members and congratulated Dr. Sr. Ananda Amritmahal and the College staff for achieving Autonomy status for Sophia College.
2. The first governing body meeting began with a brief introduction of the members by the principal, Dr. Sr. Ananda Amritmahal.
3. Sr Ananda then explained the reasons why our college chose to become autonomous. It was mentioned that, to begin with, the majority of the staff were in favour and later a few more teachers joined in favour of autonomy. Once a large number of our faculty was in favour of autonomy, the process of applying began.
4. A powerpoint presentation was given by Sr. Ananda, beginning with the vision, mission and goals of our college. She mentioned that our institution is part of a 200 year old international educational movement for women that was begun by the Society of the Sacred Heart. The goals to be achieved as put forth by the teaching faculty were mentioned as well as achievement of full intellectual potential, critical thinking, value-based knowledge. Self-reliance and self-determination were mentioned as part of the social commitment of our institution towards empowerment of women. Along with this, it was vital that we emphasise sensitisation of our students to the needs of the less privileged, the importance of bringing about a national identity, and of inculcating tolerance to religious convictions held by all communities.
5. Sr. Ananda pointed out that
 - a. Autonomy gives us an opportunity to explore the full potential of our girl students. Though it also has been challenging for our faculty with the academic capacity of our students showing extreme variation.
 - b. Autonomy also gives us an opportunity to plan our academic calendar, also to provide a global platform with opportunities for student and faculty exchange program with global universities.
 - c. Finally Autonomy gives an opportunity for self-evaluation, and improvement of our education process. We are also empowered to make our own academic decisions.

- d. Learning enhancement : Sr. Ananda mentioned that our focus was going to be in the area of learning enhancement without overly burdening the staff.
6. Autonomous status was granted to us by the UGC through a letter dated 10th June 2018 which we received on 16th July 2018. The recognition of autonomous status was conferred on us by the University of Mumbai via their letter of 23rd July 2018. Hence due to paucity of time and since we had already begun the academic year, most of the planned syllabus changes could only be incorporated where learning was based on referencing material and was not text-book based.
 7. Sr. Ananda mentioned that the student community had initially been confused about these changes as well as the status of our college, as many did not know what autonomy actually entailed and how it would affect them during the course of their study. Some actually left the college and others required guidance and reassurance. An orientation was then given to them, and they were given the opportunity to raise questions and clarify their doubts: this made them happy and excited to be part of the new programme.
 8. It was also decided that under Autonomy, earning additional credits would be made mandatory; however, this would be implemented in a phased manner for our students.
 9. Declaration of results and issuing of marksheets would be within the purview of the College and we could determine the dates for these. However, degree certificates with the logo of Mumbai University and that of the College would be awarded to the students as per university norms, after the official Convocation date of the University.
 10. Sr. Ananda mentioned that some add-on courses of 30 hours duration have already begun, and others would be initiated in the coming academic year. Dr. Hemalatha shared that the policy of compulsory attendance and assignments, but no examinations for such courses has attracted a good number of students to the Introductory Science Communication course. A Music Appreciation course and one in Gender Sensitization are some of the new courses soon to be launched.
 11. It was mentioned that under the system of earning additional credits for add-on courses, extracurricular activities and social work involvements, the current First year students who began their degree course under autonomy would be required to earn 3 credits. And Second year students would have to earn 2 credits. Sr. Pratibha asked why this difference in the requirement of additional credits for the two groups. It was pointed out that since the Second Year students had become part of the Autonomous system halfway through their academic programme, they would have only two years at hand to complete the extra credits.
 12. Sr. Ananda informed the Governing Body that the college has now a well-planned remedial course(Academic Enhancement Programme) which will enable weak students to improve their academic performance. This programme is designed by the teachers, and offers senior students the opportunity to participate as volunteers for peer teaching.
 13. Sr. Ananda mentioned that the BA, BSc, BScIT programmes will be following the 75:25 marking scheme (with 75% for the semester end examination and 25% for internal assessment) while the BMM and MSc programmes will follow the 60:40 (with

60% for the semester end examination and 40% for internal assessment) marking scheme. Also we have a controller of examinations and an examination committee to oversee the both the conduct of Semester end examinations and the declaration of results.

- 14.** A concern was expressed by Sr. Ananda that there are a number of students not fulfilling the required attendance as per the university norms. We have tried to debar such students, but unless we take the cut-off as 50%, they have been able to represent their case at university grievance committees successfully – the university has held that any lower cut-off is arbitrarily imposed, and thus will not be upheld by the authorities. It was proposed that the cut-off be taken as 50%, but that some creative form of deterrent be devised, so that the students realise that we take attendance seriously, but that they do not lose a year (which would have a negative impact on our enrolment numbers). The other option to discourage the students from absenteeism could be to indicate the attendance of each student on the marksheet issued by college authorities.
- 15.** Dr. Rashmi Oza asked about maintenance of attendance records in the College. Sr. Ananda replied that attendance records had always been meticulously maintained at Sophia. She added that the use of the Mobile app Campusby also updates the students about their everyday attendance. Fr. Fraser enquired if there was a warning given to students all through the academic year. Sr. Ananda stated that regular blacklists were put up through the year, and parents too are informed about defaulters.
- 16.** Dr. Oza enquired about the enrolment of Disabled students including students who are visually challenged. Sr. Ananda mentioned that our campus has been made disabled friendly, although we do not have special learning software for visually handicapped students. The Hostel did have students admitted with minor disabilities. Sr. Pratibha mentioned that LD students were being given the required support. Dr. Sharma also emphasised the need for support of disabled students.
- 17.** Sr. Ananda mentioned that the Governing Body meeting would be followed by the Academic Council meeting and Finance committee meeting. The Governing Body then discussed the Nominees to be selected to each of these. It was decided that the following be nominated to the Academic Council : Padmini Somani (ex-student), Dr. Usha Mukundan (principal of RJ College), Ms Zara Murao (from the media – Hindustan Times), Dr. Kothurkar (from industry – Novartis). For the nominee to the Finance committee, Ms. Deepali Patel (from Sadhana School) was suggested as she is also an experienced Chartered Accountant.
- 18.** Sr. Anila enquired if any issues of serious concern were pending. Sr. Ananda mentioned that the process for extension of her service from 62 years to 65 years is pending. The process was undertaken in time, but the various steps at University level and Government level were taking time.
- 19.** Another problem facing the College, Sr. Ananda pointed out, is that we are a Grant-in-aid institution, except for the M.Sc. (Analytical Chemistry), BMM and BScIT programmes. Of the 51 sanctioned teaching posts currently ten are vacant and of 49 non-teaching posts 12 are vacant. This places a great financial stress on our management. Even for the Self-financed courses the fee collection just about meets the

required expenditure. Nor are we allowed to raise the fees even in the unaided sections. Fr Frazer suggested that under autonomy it would be possible to raise the fees to some extent. It was suggested that we find out what other colleges are doing, and what fee raise would be permitted by the University and Government, before taking a decision on this matter.

20. Another difficulty has been that post Autonomy, the college is expected to continue the payment of Enrolment fees and Affiliation fees to the university. This despite the UGC directive that affiliation fees must be only a one-time payment. We are still awaiting clarity from the University on this matter.
21. Sr. Ananda mentioned that under RUSA we are eligible for a Rs 5 crore grant : the state government is to contribute 40% of the RUSA grant whereas 60% of the grant comes from the centre. Sr. Ananda mentioned that as of now Rs 1.5 crore has been received from the centre as the first instalment of the grant. She presented the proposal that had been submitted to RUSA, indicating the allocation of the funds under the various categories.
22. Dr. Sharma enquired if the college is receiving any UGC Minor grants for research, Sr. Ananda replied that while we have received it in the past, there were no applications this year. Further, we have heard that since we have received the RUSA grant, we would not be eligible to similar grants from the UGC.
23. Sr. Ananda mentioned that already expenses have been incurred for roofing but those cannot be claimed under RUSA as the tendering procedure had not been followed since we were not aware of it at the time. However, the expenses for painting and other infrastructural developments could be claimed under RUSA.
24. Sr. Anila raised the issue about online admissions and payment of fees. Sr. Ananda said that the financial aspects of money transfer would be checked with our auditors and norms and procedures would be carefully examined before initiating the process.
25. Sr. Ananda asked about the possible dates for the next GB meeting, since under autonomy guidelines, it was mandatory that we have another meeting before the end of the academic year. It was unanimously agreed that it should be scheduled for 23rd April 2019 at 2.30 PM.
26. Sr. Ananda brought to the notice of the Governing Body that the UGC grant of Rs. 20 lakhs for autonomous colleges is available. Should the College apply for the same since we are already in receipt of RUSA funding? Everyone agreed the College must apply as this grant can be utilised for categories not permitted under RUSA. Sr. Ananda said a tentative budget has been planned and it was discussed. After discussion Dr. Sharma said 2 lakhs allocation for seminar seems to be very little and expenses under teaching aids can be removed. Instead a recording room for Swayam can be included. She also mentioned that funds were available under UGC for conduct of Seminars. Some restructuring was suggested by members. A general suggestion was that we apply for expenditure under the UGC grant for heads that are disallowed under RUSA.

The meeting concluded with everyone thanking the chairperson Dr. (Sr.) Anila Verghese.

Minutes of the 2nd Governing body meeting held on 23rd April 2019

The following members were present at the Governing Body meeting:

- Chairperson: Dr. Sr. Anila Verghese (Chairperson of SHEWI, the Managing Trust);
- Other members of SHEWI: Sr. Teresa Pereira, Sr. Charlotte Bastion, Sr. Patricia D'Souza
- Members of teaching staff of the College: Dr. Hemalatha Ramachandran. Dr. Perpetua Miranda;
- UGC nominee: Dr. Kumud Sharma;
- Eminent educationist: Dr. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas;
- In- Charge Principal of the College: Dr. Yasmin Khan

Dr. Rashmi Oza the University of Mumbai nominee was unable to be present as she had to attend a Grievance cell meeting at the University. Sr. Pratibha Pinto (member of SHEWI) had excused herself as she was out of town. Sr Ananda Amritmahal was invited to be present as well.

It was explained at the beginning of the meeting that as the process for the extension of the tenure of Sr. Ananda was still underway and no official approval had been obtained so far, Dr. Yasmin Khan was In-charge Principal in the meantime.

Sr. Anila, the Chairperson, welcomed all the members. She also commended the College on the new letterhead and suggested that the words 'A Christian Minority Trust' be included in the details below the logo.

The minutes of the 1st Governing Body were read and the motion to accept them was proposed by Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas, seconded by Dr. Hemalatha Ramachandran and passed unanimously.

1. Brief report of events since last meeting

- The process for extension of Sr Ananda's tenure as principal from 62 years to 65 years was still in progress. All the numerous files had been submitted to the University of Mumbai and had been forwarded by the University to the Directorate of Higher Education in Pune, who would then forward the file to Mantralaya.
- The First Academic Council meeting had been held on 22nd February 2019. The second round of BOS meetings had taken place after that and the Second Academic Council meeting had been held on 22nd April 2019. The various changes to the Syllabus that would be implemented in the following Academic year had been passed by BoS members and AC members.
- Finance Committee meetings: The 1st Finance committee meeting had taken place and the second would take place after the Audited statements were available. Mr. Sanjay Shah, the University nominee, had made some recommendations about the proposal to be sent to UGC.
- Examination work and schedules: The College was happy to report that despite many challenges faced, due to the staff being recruited for election duty in the middle of examination and correction work, the whole process of examination, corrections, moderation, entry and uploading of marks had been completed and we would be

declaring results on 27th April 2019. We have the entire Examination Committee, and in particular the two Deputy conductors, to thank for the tireless and unstinted efforts they had been consistently putting in to ensure that the whole process went smoothly. The Governing body members appreciated the efforts of all the members of the Examination Committee and conveyed their congratulations to them. The teaching staff would be working to complete the admission process by 4th May 2019.

- **Attendance Defaulters:** It was shared that the decision taken in the last Governing Body meeting regarding absenteeism was put into practice during the second half of the academic year. Those having less than 50% attendance were debarred from appearing for the Semester End exams, with the option to appear for the ATKT Exam in June so that they would not lose a year, but it would be registered as an ATKT in their marksheet. It was explained that this decision had the full backing of the staff as finally we were taking some concrete action against the attendance defaulters which would send a clear message to the entire student body. Since this ATKT examination would be held in early June from 1st - 13th it would be possible for these papers to be assessed and results declared by the end of June. These students could then take admission to their respective classes in July. This would also ensure that our student numbers would not be affected, and our sanctioned teaching posts would be safeguarded.

The list of attendance defaulters had been displayed regularly throughout the year, and we had made sure that the parents had been informed about all these decisions. Many parents had welcomed this decision and appreciated the sensitivity and creativity in tackling the issue.

Dr. Yasmin pointed out that this decision had also resulted in an overall better quality of the results during the last examinations.

Keeping in mind the late admissions, it had been decided that for the TY classes, the two weeks in June would be only for double major subjects, and the classes for single major subjects would resume from July.

The members of the Governing Body appreciated the thoroughness with which this whole process has been planned and executed.

2. RUSA grant and difficulties encountered:

We had received Rs 2.5 Crores from RUSA, so far. The College had been experiencing a number of difficulties in utilization of the grant. For instance, we had been informed that no payments could be made in any form except the online portal designated by the government for that purpose. After the staff had got trained and learned the process, we discovered that the portal does not accept entries under category 8 (under which we as Autonomous Colleges fall). This has been experienced by all the autonomous Colleges. So all payments were on hold. We have finally just learned that the problem has been addressed and the portal has now been opened. Another stipulation is that for any expenditure exceeding Rs 3 lakhs we need to invite tenders publicly. The E- Portal for the same is under GEM, but the colleges still need to get registered under it.

Prof. Sharma explained that these are starting problems which will be encountered at the beginning of any new process and things would gradually be streamlined and be smoother with time.

Fr. Frazer asked whether the 40% contribution from the State was ensured, and was informed that the State had agreed to make this contribution of Rs 2 crores.

Another complication was that 70 % of the grant amount had to be utilised by September/October 2019, in order for the balance amount to be released. Further, only 30 % could be spent on the 'hard component' which included infrastructure. We had planned that part of this was to be used to set up a studio which could be used by the BMM department and also for teachers to prepare MOOCs for the SWAYAM portal.

The Principals had also represented that at various meetings that most of the elements of the soft component, including aspects like staff enhancement, are an ongoing process and need to be carried out in a phased manner and could not really be implemented in a short span of time. However, there had been no response to this from the government.

3. Academic matters:

- **Curricula:** The various modifications to be introduced in the syllabus have been run through and approved by the respective BOS and had been presented briefly to the Academic Council.

Prof. Sharma enquired about the process and basis for the changes. It was explained that with the syllabus prescribed by the University of Mumbai as a base, and incorporating recommendations and suggestions made by the BOS members, the various syllabi had been streamlined to meet the current focus of skill development and experiential learning. The focus was on learner outcomes and enhancing capabilities.

- **Additional Credits:** Additional Credits would be made mandatory from the new FY batch – 2019-20. They would be required to earn 3 additional credits, these credits could to be accumulated over the three years of the degree programme. The present SY batch would be required to earn 2 credits over the two years they would be with the college. One credit would be equivalent to 30 hours, and could be obtained through involvement in extracurricular activities, sports, social outreach and add-on courses. Students were quite enthused about these credits. An additional staff member, Ms. Jaloo Bharucha, had been taken on to work with Ms. Naina from the Computer lab to handle the clerical work of keeping track of these credits.
- **Credits for the Papers:** Some of the BOS members had questioned the allocation of credits for papers. The College had decided that for the present we would continue with the allocation of credits prescribed by the University.

Sr. Anila asked whether students can shift from autonomous colleges to non-autonomous colleges and vice versa. It was clarified that this was possible.

4. Presentation of the proposal for the UGC grant

The broad frame work of the proposal to be sent to UGC was presented to the Governing Body members. The Finance committee had met on 6th March and we had hoped to send the proposal by 31st March. However the UGC was insisting that they required an NOC from the State Government regarding the Autonomous status of the College. The State Government, on the other hand, was insisting that they did not require to issue any NOC about the matter. There did not seem to be a way out of the impasse. In the last week, however, the UGC has informed us the State Government NOC was no

longer required, and we would be putting in our proposal for the next academic year. We plan to apply for this UGC grant every year to cover autonomy-related expenses. expenses not falling under the RUSA grant.

Fr. Frazer explained that, formerly, colleges could not apply for autonomous status without obtaining an NOC from the State government: the UGC was perhaps initially reverting to the old procedure, and has now realised that the process has changed.

5. Update on admission processes – online, with online fee payments

- The College had invested in the online MIS (Master Software) for administration and examination work. This system also allows for the possibility of doing online admissions and fee payments. The portal would also be used to charge the students a nominal amount for the use of the portal. The system will maintain the entire records of the students including attendance, admissions, marksheets for all our students including the post-graduate students. The attendance of students would also be done using this system instead of Campusby (which we were using for attendance in the last two academic years) in the coming year. The finalization and signing of the MOU is awaiting the final approval by our auditors and would be in place soon.
- An area of concern was the raising of fees for our courses. Most of the fees have not been raised for a long period. For the self-financing course -BMM it was suggested that we could move from the current Rs 18 thousand to Rs 25 thousand. Sr. Anila suggested that the increase should be gradual

Regarding the other courses, maybe after the audit we would have a clearer idea of how to proceed. Fr. Frazer suggested we study what other colleges had been doing to get some ideas, and to maintain parity between the autonomous colleges.

6. Update on recent additions to the prize list

The contributions made by different individuals for various prizes and scholarship were shared and appreciated by all, particularly those instituted for participation in Kaleidoscope. Sr. Anila recommended that, in future, a minimum of Rs 15,000/- would be accepted as a corpus for scholarships so that the prize money would amount to at least Rs 1,000/- at the current interest rates. Amounts less than this would result in very small prizes. This suggestion was noted for the future.

7. Fixing a tentative date for the next meeting:

It was decided that possible dates would be communicated via email and then finalised.

8. Other matters:

Dr. Hema appreciated the work done towards setting up of the Examination cell, in particular now that the cabinets and IT infrastructure had been installed. The set up was really looking very good.