



INDIAN STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

203 B.T. Road, Kolkata 700108

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON FEBRUARY 10, 2017 IN THE PLATINUM JUBILEE AUDITORIUM, ISI KOLKATA

The following members/ invitees were present:

1	Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay	30	Smarajit Bose
2	Amita Pal	31	Rita Saharay
3	Dilip Saha	32	Ashish Ghosh
4	Deba Prasad Mandal	33	Nabanita Das
5	Amartya Kumar Dutta	34	M.Z. Anis
6	Parthasarathi Ghosh	35	Mahuya Dutta
7	Raghunath Chatterjee	36	Nityananda Sarkar
8	Amlan Banerjee	37	Probal Dasgupta
9	Dhurjati Prasad Sengupta	38	Sumitra Purkayastha
10	Nandini Das	39	Ritabrata Munshi
11	Alok Goswami	40	Prasun Das
12	Rana Barua	41	Kiranmoy Das
13	Arup Das	Following members/ invitees were present via Video-conferencing	
14	Bhabatosh Chanda		
15	Tarun Kabiraj	42	Siva Athreya
16	Guruprasad Kar	43	Mohan Delampady
17	C.A. Murthy	44	TSSRK Rao
18	Umapada Pal	45	Rajarama Bhat
19	Debapriyo Majumdar	46	BS Daya Sagar
20	Swagato K. Ray	47	Bharat Ramaswami
21	Debashish Goswami	48	Chetan Ghate
22	Souvik Roy	49	Abhay G. Bhat
23	Goutam Mukherjee	50	Isha Dewan
24	Barnana Roy	51	Rahul Roy
25	Banasri Basu	52	Abhiroop Mukhopadhyay
26	Mausumi Bose	53	Antar Bandyopadhyay
27	Subhas C. Nandy	54	Debasis Mishra
28	Ayanendranath Basu	55	Tridip Ray
29	Dipti Prasad Mukherjee	56	Saurabh Ghosh

Agenda Item: Consideration of the report of the committee formed by the Office Order No. DO/2016/225 dated April 07, 2016 to look into all aspects of transparency and reservation for admission to all degree / diploma programmes of the Institute.

At the outset, the chairperson clarified the basis for inviting members to this special AC and briefed about the facts of the agenda, including submission of the report. She proposed that, after presentation of the salient features of the report of the committee by its chairman, Prof. Alok Goswami, members could first seek clarifications and responses for queries, if any, from the committee members present, and this would be followed by deliberations on the report. Then, she requested the Chair of the Committee to explain the salient features of the recommendations of the committee.

Prof. Goswami initially gave an overview of the manner in which the committee functioned, briefly touching upon the time frame given, the scope of the committee, its deliberations based on admission data for the past two years, and eventual submission of the report in Feb,'17 after a short but unavoidable delay. He explained the term "annual permitted strength" mentioned in the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006 (called the Act hereafter) in relation to the notion of "number of available seats" and accordingly the percentage breakup of reserved and unreserved categories. Regarding the reservation issue, his opinion was that this act can be considered to be a "directive principle/guideline" and as for the transparency issue, he felt that it was the need of the day. He expressed the belief that by implementing a reasonable reservation policy, the Institute would be fulfilling some of its social obligations towards the underprivileged members of society.

Prof. Goswami summarised the recommendations of the committee in the context of existing admission process, its stages (written test & interview), including process for JRF programme, mentioning that the committee essentially followed the basic principles recommended by the 2008 Committee. He noted that the current reservation policy being followed by the Institute, which is based on the latter, has not been successful in ensuring adequate representation of the reserved categories among the selected candidates. He also clarified that the Committee excluded from its consideration interview-only procedure that is being followed currently for GATE-qualified candidates, while recommending methods for qualifying scores.

Prof. Goswami then elaborated upon the recommended procedures for determining qualifying scores for General and reserved categories based on percentiles, weighted combinations of scores, etc. and explained the rationale behind the proposed relaxation of qualifying scores by 50% for SC/ST/PWD candidates on the basis of past two years' data and 10% for OBC candidates as per the existing Supreme Court ruling. He also mentioned in this context that the Act used figures like 15% for SC, 7.5% for ST as benchmark only, and the past two years' data on admission to many of the degree programmes of ISI indicates that a cut-off of 50% can ensure a much higher representation of reserved categories, almost as much as required by the Act.

Prof. Goswami ended his summarization by emphasizing that the committee recommends implementation of its proposals for 3 years and, thereafter, a reassessment of the system and framing of a new/modified policy, if necessary.

The Director, while seeking clarification from Prof. Goswami about the "annual permitted strength" as mentioned in the Act, concluded that the said Act is applicable to ISI also, once the number of seats is declared, irrespective of the manner in which they are determined. A few members felt that the view of some legal expert should be sought in order to get such issues resolved. One member highlighted Clause 6 of the Act, which says that this act shall take all necessary steps for the purposes of reservation of seats in admissions to its academic sessions commencing on and from the calendar year, 2007.

While several members agreed that errors of both type-I & type-II can be expected to occur irrespective of the method followed (percentile-based or fixing number of seats), many of them also felt that a minimum pass mark must be specified for every stage of the admission process particularly the MCQ-based test and the interview, so that certain undesirable scenarios can be avoided, particularly after relaxation of cut-off. For example, for the MCQ-based tests, if the relaxed qualifying score (as proposed by the committee) is less than 30, a candidate who leaves all questions unanswered (and thereby scores 30) will be shortlisted for the next stage.

Some members raised queries about characterising the weights (u, v, a, b, c) used in both the methods. Prof. Goswami clarified that this is a minor issue which can be decided by the individual Selection Committees prior to the admission test.

In this context, he also clarified that all information regarding the selection test that is to be made public in order to ensure transparency as recommended by the committee, should be declared on the Institute website well before the Admission test, preferably by the end of April, subject to the capability of the Dean's office to do so. He also highlighted that the Institute must use the current version of the Central list (list of reserved categories declared by the Central Govt.) to determine the reserved categories.

Some members sought clarification on the equivalence between percentiles and the number of seats. The Chair explained that percentiles indicate maximum number of seats only, not the exact number of seats, and, moreover, the number so obtained will vary since the total number of applicants varies over years. A few members felt that, for a particular admission year, this number gets fixed anyhow, and transparency may be lost if a cap is declared instead of the exact number. Prof. Goswami was of the opinion that transparency can easily be ensured if all the information is put up on the admission portal for all the categories well in advance.

One member pointed out that not declaring the number of seats goes against the institute's own policy followed for the PGDBA programme being conducted in association with two other institutes. Some members of the committee argued against this on the basis of lack of available infrastructure (classroom, hostel etc.) of the institute. Also, according to them, the significantly varying number of applicants from year to year is one of the major deterrents in fixing the number of seats. The suggestion also came to implement reservation policy for UG programmes in terms of number first, something similar to existing PGDBA programme, and defer for rest of the programmes as of now.

Several members expressed their concern regarding the gravity of the issue and were highly appreciative of the effort put in by the Committee for formulating its recommendations. At the same time, a few were concerned about the difficulty of convincing Government officials regarding the statistical thinking and approach incorporated in the report. Some felt that it might be difficult for the Administrative Ministry to comprehend and accept the recommended approach. The Director agreed that reservation in admission was indeed an extremely serious matter, based on the past communication from the Chairman of Section 8(1) committee and Government representatives as well since, according to them, all constitutional obligations/requirements must be met by the Institute in respect of reservation as stipulated by the Act.

One member expressed his concern about the applicability of Clause 5(1) of the Act to the recommendations made for JRF programmes separately in the report. One member of the Committee replied that for several JRF programmes in the Institute, seats are actually fixed since the first-year budget allocation is through TAC-approved projects.

Finally, the Director concluded with the remark that, instead of a qualifying score, declaring qualifying marks at all stages (including the interview) of admission process, at least for the unreserved category, might be a better option, together with prefixing some numbers like percentiles or number of seats.

Resolution: The report submitted by the committee, and the views expressed by members in this special meeting of the Academic Council, will be forwarded to the ISI Council for discussion in its forthcoming meeting.

Sd/-
Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay
Director, Indian Statistical Institute &
Chairperson, Academic Council