ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021 | 2077-2078

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal
Website: www.ugcnepal.edu.np

University Grants Commission Composition

1. The apex body of UGC (the Board) consists of eleven members headed by the Executive Chairman. Some office bearers are nominated by the government while some others are *ex-officio* members.

2. Upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education, the Council of Ministers nominates the Executive Chairman and the Executive Member Secretary of the Commission from among the academic leaders and eminent professors.

3. The secretaries of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, and a member of National Planning Commission (Social Sector/Education Desk) are the *ex-officio* members.

4. Among the two Vice-Chancellors represented, one is usually from Tribhuvan University. Additionally, two distinguished professors and two prominent educationists are nominated as the members of the apex body. The tenure of the members, including the Chairman and the Member-Secretary, is four years from the date of their appointments.

UGC Board in 2020-2021

1.	*Chairman* Prof. Bhim Prasad Subedi	
Members		
2.	Dr. Usha Jha	Member, National Planning Commission
3	Prof. Dharma Kanta Baskota	Vice Chancellor, Tribhuvan University
4	Prof. Ram Kanth Makaju Shrestha	Vice Chancellor, Kathmandu University
5.	Dr. Shisir Kumar Dhungana	Secretary, Ministry of Finance
6.	Mr. Gopi Nath Mainali (upto 8th Feb 2021)	Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology
	Mr. Ram Prasad Thapaliya (from 4th March 2021)	
7	Prof. Govinda Acharya	New Banshwor, Kathmandu
8	Prof. Pramod Kumar Jha	Post Gradutae Campus, Tribhuvan University, Biratnagar
9	Dr. Chandra Kala Ghimire	Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur
10	Dr. Bikas Adhikari	Kathmandu University, Dhulikel
Member - Secretary		
11	Prof. Dev Raj Adhikari (upto 1st Oct. 2020)	
	Prof. Shankar Prasad Bhandari (from 11th Jan. 2021)	

Foreword

University Grants Commission (UGC) is committed to work as a coordinating and facilitating body of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country and this has been reflected in our operation since its establishment. We are pleased to present you this report that outlines the summary of the activities that the UGC carried out in the last one year. Also, the report presents the summary of the policies and programs that UGC has developed to shape the future of higher education in Nepal.

The year was obviously very challenging due to the continued prevelance of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year. Coordinating with the hundreds of HEIs in the country and monitoring the support provided to them for various reform activities was not easy. However, due to the continued support of the government, better understanding of the HEIs and the dedicated staff of the UGC, we have been able to accomplish most of the planned activities. Our entire efforts were geared towards helping the HEIs run their academic programs through alternative modes so that there is a minimum learning loss during the pandemic. As a result, almost all the HEIs were able to run their classes online and some HEIs were also able to conduct both formative and summative assessment online.

In addition to the disbursement of the grants to the HEIs and coordinating with the regular activities, the UGC has formed several policy advice committees and task force to help us operationalize our programs and activities effectively. The on-going reform project (HERP) supported by the World Bank has come to an end. Building on the strong foundation that the HERP has laid, a new program entitled Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education (NEHEP) has been developed in order to make higher education relevant to the market.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the government of Nepal for being with us throughout. Our sincere thanks to all the members of the UGC Board for their advice and support. We extend our sincere acknowledgement to the World Bank for their support in the higher education reform and the support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, we thank all the HEIs for their cooperation and the UGC team for their continued commitment to the UGC.

Prof. Bhim Prasad Subedi, PhD
Chairman

Executive Summary

As a statutory and autonomous apex body of the higher education institutions in Nepal, University Grants Commission (UGC) makes justifiable allocation and disbursement of the grants to the universities and higher education institutions to strengthen their smooth operation and academic excellence. UGC sets academic standards for higher education and formulates plans and policies to foster quality education. It also facilitates to establish good rapport and coordination among the universities in the country.

This report summarizes the major accomplishments of the UGC in the year 2020-21 with reference to its major tasks of promoting, facilitating, supporting and enhancing the quality of higher education. During the year 2020-2021, UGC's major activities were infrastructure development of higher education institutions, capacity development of faculties, fellowships and scholarships, research and innovation, and quality assurance and accreditation.

In last fiscal year, the commission endorsed three policy documents that have set the milestones; National Higher Education Program (NHEP) Framework (2021-2030), Stainability Plan for Research in Higher Education 2021-2024 and The QAA Strategic Plan 2021-2030. NHEP aims to develop a knowledge-based society and economy by making higher education scientific, innovative, research-oriented, technology friendly, employment-oriented and inclusive. The Research Plan has set goals of advancement of research culture through strong institutional mechanism and back-up to nurture excellence in research, diversification of sources for research funding and develop human capital base in higher education for promoting research and development. Likewise, QAA Strategic Plan proposes to establish a compliance with the relevant policy offered by National Educational Policy 2019; setting direction for the expansion and efficiency of accreditation system in the country; and making Nepali higher education at par with international standard.

During the fiscal year, the Commission completed the preparation of a new reform program entitled 'Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) through a wide stakeholders' engagement that include representatives of the government, universities, UGC, World Bank and the employers. NEHEP consolidates the efforts made during the Higher Education Reform Project (HERP) and aims to nurture the excellence in higher education by making it market relevant and research-driven.

In the fiscal year 2020-2021, UGC provided support to 40 M. Phil. fellowships and 201 masters' thesis writing support. Similarly, 51 students received PhD scholarships and thesis writing support and 17 students received partial support for PhD thesis writing. Under the faculty research, 45 mini-research support and 35 faculty research support were provided. Under the institutional research support, 4 HEIs received COVID-19 special research and 6 HEIs received collaborative research support. Ten HEIs received Research Management Cell establishment support. Six HEIs received support for establishing laboratories for scientific innovation and innovative research activities. Journal publication support was provided to 48 faculty members.

UGC provided scholarship support to 2 medical students and 1 engineering students from Dom, Badi, Chamar and Mushahar communities. Similarly, 21 students from Martyrs and conflict-victim families have received scholarships for higher education. One hundred forty three research articles have been published in the international journals with the support of the UGC. This number is way above the target of 85 articles. Four research projects have been approved in the areas of national research priorities and these research projects have been implemented by the research centers of the universities.

One hundred eighty two community campuses have received Rs. 37,98,00,000/- as infrastructure development support and 459 campuses have received 43,39,68,000/- for academic reform. Under the conference/workshop/seminar support, 37 HEIs received the UGC support. Similarly, 10 refresher training, 38 teacher and staff capacity building training, 60 research method training, 10 academia-industry dialogue were also supported by the UGC. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, some of these programs have been delayed. Two HEIs have received university-community programs. Six teachers received travel grants to attend international conference.

In the last fiscal year, 4 HEIs have received the QAA certificates, 18 HEIs have completed the QAA Cycle, 21 HEIs have completed PRT visit, 20 HEIs have obtained SSR approval, 20 HEIs have PRT team formed and 26 HEIs have their LoI approved. In order to enhance the leadership capacity of the Campus Chiefs and Assistant Campus Chiefs of the different campuses, educational planning and administration training was organized and 61 participants attended the training. Twenty four science laboratories of the campuses that run B. Sc. and M. Sc. classes have been improved under the support of Rs. 36,85,00,000 from the Nepal Government.

In order to expand access to technical education, additional seats were allocated in certain subjects at the bachelor level. The additional number includes 192 in engineering, 110 in agriculture and forestry. Performance grants were awarded to 124 community campuses and 40 decentralized, autonomous campuses and central departments of TU under the HERP support. Under the new or revised priority programs, out of 140 targets, 81 programs have been revised and 67 new programs were developed. Out of them 63% were in the technical subjects. Under student financial support fund, 2087 students of +2 science stream and 7473 students of bachelor level have received scholarships. 300 HEIs have received support for online classes during the COVID-19 and 3 COVID-19 related research projects have been supported. Similarly, 2997 dalit and disadvantaged children received support for online classes.

CONTENTS

Research, Development and Innovation

Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA)

UGC Nepal

1.1 Introduction

The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established as an autonomous and statuary institution, under the *University Grants Commission Act* (1993), to promote, facilitate, support, and enhance the quality of higher education in the country, thereby enabling educational institutions to meet the national need for the educated workforce; it also aims at developing Nepali academia as per the global standard. As one of the outcomes of the political changes in the early 1990s, the UGC was instituted to address the people's aspirations for revolutionary and qualitative changes in higher education to facilitate the all-round development of the nation. This statuary and autonomous institution also came into existence to solve the problems that had been historically impairing higher education in the county.

Established as an autonomous statutory body under the *University Grants Commission Act, 1993,* UGC has the following broadly envisioned objectives:

- to promote, facilitate, support, and enhance the quality of higher education,
- to enable educational institutions to meet the national need for an educated and trained workforce,
- to develop Nepali academia as per the global standard,
- to solve problems and address challenges that have been historically impairing the development and quality of higher education in the country, and
- to make higher education inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

1.2 Functions of UGC

UGC allocates and disburses grants to universities and higher education institutions to ensure their smooth operation and help them realize academic excellence. UGC is also expected to define the academic standards of higher education and to facilitate good rapport and coordination among the universities in the country, thereby encouraging them to cooperate, collaborate, and exchange their academic experiences. In this spirit, the *UGC Act* (1993) mandates the University Grants Commission to carry out the following functions:

- Formulate policies for allocating government grants to universities and higher education institutions;
- Disburse grants to universities and campuses, and make recommendations to the government for revising the provision of grants;
- Award grants for research, scholarships, and fellowships;
- Take necessary measures to maintain the standards of higher education;
- Advise the government on matters concerning the establishment of new universities, or the operation of an institution of higher education with an affiliation to foreign universities/ institutions;

- Make necessary arrangements for the exchange of resources, funds, and fellowships between universities and educational institutions within and outside Nepal.

1.3 Organization Structure

The apex body of UGC (the Board) consists of eleven members headed by the Executive Chairman. Some office bearers are nominated by the government while some others are *ex-officio* members. Upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education, the Council of Ministers nominates the Executive Chairman and the Executive Member Secretary of the commission from among the academic leaders and eminent professors. The secretaries of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, and a member of National Planning Commission (Social Sector/Education Desk) are the *ex-officio* members. Among the two Vice-Chancellors represented, one is usually from Tribhuvan University. Additionally, two distinguished professors and two prominent educationists are nominated as the members of the apex body. The tenure of the members, including the Chairman and the Member-Secretary, is four years from the date of their appointments; however, they are eligible to be reappointed.

Organizational Chart

University Grants Commission

Recruitment Committee | University Coordination Committee | Academic Committee | Chairman | Research Council | QAA Board

Secretary

General Administration Division	Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Division	University Coordination Division	Research & Scholarships Division	QAA Secretariat
• Human Resource Management Section • Financial Administration Section • Information & Technology Section • Logistics Management Unit	• Planning, Program & Budget Section • Monitoring & Evaluation Section • International Relations Section	• Coordination, Regulation & Governance Section • Eligibility Test & Equivalency Section • Grants Allocation Section	• Scholarships & Fellowships Section • Research Grants Section • Training & Innovation Section • UGC Resource Center	• Facilitation, Monitoring & Evaluation Section • Accreditation Section • Administration & Account Unit

1.4 Budget and Finances of UGC

One of the major responsibilities of UGC is to formulate policies for allocating grants to different higher educational institutions. The Government of Nepal (GoN) provides a higher education budget to the UGC classified as capital and operating grants with and without terms. The Commission provides grants to institutions and, when necessary, coordinates with concerned bodies to provide additional funding to universities. Based on the requirements of the sector, the government also provides additional grants. Funds to the universities are made available in the form of block grants under two categories: operational and developmental.

1.4.1 Allocation of budget and actual expenses: a comparative chart

Following bar chart illustrates five years UGC annual budget verse expenses. Units are measured in Nepalese Rupees in thousands.

	2072/73	2073/74	2074/75	2075/76	2076/77	2077/78
■ Recurrent Grants Allocation	6,361,800	7,974,938	8,268,770	9,320,000	11,257,848	12,014,900
■ Recurrent Grants Expenses	6,244,729	8,028,313	8,153,446	8,856,721	11,462,298	
■ Capital Grants Allocation	815,000	1,923,610	1,853,000	3,927,700	3,993,180	4,446,500
■ Capital Grants Expenses	794,170	1,561,997	1,742,491	3,552,613	3,219,769	
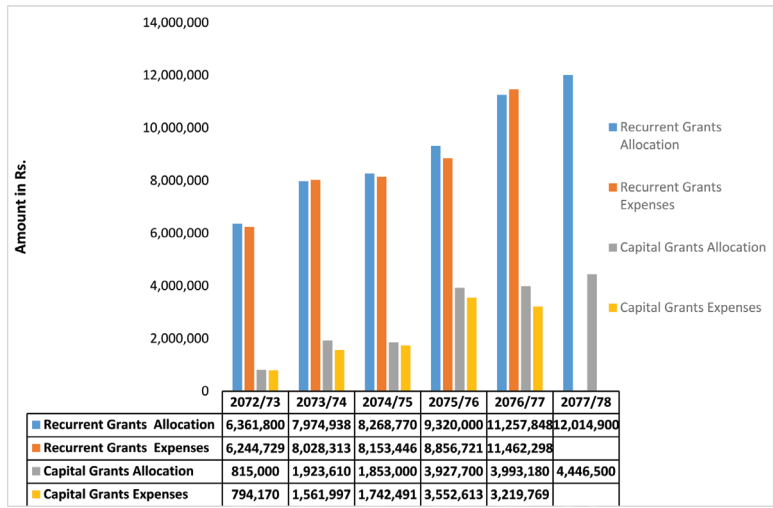
1.4.2 Government budget and funding for higher education

The bar graph depicts share of national budget in education, share of education budget in higher education and share of national budget in higher education in the ten year period. Share is shown in percentage.
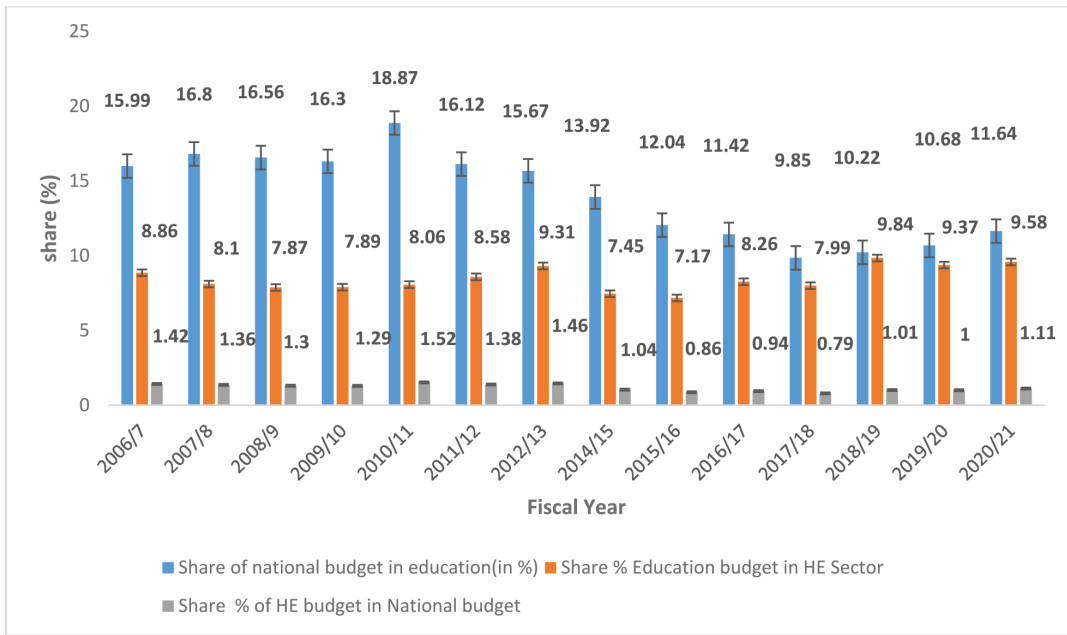
1.4.3 Financial progress in percentage

The line graph depicts the expenses capacity of UGC during the five years. The financial progress for the fiscal year 2077/78 is estimated one. The progress is measured in percentage.
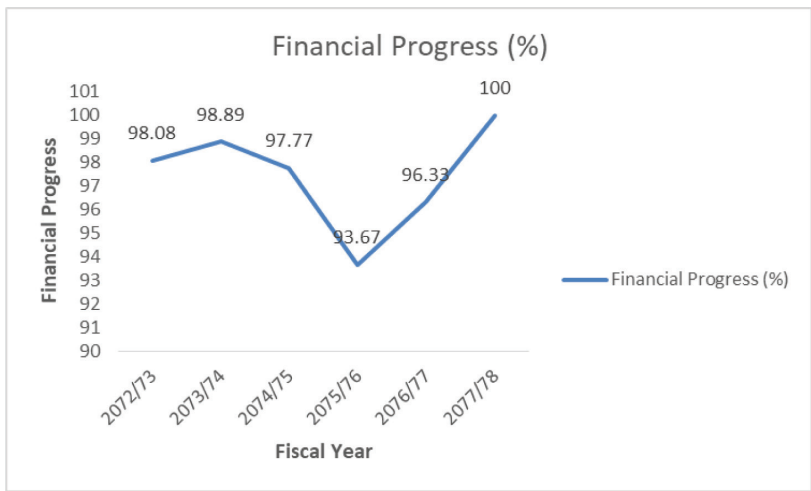
1.4.4 Share of capital budget

The line graph illustrates share of capital budget of higher education from 2073 to 2078. The share is measured in percentage.

Share of capital budget (%)
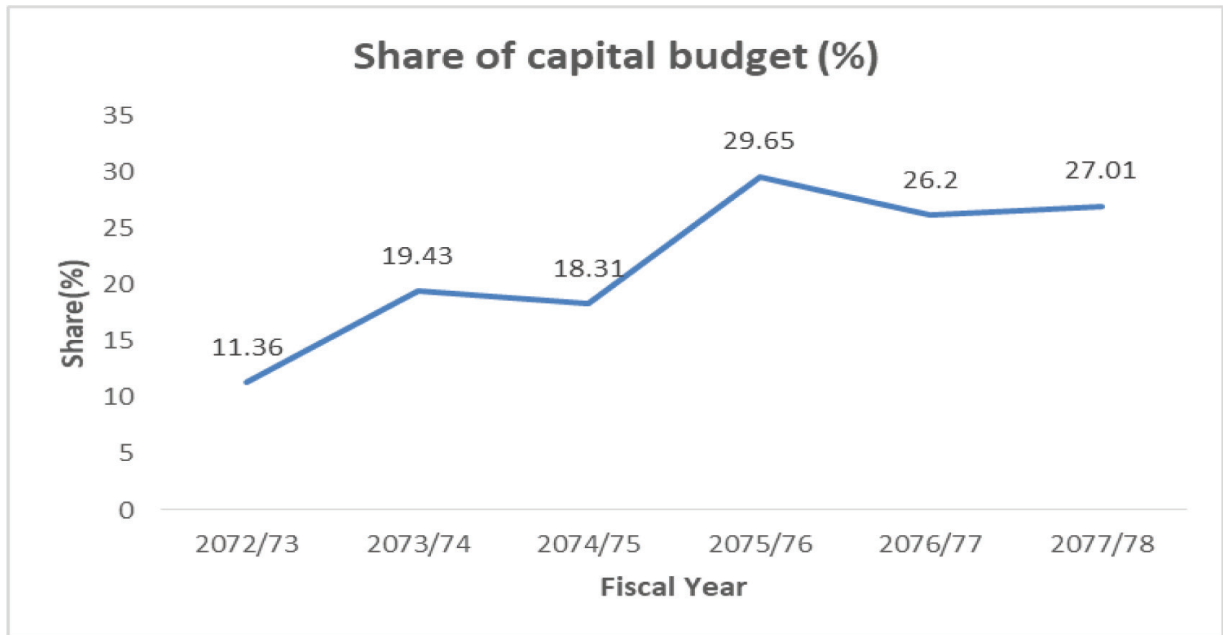
1.4.5 Research grants

The line graph illustrates the incremental growth of research budget in the five year period (2074 to 2078). The unit is measured in NRs. in thousands.
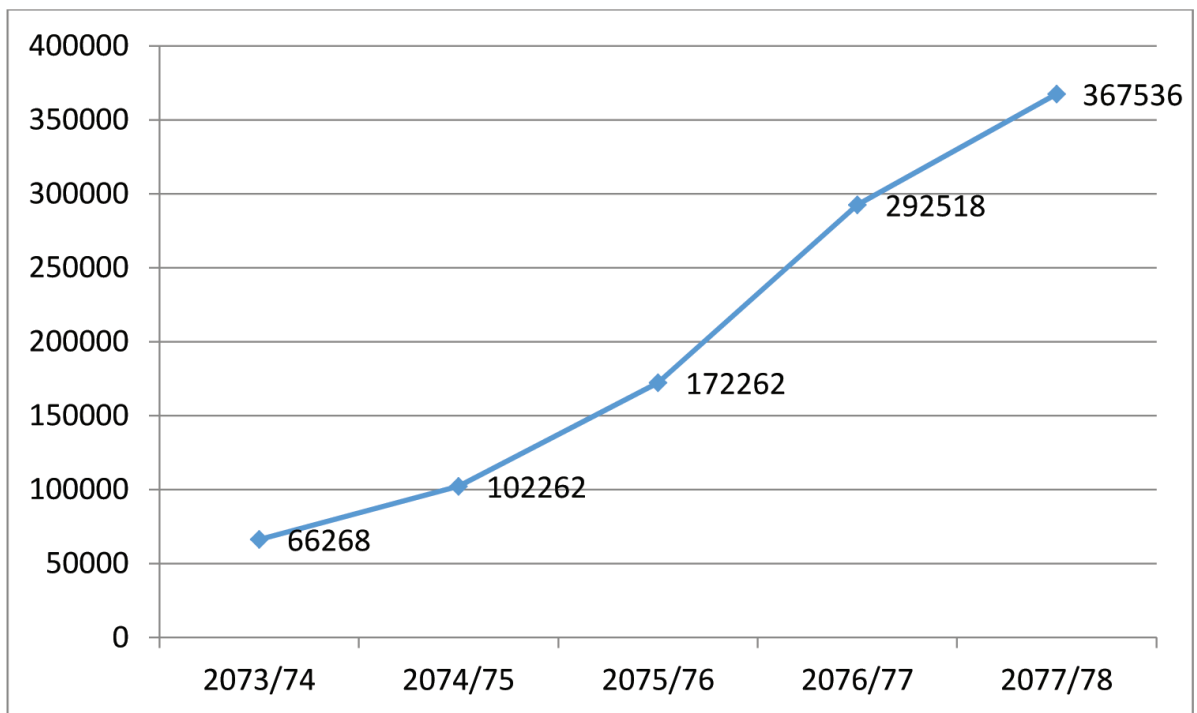
1.4.6 Grants to community campuses

Following line graph depicts five year's trend of budget to the community campuses from 2074 to 2078. Units are measured in NRs. in thousands.
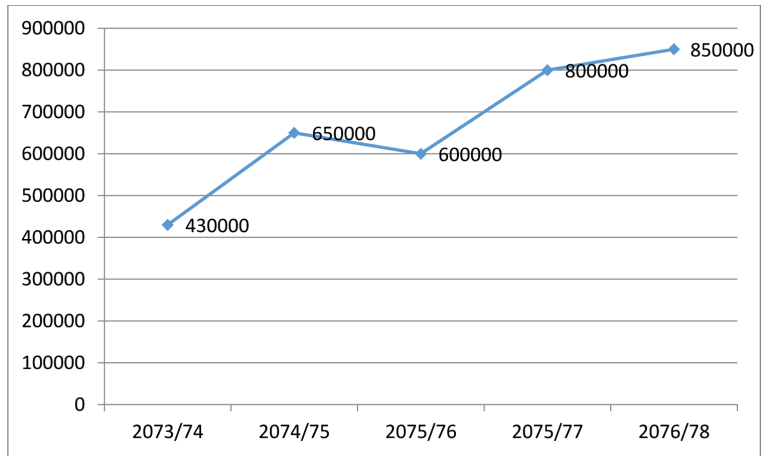
1.4.7 Quality improvement programs

The line graph shows the five year's trend of budget allocation in quality improvement programs. Units are measured in NRs. in thousands.
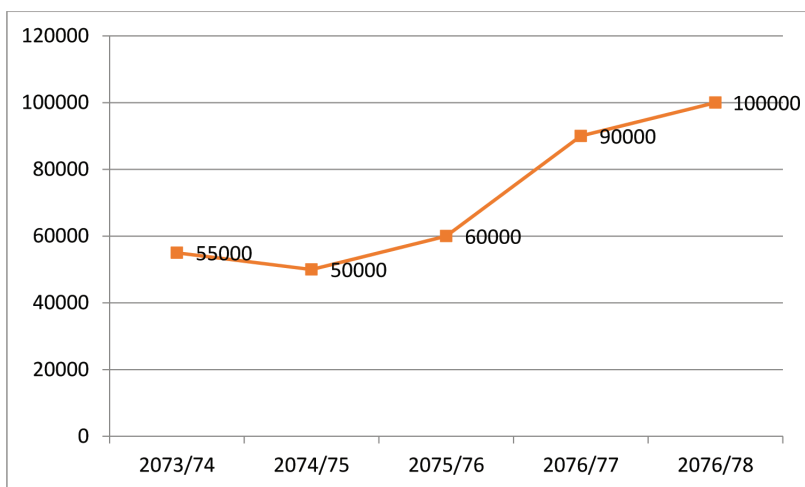
1.4.8 Quality assurance and accreditation (QAA)

The bar graph illustrates five year's budget pattern in quality assurance and accreditation. The unit is measured in NRs. in thousands.
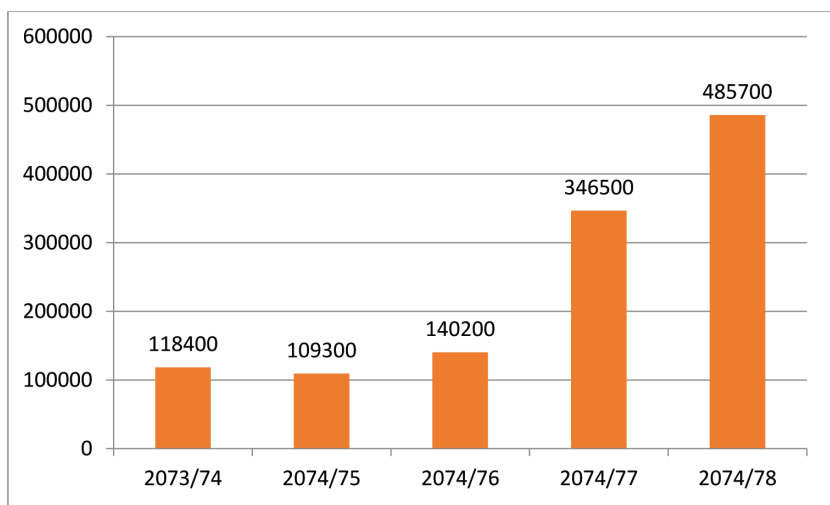
1.4.9 Share of enrolment/budget and per student public funding

Following graph depicts the share of enrolment and HE budget share based on the enrolment in the year of 2077-78.

Share of enrolment/budget and per student public funding (2077/78)

	Community Campuses	AFU	FWU	KU	LBU	MWU	NOU	NSU	PokU	PU	RJU	TU
Share of enrolment	27.41	0.88	2.29	4.15	0.16	1.66	0.22	0.85	6.91	6.23	0.03	75.95
HE budget share (%)	5.16	4.26	2.07	1.03	1.03	2.44	0.93	4.36	0.79	1.28	0.8	54.02
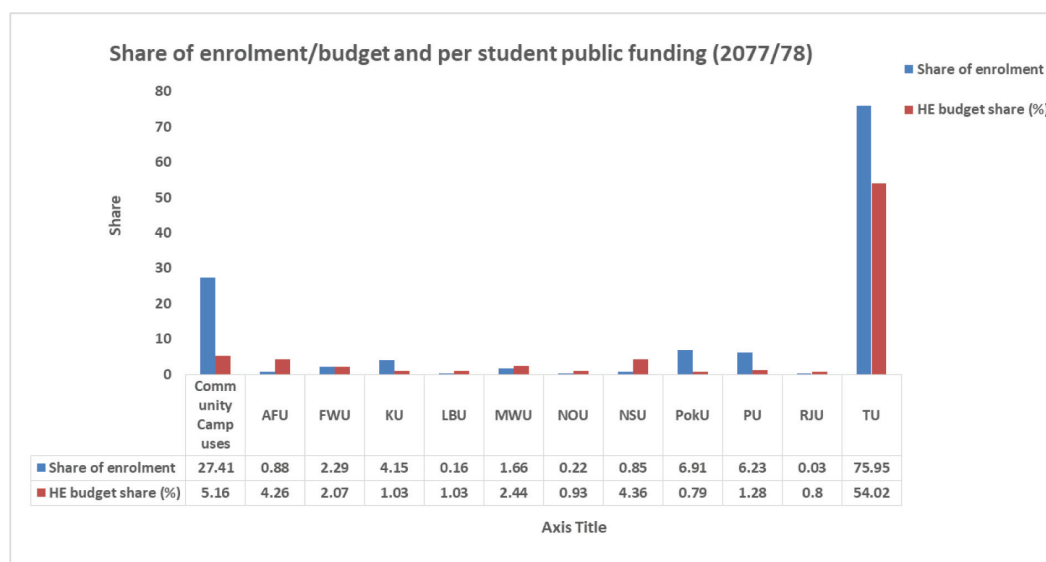
1.4.10 UGC Budget in 2020-2021

The UGC received the following regular grants from the Government for the fiscal 2020-21.

In thousands

SN	Details	Actual Income in 2019-20	Actual Expenditure in 2019-20	Allocation for 2020-21
	Recurrent Grants	11,257,848	11,462,298	12,014,900
1	Capital grants (including direct grants from the Chinese Government)	3,993,180	3,219,769	4,446,500
	Remaining amount in the UGC account		2,000,000	
	Total	15,242,048	16,682,067	16,461,400

1.4.11   The UGC received the following soft loan from World Bank for the implementation of Higher Education Reform Project in 2020-21

SN	Details	Actual Income in 2019/20	Actual Expenditure in 2019/20	Allocation for 2020/21
	Recurrent Grants	2,295,750	1,499,164	1,751,400
1	Capital Grants	4,200	1,931	-
	Rollover from Previous Years	-	-	1,302,851
	Total	2,299,950	1,501,095	3,054,251

1.4.12 The total grants released in different categories during 2020-21

SN	Name	Grants releases		Total Rs.	Remarks
		Recurrent (Rs.)	Capital (Rs.)		
1	Grants to Universities, Board, Committees	10,853,670,000.00	2,990,420,000.00	13,844,090,000.00	
2	Grants to other Higher Education Institutions	161,840,000.00	-	161,840,000.00	

SN	Name	Grants releases		Total Rs.	Remarks
		Recurrent (Rs.)	**Capital (Rs.)**		
3	Regular Grants to Community Campuses	433,968,125.00	-	433,968,125.00	
4	Grants (Central Campus for Deaf)	1,200,000.00	-	1,200,000.00	
5	Physical Grants to Community Campuses	-	403,830,000.00	403,830,000.00	
6	Special Grants (Scholarships for Dom, Chamar/Martyrs' Children)	3,303,518.00	-	3,303,518.00	
7	Quality Improvement Programs (QIP)	6,053,885.00	-	6,053,885.00	
8	UGC Operating Expenses	51,075,399.66	-	51,075,399.66	
9	UGC Machinery /Equipment/ Building /QIP Capital	-	5,240,936.85	5,240,936.85	
Gross Expenses (recurrent & capital) for the fiscal Year 2077.078 (Regular)		11,511,110,927.66	3,399,490,936.85	14,910,601,864.51	

1.4.13 Grants released under Higher Education Reform Project (HERP) in 2020-2021

S.N.	Grants Category	Total Amount (NRS)
1	Grants to Social Service	1,586,810,983.91
2	Operating Expenses	26,290,064.73
Total		1,613,101,048.64

Major Initiatives/ Activities during the Year

2.1 Major Policy Decisions

2.1.1 The Government of Nepal approved the *Bishwovidhyala Anudan Aayog Karmachari Niyemaoli, 2078* on July, 2021 upon the recommendation of the Commission through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in order to bring uniformity with the general principles issued by the Public Service Commission regarding the employees' service conditions, promotions and departmental actions.

2.1.2 The Commission has completed the preparation of a new reform program entitled 'Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) through a wide stakeholders' engagement that includes representatives of the government, universities, UGC, World Bank and the employers. This reform program is expected to consolidate the efforts made during the Higher Education Reform Project (HERP) and nurture the excellence in higher education by making it market relevant and research-driven. The program addresses the five thematic areas of higher education reforms. A high level Steering Committee has been formed to facilitate its implementation through the UGC.

2.1.3 In the last fiscal year, the Commission prepared the National Higher Education Program (NHEP) by compiling the three main documents, latest national policies and programs that include National Education Policy - 2019 (NEP) and the 15th Plan and Science and Technology Policy-2019 (S&T Policy). The major objectives of NHEP are to develop a knowledge-based society and economy by making higher education scientific, innovative, and research-oriented, technology friendly and employment-oriented and inclusive.

2.1.4 The UGC has initiated the revision on the QAA system to align it with the globally changing dimensions of higher education needs and demands. The UGC formed a 7-members committee to undertake this task under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chair of the UGC Nepal.

2.1.5 In the last fiscal year, the Commission made amendment in standards and indicators of the QAA process as well as amendment in Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council Directives, 2074.

2.1.6 As mandated by the UGC Act, 2050, Article, 6.1(a), a Task Force has been formed under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Govinda Prasad Acharya to offer advice to the government for the establishment of the proposed Nepal University. The task force will review policy documents, related reports and the documents developed so far on the proposed Nepal University.

2.1.7 The UGC approved the guidelines regarding the management of the UGC staff international travel and study leave. A three-member committee lead by UGC Chief Administrative Officer Mr. Subash Chandra Dhungel developed and submitted the guidelines according to the UGC

Personnel Regulation, 2060 Article 8.8.

2.1.8   As per the UGC Operation Guidelines 2060, Article 24, a separate guidelines has been developed to specify the incentives to cover the cost of health, insurance, festival celebration, loan and others for the full-time executives of the UGC. The document entitled UGC Executives Incentive Guidelines, 2077 has been submitted to the MOEST for approval.

2.1.9   The report submitted by the Task Force to establish Nepal University has been submitted to the MOEST.

2.1.10 UGC since its establishment has been disbursing the grants to the higher education institutions based on various parameters set in the past. As the new National Education Policy – 2076 is in place and the milestones have been revised in the 15th Periodic Plan of the government, UGC has formed a committee under the coordination of the UGC Secretary to suggest revisions on grants disbursement policy in the changing context of the higher education.

2.1.11 A task force has been formed to develop the guidelines for providing higher education scholarships to the students from the Dalit families, differently able and students from the economically disadvantaged communities.

2.1.12 Guidelines to provide the grants to the affiliated campuses has been revised to include the indicators outlined in UGC Program Guidelines, 2077.

2.1.13 In the current scenario, there is a variation in the infrastructure and minimum standards for the educational programs in engineering, medical and technical education programs. A committee has been formed to review the existing standards of these various programs and suggest a set of common standards for these programs.

2.1.14 UGC has also brought a National Higher Education Program Framework – 2021 – 2023 with a view to ensure quality, equitable access, research, ICT integration, innovation, market relevance and employability in higher education. Also, the framework addresses the issues of national qualification standards, climate change and classification of higher education institutions.

2.2 Major Activities

2.2.1 Agreement between UGC and NT to Facilitate Teaching and Learning

While the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the teaching-learning activities, an agreement has been signed between University Grants Commission and Nepal Telecom to facilitate the teaching-learning and research activities in higher education.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between UGC and NT for facilitation of the Online Education promotion Offers launched by NT. UGC, an apex body of higher education in Nepal, has recently issued Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of learning in Higher Education, 2077 to mitigate impact of Covid-19 on regular academic activities of universities and other higher education institutions. Covid-19 has caused unprecedented disturbances in the teaching learning situation of higher education institutions. Uncertainties continue and amidst these uncertainties and difficulties it is the joint responsibility of all stakeholders that the loss incurred to mitigate to the extent possible without compromising the objectives of the curriculum and quality of teaching and learning. As per the agreement, NT will designed the 'Happy Learning

Pack' for the online education and UGC will inform to the universities and ask for them to recommend students to subscribe the pack offered by NT as an alternative e-learning platform. Accordingly, NT will coordinate with all the universities and higher education institutions upon signing of this MOU and inform about this activities.

2.2.2 MOU with NTV for TV Program

University Grants Commission and Nepal Television signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on October 31 to work together on production and broadcast of Television program on higher education.

Mr. Subas Chandra Dhungel, Chief Administrative Officer of UGC and Mr. Govinda Rokka, Managing Director of NTV, signed the agreement at UGC in presence of UGC Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi. As per the understanding NTV will produce the television program focusing on the activities of UGC and issues of higher education. Nepal Television will broadcast the fortnightly TV program on Saturday at 6:30 pm.

2.2.3 UGC Annual Programs and Budget

The UGC Board meeting held on 26th August 2020 approved the annual programs and budget for the fiscal year 2019/20 (2077/78) with the total amount of Rs. 16.4614 billon for the operation and capital development of the higher education sector. Out of this budget, NRs. 4.4465 billion has been allocated for the capital development of higher education institutions in the country. It is 27.01% of the total budget whereas 72.99% has been allocated for operation and consumption. UGC disburses grants to higher education institutions broadly under two categories: operation grants and capital development grants. UGC funding to universities are provided in the form of block grants and formula based grants. Block grants are provided for the operation and it is calculated on the basis of number of teachers and administrative staffs a university employs; whereas the formula-based grants is calculated on the basis of cost recovery.

2.2.4 Consultation on New Project 'NEHEP'

In line with the preparation of the Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP), stakeholders' engagement was one of the major concern of UGC and the WB. For this, consultation programs were organized majorly on five thematic areas of higher education reforms as the following:

Theme 1: Strengthening market relevance (*Improved employability and skills of graduates*) of Higher education. The consultation was conducted on October 5, 2020.

Theme 2: Strengthening quality (*Improved teaching, learning, and quality management*) in Higher Education in Nepal. The consultation was conducted on October 8, 2020.

Theme 3: Boost collaborative research and innovation at HEIs. The consultation was conducted on October 16, 2020

Theme 4: Digital Connectivity in Higher Education (strengthen quality and enhance equitable access). The consultation was conducted on October 20, 2020.

Theme 5: Widening access to quality higher education: Enhancing equitable access and retention for under-privileged. The consultation was conducted on November 4, 2020.

The Financing Agreement (FA) between the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the International Development Association/ World Bank (IDA/ WB) was formally signed on August 19, 2021 for NEHEP.

2.2.5 UGC Secretary Completed the Tenure

Prof. Dr. Dev Raj Adhikari, Secretary of the University Grants Commission, completed his four year tenure on 2nd October 2020. UGC Organized a farewell program in honour of him on 2nd October. Acknowledging his

contribution, UGC Chair Prof. Dr. Bhaim Prasad Subedi offered a felicitation letter and token of love to the outgoing Secretary Prof. Adhikari.

2.2.6 The Government Appointed Prof. Bhandari as Secretary of UGC

The Government of Nepal (Council of Ministers) appointed Prof. Shankar Prasad Bhandari as the Secretary of the University Grants Commission on 4 January 2021. Prof. Bhandari is the sixth Member-Secretary of the UGC. With a strong background in management, Prof. Bhandari brings his rich administrative experience from a wide range of his engagement in TU's administration and higher education reform activities implemented by TU. Prof. Bhandari assumed office as the Member-Secretary on 11January 2021.

2.2.7 Government Appointed Five Members of UGC

The Government of Nepal appointed Prof. Dr. Yadav Prakash Lamichhane, VC, Nepal Sanskrit University on 31 May 2021 as a member of the Commission for a four year tenure. Similarly, Prof. Dr. Govinda Nepal, Prof. Dr. Abhoya Kumar Das, Prof. Dr. Tulasi Prasad Pathak and Prof. Dr. Sangita Sing were appointed as members of the Commission on 5 July 2021.

2.2.8 Retirement of Chief Administrative Officer

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the UGC Mr. Subas Chandra Dhungel got mandatory retirement on 28th March 2021. He retired after completing 22 years of public service and served almost 12 years as CAO at the Commission. He had started his service as Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in 1998. Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi offered a felicitation letter and token of love to Mr. Dhungel in a farewell program organized at UGC.

2.2.9 UGC Day Celebration

University Grants Commission celebrated its 27th Annual Day on 22 Nov. 2020 to mark the endorsement of the UGC Act, 2050 by the Parliament. A special program was organized at the UGC Office, Sanothimi, Bhaktapur. Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi, Chairperson, UGC, presided over the function where Mr. Gopi Nath Mainali, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), was the special guest. A number of the UGC employees were felicitated for their work performance. Mr. Dul Raj Chimariya, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, received a felicitation as the best employee from the regular staff and Mr. Dinesh Prajapati, Program Officer, was felicitated as the best employee from project staff at officer level. Also, Mr. Dhan Krihsna Prajapati, Senior Account Assistant and Mr. Hari Rai, Driver, were felicitated as the best employees. Prof. Bhim Prasad Subedi handed over a certificate of appreciation and cash prize to the winners for their best performance to the institution.

2.2.10 Chair's Visit to Different Higher Education Institutions

UGC Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi paid a visit to Gandaki University to participate in the University Day Celebration as a special guest on 15th Feb 2021. In the program, Prof. Subedi highlighted the status of higher education in Nepal along with the educational activites of the Gandaki Province. Prof. Subedi also mentioned the role of the UGC in higher education reform and management in the present context.

The Chair attended the building inauguration ceremony of Shree Binduwasini Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Pokhara as a Chief Guest. Addressing the audience, Prof. Subedi highlighted the importance and scope of the Sanskrit language and culture in Nepali lives from womb to tomb and also the need for the application of Sanskrit education in our daily life. Established as one of the constituent campuses of Nepal Sanskrit University, Binduwasini Sanskrit Vidyapeeth (Campus) is located at Bhim Kali Patan, Pokhara. The campus offers Bachelor's program in Sanskrit for 88 students. It is also planning to run a Master's degree in near future.

The UGC Chair participated in the building inauguration program of Janajyoti Aadarsha Multiple Campus, Nawalparasi as a Chief Guest on 7th March 2021. He congratulated the campus for developing the new infrastructure and addressed the participants in the program. The same day, he also visited Madhyabindu Multiple Campus and participated in the lighting lamp ceremony of the campus. There, he interacted with the management committee along with the campus stakeholders.

2.2.11 Chairperson as a speaker in the International Webinar on "Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Assessment are including Quality in Higher Education"

The Chairman, Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi participated in the International Webinar on Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Assessment are including Quality in Higher Education organized by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) on May 19, 2021. In that virtual program the Chair of the UGC presented a paper entitled "Quality Issues in Higher Education: Nepal's Journey to QAA" in which he shared the current scenario of the higher education in Nepal along with the basic features, status and achievements, lessons learnt and challenges faced by the Nepal's QAA system.

2.3 Major Policy Documents Indorsed in 2020-21

2.3.1 National Higher Education Program (Framework) (2021-2030)

National Higher Education Program (NHEP) has been developed by compiling the three main documents, latest national policies and programs that include National Education Policy - 2019 (NEP) and the 15th Plan and Science and Technology Policy-2019 (S&T Policy). The major objectives of NHEP are to develop a knowledge-based society and economy by making higher education scientific, innovative, and research-oriented, technology friendly and employment-oriented and inclusive. The key result areas of NHEP are:

- Enhanced equitable access and retention for underprivileged / disaster affected
- Strengthening quality (*Improved teaching, learning, and quality management*) in Higher Education in Nepal
- Promoting industry-academia collaboration, collaborative research and entrepreneurship, publications
- Strengthening market relevance of higher education in Nepal (*Improved employability and skills of graduates*
- Digitize Higher Education for increased access to effective teaching-learning (LMS), sharing of available resources, govern the HEIs (e-governance on HR, account, finance, budget,), evaluate the achievements (student management -assessment and examination system), and archive the records (EMIS) to plan further for quality enhancement.
- Strengthening UGC for coordination, facilitation and monitoring as well as evaluation, including digitalization
- Classification of Universities and HEIs and defining their scale-specific leadership in higher education
- National Eligibility Test for Faculties of Higher Education
- Addressing climate change impact and environmental safeguards in higher education activities

NHEP has an estimated budget of Rs. 283.1126 billion for ten years to grant funding and capital expenditures.

2.3.2 Sustainability Plan for Research in Higher Education 2021-2024

UGC has been playing a key role in setting research goals and stream-lining the research funding to strengthen research and development capacity of HEIs. Considering the national research priority areas (envisioned in National Education policy-2019 and National Development Plan) that include energy, transportation, tourism, forest, health, environment, agriculture, urban development and foreign employment and social development

along with the increasing demands for research and development activities in HEIs, the UGC has realized that the existing source of research funding and budget is not adequate and thus difficult to undertake research in the set priority areas. Thus, a sustainability plan is developed to address the resource gaps and promote research activities in the HEIs with the following goals:

- Advancement of research culture through strong institutional mechanism and back-up to nurture excellence in research.
- Diversification of sources of research funding.
- Develop Human capital base in higher education for promoting research and development.

As envisioned in National Education policy-2019, this plan has briefly described the establishment of National Research Council (NRC) under the umbrella of the UGC to function as the government's apex body for advancing research and innovations in the country. Major objectives of the National Research Council (Foundation) are to energize research, development and innovations across the country in all academic disciplines. The functions of the NRC are envisioned as;

- Promote research in higher education
- Identify the priority research areas
- Coordinate with the research institutions engaged in Higher Educations
- Develop a system of regular interaction between and among the researchers
- Ensure the quality of research and develop an environment of linking research with policy formulations and
- Develop a system to optimize the utilization of research outputs to instructional practices

2.3.3 The QAA Strategic Plan 2021-2030

The EQAAC has developed its Strategic Plan (2021- 2030) and it has been endorsed by the University Grants Commission. The rationales behind developing Strategic Plan are: to establish a compliance with the relevant policy offered by National Educational Policy 2019; setting direction for the expansion and efficiency of accreditation system in the country; and making Nepali higher education at par with international standard.

Vision, Mission, and Values of the Plan

The preamble of the plan mentions, 'Careful observation of emerging global trends in the QAA System and develop strategic goals to match its spirit and ethos of QAA in Nepal so that Nepali HEIs comply with defined quality standards, be able to address the national need of qualified human resources, and approach towards meeting international standard in higher education' as its Destination by 2030.

The **Vision Statement**: Assure the operation of Nepali HEIs capable of producing competitive knowledge and human resources to respond to changing national and global demands.

The **Mission** of the plan is: Promote and nurture an enabling environment for producing knowledge and human resources through a dynamic QAA system that is compatible to international practices of accreditation, and applicable to different types of HEIs and academic programs in the country. The Strategic Plan sets Quality Culture, Research, development and expertise, Relevance and dynamics, Efficient in inputs management and processes, Result-oriented, Performance-based management system, Striving for excellence, and Sustainability as its **Core Values**.

The plan sets the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: To enable institutions engaged in higher education in Nepal offer quality programmes defined in terms of success in exhibiting knowledge, skills and abilities.

Objectives

• Design a framework-guideline to implement systematic and authentic system for quality assurance and accreditation.

• Develop and implement quality assurance and accreditation criteria benchmarks and indicators to be applicable in reference to the nature of governance, and program offered by HEIs.

• Internalize the global QAA practices and ensure the quality of Nepali higher education expected by concerned stakeholders.

• Sensitize HEIs to QAA system to improve their academic environment integrating innovative teaching-learning process.

• Expand and strengthen international network and cooperation with QAA Agencies.

• Sustain the HEIs for quality standard defined by QAA system.

Goal 2: To develop core competencies of Nepali HEIs in niche areas with capabilities, faculties, engagement, and outputs.

Objectives

• Make HEIs ethically responsible for quality services and encourage them to be morally and professionally bound by their code of conducts.

• Facilitate Nepali HEIs to identify their specific expertise/capability and encourage them to exhibit scale-specific leadership and engagement (local/provincial/national/ international).

• Facilitate universities and HEIs to strengthen IQAC, Quality Audits and EMIS through innovations and improvement in existing system.

• Enhance the quality of faculties and their outputs (e.g., research and publications, consultancy, graduates, and outreach) through mobility of students and faculties, both nationally and internationally.

These Objectives are followed by 33 outcomes, 108 outputs or results and, 180 activities or strategic actions. The outcomes have been categorized as to be achieved in short-period of time (to be achieved by 2022), in mid-term (to be achieved by 2025), and in long-term (to be achieved by 2030).

Higher Education Statistics

3.1 Higher Education Institutions

Eleven universities viz. Tribhuvan University (TU), Kathmandu University (KU), Pokhara University (PokU), Purbanchal University (PU), Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), Lumbini Bauddha University (LBU)), Far-Western University (FWU), Mid-Western University (MWU), Agriculture and forestry University (AFU), Nepal Open University, and Rajarshi Janak University, and four medical academies viz. National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS), Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) and Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS) are providing higher education through their constituent and affiliated campuses. The affiliated campuses are either private or community-based.

The following table reflects the number of universities, their affiliated campuses, students, teachers and graduate numbers:

		Campuses				Students				Others	
Sno.	University	Constituent	Community	Private	Total	Constituent	Community	Private	Total	Teachers	Graduates
1	AFU	11	-	7	18	3,866	-	562	4,428	109	453
2	BPKIHS	1	-	-	1	1,348	-	-	1,348	na	348
3	FWU	15	-	-	15	10,097	-	-	10,097	390	na
4	KAHS	1	-	-	1	59	-	-	59	77	na
5	KU	9	-	15	24	8,886	-	9,757	18,643	504	3,150
6	LBU	1	-	8	9	330	-	365	695	23	na
7	MU	18	-	-	18	9,754	-	-	9,754	345	1,315
8	NAMS	2	-	-	2	642	-	-	642	329	na
9	NOU	1	-	-	1	1,164	-	-	1,164	212	11
10	NSU	15	2	2	19	2,565	143	120	2,828	745	na
11	PAHS	1	-	-	1	219	-	-	219	232	99
12	PokU	9	-	58	67	3,143	-	29,441	32,584	133	3,891
13	PU	5	5	106	116	1,562	101	25,864	27,527	74	na
14	RJU	1	-	-	1	186	-	-	186	45	na
15	TU	62	529	553	1,144	123,286	131,637	101,731	356,654	7,592	70,077
	Total	152	536	749	1,437	167,107	131,881	167,840	466,828	10,810	79,344

There are altogether 1437 higher education campuses, 152 constituent (10.58 percent) campuses, 749 private (52.12 percent) and 536 community (37.3 percent) campuses.

TU has 1144 campuses (62 constituent and 1082 affiliated campuses). The other major universities in terms of student number are PU, PokU, and KU catering around 18000 students in about 200 campuses; PU has 116 (8.07 percent) campuses, PoKU has 67 (4.66 percent) campuses, KU has 24 (1.67 percent) campuses.

In terms of the ecological belts 58.73 percent (844) campuses located in Hill, 35.90 percent (516) in the Tarai and 5.35 percent (77) in the Mountain. In terms of the provinces, 624 (43.42 percent) campuses are located in Bagmati Province, 185 (12.87 percent) in Lumbini province, 197 (13.71 percent) in province One, 123 (8.56 percent) in province Two, 151 (10.51 percent) in Gandaki province, 95 (6.61 percent) in Sudurpaschim prov-

ince and 62(4.31 percent) campuses in Karnali province.

In terms of the level of education more than 1250 campuses are offering Bachelor level of programs and more than 302 campuses are offering Master level of programs.

3.2 Enrolment in Higher Education

A total of 466,828 students are enrolled in Higher Education in the year. TU has 356,654 (76.4 percent) students, PokU has 32,584 (6.98 percent) students, PU has 27,527 (5.9 percent) students and KU has 18,543 (3.99 percent) students and rest of the students are enrolled in other universities and medical academies. The enrolment in general education is 77.87 percent remaining 22.13 percent is in technical education. In terms of the subject areas, the enrolment figures in management, education, and humanities are 43.34 percent, 19.02 percent and 12.6 percent respectively. Similarly, in the technical subjects the ratio is 7.95 percent in science & technology, 5.95 percent in medicine, 6.38 percent in engineering.

Table illustrates enrolment of students in different universities and their share

No.	University	Male	Female	Number of Students	Share of students
1	AFU	2,528	1,900	4,428	0.95
2	BPKIHS	746	602	1,348	0.29
3	FWU	3,872	6,225	10,097	2.16
4	KAHS	35	24	59	0.01
5	KU	9,961	8,682	18,643	3.99
6	LBU	478	217	695	0.15
7	MWU	5,175	4,579	9,754	2.09
8	NAMS	201	441	642	0.14
9	NOU	1,032	132	1,164	0.25
10	NSU	2,117	711	2,828	0.61
11	PAHS	60	159	219	0.05
12	PokU	18,317	14,267	32,584	6.98
13	PU	13,108	14,419	27,527	5.9
14	RJU	108	78	186	0.04
15	TU	161,720	194,934	356,654	76.4
	Total	219,458	247,370	466,828	100

The distribution of students across the ecological belts shows 60.34 percent students in Hill, 37.39 percent in Tarai and 2.28 percent in the Mountain region. In terms of the provinces, 230,735 (49.43 percent) students are in Bagmati Province, 56,681 (12.14 percent) are in Lumbini province, 55,614 (11.91 percent) are in province one, 40,279 (8.63 percent) are in Gandaki province, 34,066 (7.30 percent) are in province two, 31,075 (6.66 percent) are in Sudurpaschim province and 18,378 (3.94 percent) are in Karnali province.

Among three types of campuses, private campuses enroll the highest number of students. The share of student enrolment in the community campuses is 28.22 percent, constituent campuses is 35.83 percent, and private campuses is 35.95 percent.

3.3. Share of Girls in HE Enrolment

The overall girl's enrolment in HE in Nepal is about 52.98 percent. By university, the girls' share in TU is 54.66 percent whereas in KU it is 46.57 percent, PokU 43.79 and PU 52.38. The proportion of girls' enrolments in the medical academies are: BPKIHS 44.66 percent, PAHS 72.60 percent and NAMS 68.69 percent.

In terms of campus types, the biggest share (65.53 percent) of girl's enrolment is observed in community campuses. This figure is 50.06 percent in private and 46.05 percent in constituent campuses.

The proportion of girls' enrolment is highest in the education faculty (68.47 percent), followed by 62.83 percent in medicine, 48.63 percent in humanities and 56.34 percent in management. The percentage of girls in total enrolment at various levels of education is 54.17 percent at bachelor's level and 44.74 percent at the master's level. The overall Gender Parity Index (GPI) of HE is 1.07.

3.4 Graduates

A total of 79,541 students graduated from these universities in the current reporting year. The figures included the students from the grace list prepared by the universities for the convocation programs of KU, MU, AFU, NAMS, BPKIHS, NOU, PAHS, PokU and TU.

3.5 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education

Gross enrolment ratio for higher education stood at 15.00 with 18.91 at bachelor level and 5.52 at the master level.

3.6 Teachers

The total numbers of teaching staffs (including instructors) is 11,748. Among them, 46.55 percent are Lecturers, 21.63 percent are Readers and 8.05 percent are Professors.

3.7 Student-Teacher Ratios

The overall average student-teacher ratios (number of students per teacher) are as follows:

TU (16.24:1), KU (17.63:1), MU (28.27:1), FWU (25.89:1) PokU (23.63:1), BPKIHS (1.4:1), PAHS (0.94:1), NAMS (1.95:1) and LBU (14.35:1)
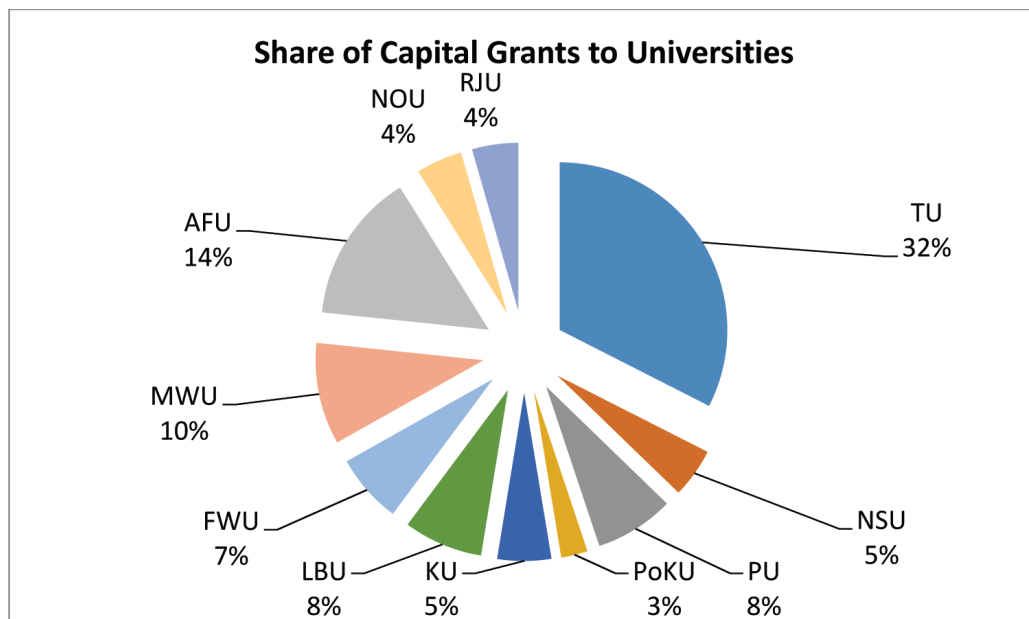
3.8 Public Financing

The universities have been receiving block grants (i.e. regular and development grants) and the community campuses get small token grants. In case of medical academies, the funds are made available directly through the Ministry of Health and Population. The grants provided to the universities in year 2019/20 is 13.46 billion rupees.

Support to the Higher Education Institutions

4.1 Support to the Universities, Boards and Projects

UGC provides grant assistance to the higher education institutions through recurrent and capital grants. Other form of grants include block grant, formula-based grant, or program grant. Universities must apply with the details of their programs alongside a budget estimate for the grants and the UGC, after consultation with the relevant stakeholders, provides the grants as per the set criteria.

The pie chart depicts the share of capital grants disbursed to different universities in 2020-21:

Share of Capital Grants to Universities

- RJU 4%
- NOU 4%
- AFU 14%
- MWU 10%
- FWU 7%
- LBU 8%
- KU 5%
- PoKU 3%
- PU 8%
- NSU 5%
- TU 32%

The pie chart illustrates the share of total recurrent grants released to different universities in 2020-21 :

- FWU 3%
- MWU 3%
- AFU 6%
- NOU 1%
- RJU 1%
- LBU 1%
- KU 2%
- PoKU 1%
- PU 2%
- NSU 6%
- TU 74%
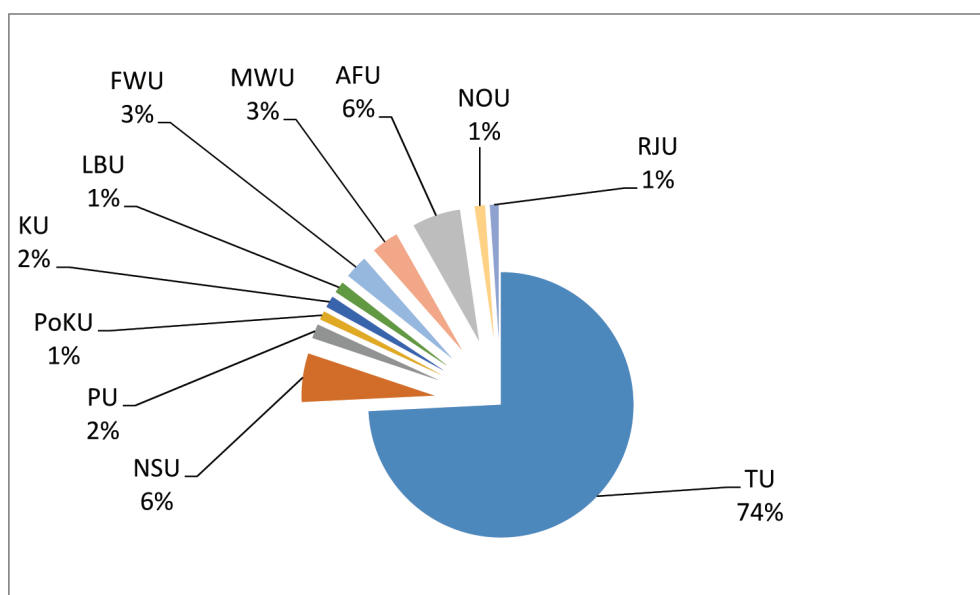
The table shows the list of different universities/boards/projects that received grants in 2020-21:

SN	Name	Grants released 2077.078		Total
		Recurrent	Capital	
1	Tribhuvan University	8,621,178,000	512,000,000	9,133,178,000
2	Nepal Sanskrit University	652,394,000	75,000,000	727,394,000
3	Purvanchal University	90,000,000	120,000,000	210,000,000
4	Pokhara University	90,000,000	40,000,000	130,000,000
5	Kathmandu University	90,000,000	81,500,000	171,500,000
6	Lumbini Boudha University	50,000,000	120,000,000	170,000,000
7	Far Western University	241,400,000	105,000,000	346,400,000
8	Mid Western University	251,600,000	154,500,000	406,100,000
9	Agriculture And Forestry University	496,798,000	228,000,000	724,798,000
10	Nepal Open University	83,500,000	70,000,000	153,500,000
11	Rajarshi Janak University	61,400,000	70,000,000	131,400,000
12	Geta Medical College Infrastructure development project	50,000,000	1,100,000,000	1,150,000,000
13	Surkhet Medical College Infrastructure Development Project	2,200,000	20,000,000	22,200,000
14	Butwal Medical College Infrastructure Development Project	6,600,000	48,500,000	55,100,000
15	Bardibas Medical College Infrastructure Development Project	6,600,000	75,920,000	82,520,000
16	Madan Bhandari Technological University Development Board	5,000,000	10,000,000	15,000,000
17	Madan Bhandari University of Science & Technology Development Board, 2075	50,000,000	150,000,000	200,000,000
18	Bidushi Yogmaya Aayurved University	5,000,000	10,000,000	15,000,000
Total released		10,853,670,000	2,990,420,000	13,844,090,000

4.2 Support to the Community Campuses

4.2.1 Regular Grants

Affiliated community campuses which have completed at least one academic year with the bachelor's or master's program receive their regular grants to enhance the quality of education. The community campuses are selected on the basis of the documented evidences that include the number of students, academic programs, and the location of the campus (for example, backward areas, remote areas, or hilly regions). The Commission has a set of guidelines for the grants to the community campuses.

Regular Grants in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in Rs.
	477	459	43,39,68,125

4.2.1 Physical Facility Development Grants

Grants under this category are provided to enhance physical facilities and to improve the capacity of the campuses to provide access to quality higher education in the country. The grants are used to expand physical facilities such as classrooms, library, playground, toilet and administrative buildings. Support for purchasing books, furniture, equipment and materials for extracurricular activities are also provided under this scheme.

The follwing chart shows the number of community campuses that received the grants under different categories in 2020-21:

The follwing chart depicts the share of grants released to the comunity campuses under different categories in 2020-21:
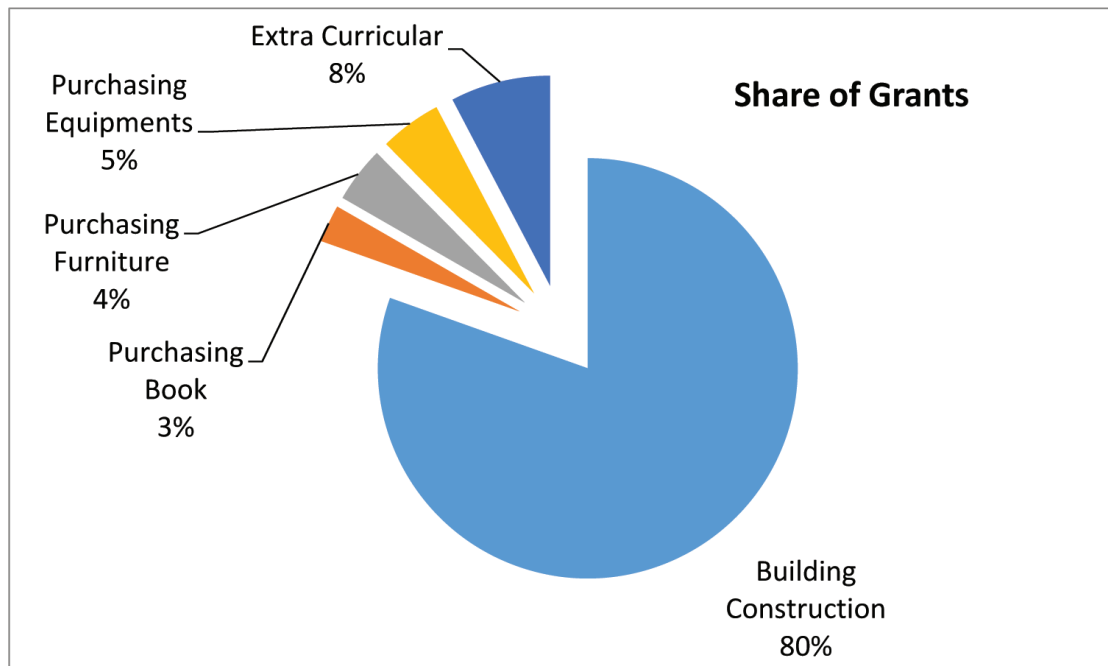
4.2.2.1 Physical (Building) Development Grants

The grants under this category are provided to enhance physical facilities of the campuses in order to foster quality of education and to improve capacity of the campuses to enhance access to quality higher education in the country. The grants are provided to expand physical facilities that include classrooms, library, toilet and administrative buildings. Support for references and textbook is also provided under this grants scheme. The physical development grants were provided to 67 campuses throughout the country ranging from NRs. 25,00,000 to Nrs.50,00,000 in the fiscal year 2020-2021.

Physical Facility Development Grants in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in NRs.
	74	67	303,200,000

4.2.2.3 Grants for Purchasing Books

Under this program, the UGC provides grants to community campuses to purchase books to enrich their libraries. The total 25 campuses were selected under this scheme to strengthen the existing libraries in order to have better access of students to have both reference and text books.

Grants for Purchasing Books in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in NRs.
	67	25	10,800,000

4.2.2.4 Grants for Purchasing Furniture

Under this program, grants can be provided to community campuses to purchase furniture for class room and libraries. The total 29 campuses were selected to equip with furniture to the class room and libraries in the fiscal year of 2020-21.

Grants for Purchasing Furniture in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in NRs.
	69	29	16,150,000

4.2.2.5 Grant Assistance for Purchasing Equipment

UGC also provides grants to community campuses to purchase computers and other ICT equipment to help them efficiently execute their administrative and academic activities through a systematic use of information technology. 32 out of 63 campuses were selected to equip with basic ICT equipments in the fiscal year of 2020-21.

Grants for Purchasing Equipment in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in NRs.
	63	32	17,830,000

4.2.2.6 Grants for Infrastructure Development for Extra Curricular Activities

Under this program, grants can be provided to community campuses to develop infrastructure specially playground for football, valley ball, basketball and table tennis courts. The grant is also utilized to buy other necessary materials for extracurricular activities both indoor and outdoor. 29 campuses were selected to develop such infrastructure in the fiscal year of 2020-21.

Grants for ECA in 2020-21	Applied Number of Campuses	Selected Campuses	Disbursed Amount in NRs.
	37	29	29,000,000

Capacity Development Programs and Scholarships

5.1 Capacity Development Programs

To enhance the capability of teachers and staff members of the universities and constituent campuses, several programs such as Refresher Course, Capacity Development Trainings, Research Methodology Training are conducted. Different authorities such as universities, subject committees, dean's offices, departments, campuses, or other higher education institutions can conduct capacity development programs with grant assistance from the UGC. The program-hosting institution or authority can submit a grant proposal to UGC along with an outline of the programs. If the proposal meets the set standards of the UGC, it provides a specified grant amount.

The table reflects the number of awards provided in different capacity development programs in the five years.

Name of program	Awards				
	2077/78	2076/77	2075/76	2074/75	2073/74
International conference	1	5	23	20	9
National conferences	15	22	19	9	8
Local conference	21	14	13	10	16
Refresher course	14	6	13	10	7
Research methodology training	49	45	42	36	34
Laboratory training	11	14	9	13	5
Capacity development trainings	38	34	29	16	16
Academia industry dialogue	10	10	3	4	4
Total	159	150	151	118	99

5.1.1 Refresher Course

The objective of "refresher training programs" is to make university teachers aware about the recent changes in the course contents and teaching methods and to identify the best approach in the classroom. Such programs also help teachers enhance their academic capability by making them familiar with the latest teaching, trends. Higher education institutions and their constituents also receive financial support to organize refresher training in areas of curriculum development, dissemination and pedagogical orientations.

Refresher Course	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	14	10

5.1.2 Capacity Development Trainings

In this scheme, the Commission provides the financial assistance to universities, dean's office, research centre, departments, constituent and affiliated campuses for organizing different training programs to enhance the capacity of the teachers and staff members organize different training programs.

Capacity Development Training	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	54	38

5.1.3 Research Training

The objective of this provision of supporting research trainings is to develop research capabilities of young faculties. The trainings will also help the participants publish their research work. The main purpose of the research trainings is to develop skills of conceptualizing and writing research proposals, including the skills of preparing research design, conducting literature review, formulating research questions and hypothesis, collecting of information, using statistical tools as well as writing research paper for publication.

The research training should address any of the following areas:

- Research Methodology, (theories and research design)
- Research Proposal Development and Research Management,
- Data Management and Analysis,
- Scientific Writing ,
- Responsible Conduct of Research,
- Laboratory Safety,
- Advanced Hands-on Laboratory Training

Research Training	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	57	**49**

5.1.4 Seminar/Workshop/Conference

Financial support is also provided to the HEIs to conduct other academic and professional activities that include seminars, workshops, conferences, academia-industry dialogues, leadership training on higher education planning & administration, university-community linkage programs. In addition to this, the faculty members of the academic institutions could also apply for travel grants to present in the conferences.

Seminar/Workshop/Conference	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	39	37

5.1.5 Academia-Industry Dialogue

The purpose of this program is to support higher education institutions for conducting dialogues to establish effective relationships between the industry sector and universities through mutual cooperation and participation. Continuation or institutionalization of such dialog will be encouraged. Such practice will help significantly in establishing industry-university interface to make the overall research and development as well as academic programs more application oriented.

Academia-Industry Dialogue	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	13	10

5.1.6 Training on Higher Education Planning and Administration

The overall objective of this training program was to enable the Campus Chiefs to bring changes in their activities and behavior so that organizational efficiency and effectiveness of campuses could be enhanced. This

program also aims to enhance understanding in planning and administration of academic institution, provide information and enhance knowledge in leadership, decision-making, communication, negotiation, quality and budgeting and to enable Campus Chief with skill in implementation of the program and administration of colleges.

Training on Higher Education Planning and Administration	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
		60

5.1.7 University-Community Linkage Program

The purpose of the program is to support higher education institutions for promoting relationship between university and community by involving faculties and students for exploring needs and necessities of the community for its benefit. The program is designed to narrow down the gap between the universities and communities and to establish the close relationship by engaging in communities through research and communication.

University-Community Linkage Program	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	4	2

5.1.8 Travel Grants for Participation in Seminars/Conferences

Under this program, partial financial support is offered to teachers invited by international institutions to participate in conferences, workshops, or seminars to present their papers or posters. The proposals should be submitted in the specified format.

Travel Grants for Participation in Seminars/Conferences	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	7	6

5.2 Scholarships

5.2.1 Special Scholarship

Provision has been made to cover the higher educational expenses of the students from low income band from the educationally disadvantaged dalit communities that include Dom, Badi, Chamar, Mushahar in the field of Engineering and Medicine provided that the candidates meet the minimum eligibility criteria for the admission. Tuition other education institution related fees will be paid directly to the institution's bank account and NRs. 5,000/- monthly stipend will be paid to the students' account in two instilments per year. The institution related fee will be of NRs. 35,00,000/- for Medical subjects of the Medical colleges of the Kathmandu valley. In case of the Medical colleges outside the valley additional education related expenses will also be paid to the institution as decided by the Faculty Board. In case of Engineering field maximum amount NRs. 12,00,000 will be paid to the institution.

Special Scholarship	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	16	3

5.2.2 Technical Teacher Development Program

The Commissions provided the financial support to 110 individuals under Technical Teacher Development Program in 2020-21.

Technical Teacher Development Program	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	110	110

5.2.2 Scholarships for the Children of Martyrs and Conflict Victims

The purpose of this program is to provide the scholarship for the study of higher education from the children of those declared martyrs and conflict victims by the government. The scholarships is designed to the sons and daughters of persons who have been martyr, disappeared or wounded during the different political movements.

The scholarships will be provided as per the criteria and norms set by the 'Guidelines for Scholarships to the Children of Martyrs and Conflict Victim for the Study of Higher Education, 2076'.

Scholarships for the Children of Martyrs and Conflict Victims	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	74	21

Research, Development and Innovation

The aim of research-funding programs of UGC is to inculcate culture of research, development and innovation (RDI); enhance the competitive research capabilities of faculties and higher education institutions; link teaching-learning to RDI; promote university-industry relationships and support generation of relevant knowledge and technology for socio-economic development of the country.

Research supports during five years period (2072/73-2077/78)
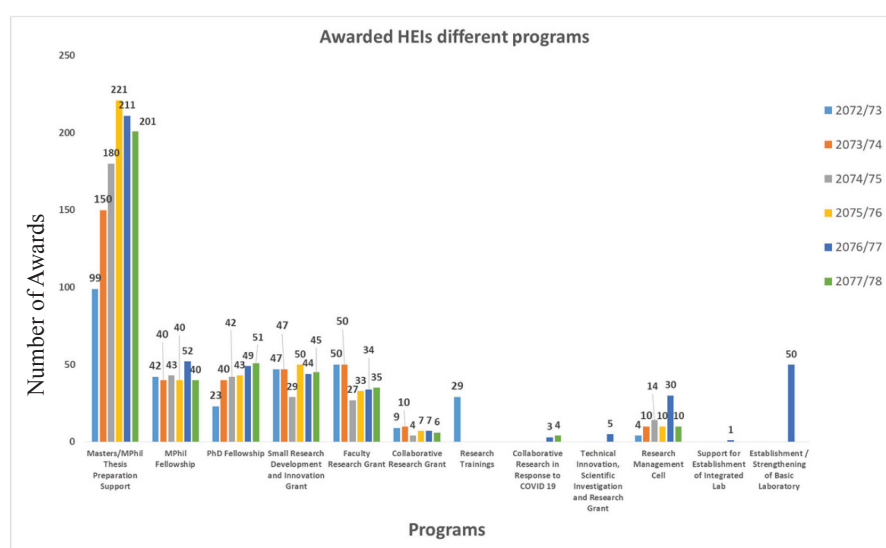
University Grants Commission is currently providing financial support to higher education institutions, faculties and students for the following programs:

6.1 Fellowship Programs

As an integral part of research funding component of the regular program of the UGC, this subcomponent covers the financial support to the faculty members from HEIs and fresh postgraduate students taking Master's, MPhil or PhD degrees. This program is also introducing the provision of postdoctoral fellowship in large UGC funded research projects. The primary purpose of this program is to support quality research in areas of national priority and academic excellence leading to theses required for postgraduate degrees. Young students as well as faculty members of HEIs of Nepal are beneficiaries of this program.
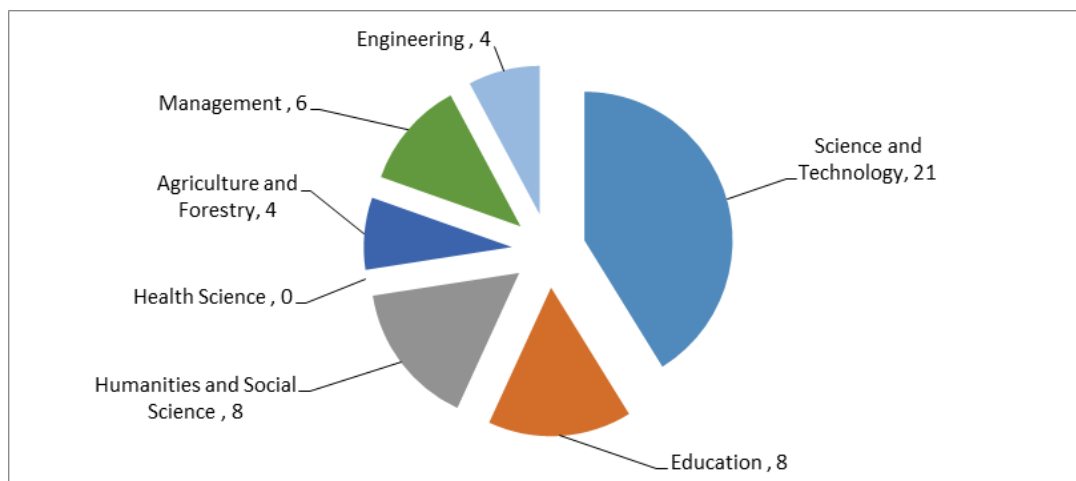
6.1.1   PhD Study Fellowship

This program primarily aims at supporting qualified junior faculty members and young students pursuing PhD degrees in universities in Nepal or recognized foreign universities with monthly stipend to cover educational expenses. The Faculty members/young students enrolled in MPhil program leading to PhD degree are eligible to apply for the PhD Fellowship program. Selection of candidates for PhD fellowships are based on the competitive evaluation of PhD research proposals and academic and research credentials of the candidates. Research proposals are evaluated based on the indicators of academic merit and association of the research project to national priority. Candidates from the underprivileged groups receive preference marks during the

evaluation of applications.

PhD Study Fellowship	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	105	51

Following Pie chart illustrates cluster-wise distribution of PhD Study Fellowship Awards in 2020-21


6.1.2   M. Phil. Study Fellowship

This program primarily aims at supporting the qualified faculty members of Nepal's HEIs and Young students who are seeking MPhil degree to enhance their capacity. The faculty members/young students enrolled in MPhil PhD integrated program for MPhil degree are eligible for this fellowship. Fellowship seats are divided equitably between the Faculty category and the Young category using a mixed proportional method. The selection of candidates is based on the evaluation of candidate's academic and publication records, underprivileged status and interview by relevant Cluster Committee.

M. Phil. Study Scholarship	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	**Awarded**
	42	40

This Pie chart depicts cluster-wise distribution of M. Phil. Fellowship Awards in 2020-21
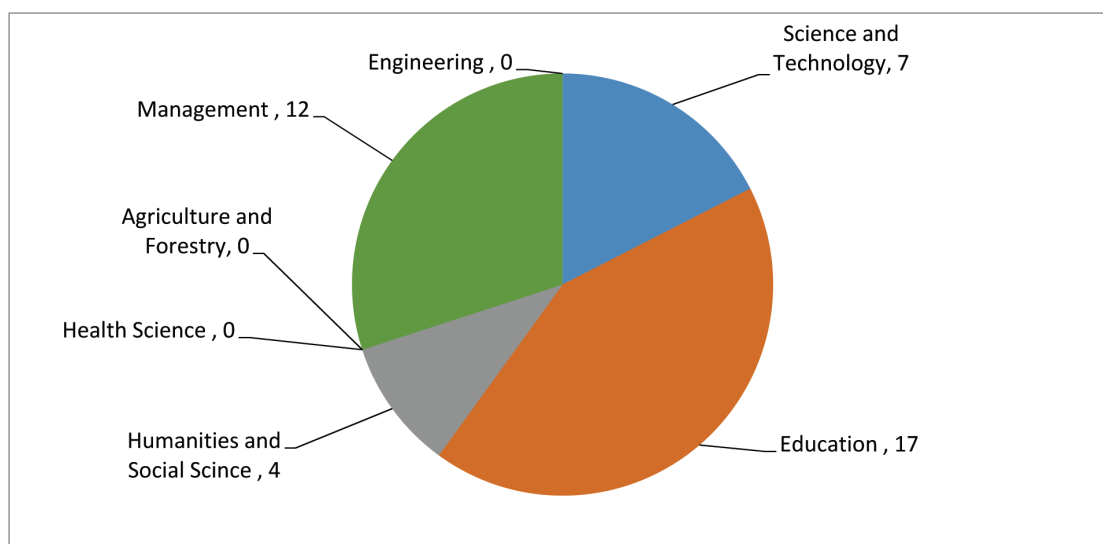
6.1.3 Postdoctoral Fellowship

Recognizing that postdoctoral fellowship is a strong supporting system for promoting research culture in universities and that the universities in Nepal are yet to introduce it, a limited number of postdoctoral fellowships are introduced to promote the culture of postdoctoral fellowship in the HEIs. Initially, the postdoctoral position and fellowship are provided for technical and laboratory-based research among the projects funded by the UGC Collaborative research grant. Research projects in the HEIs funded by sources other than the UGC can also be considered for this support. The Alternative scheme of Appointment and Promotion based on Academic Excellence introduced by Tribhuvan University under the HERP will also be encouraged to link with this postdoctoral fellowship program. The UGC postdoctoral fellowship is for up to two years.

6.1.4 Master's/M. Phil. Thesis Preparation Support

This program aims at primarily provide financial support to Masters and MPhil degree students to conduct research in nationally important areas leading to their theses required for the respective degrees. All Nepali students enrolled in Nepali universities for MPhil/Master Degree are eligible to apply for support under this program. Candidates who have received the UGC MPhil Fellowship also can apply for this support. The fund received under this program can be used to cover costs required to complete the research and prepare the thesis.

Master's/M. Phil. Thesis Preparation Support	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	236	201

Following is the cluster-wise distribution of Master's/MPhil Research Support in 2020-21
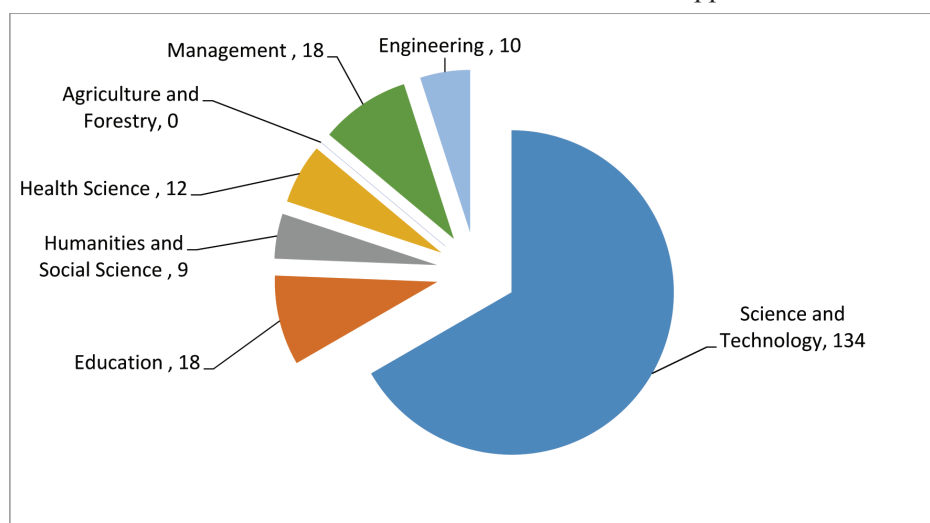
6.1.5 Partial Support for PhD Fellow

The purpose of this program is to provide partial support to PhD Fellow who has not received fellowship or financial support from any other source. A PhD fellow enrolled in universities in Nepal or a recognized foreign university (Public university, Accredited institutions and Ranked universities) who has not received Fellowship and Research Support from any other source can apply for this support within specified time during the course of his/her PhD program. Application can be submitted to the UGC any time throughout the year. Application should accompany a copy of PhD Thesis proposal/progress report and a recommendation letter from the institution/supervisor and employed institution, if any, certifying that the candidate has not received any other financial support.

Partial Support for PhD Fellow	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	17	17

6.1.6 Thesis Preparation Support for Persons with Disabilities

This program aims at supporting the students with disability for Masters and MPhil theses in a non-competitive way. Masters and MPhil students with disability (all classes of disability) can apply to the UGC for the support any time after the date of the acceptance of their theses proposals by the respective institution and within six months from the date of Thesis approval. The financial support under this program is the same as that for the Masters/MPhil Research Support. Persons with the disability of the classes 'A' and 'B' are eligible to receive additional fund for supporting assistant, if any.

Thesis Preparation Support for Persons with Disabilities	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	12	12

6.2 Research Infrastructure Development Support

The purpose of this program is to provide financial support to higher education institutions to strengthen their research infrastructure. This program also includes a program to support national peer-reviewed journals to strengthen and upgrade their quality.

6.2.1 Research Laboratory Support

The purpose of this program is to strengthen research laboratories in HEIs. Under this program, funds are made available to establish and strengthen research laboratories, to purchase laboratory equipment, to purchase service contract and extension and to strengthen physical infrastructure of research laboratories. Research laboratory service networking and preparation of national inventory of facilities and services are also supported. The UGC has set criteria, nature and scope of support. HEIs were invited for the application. Six higher education institutions were provided the support to establish the research laboratory.

Research Laboratory Support	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	16	6

6.2.2 Library Networking

The purpose of this component of research funding is to strengthen the capacity of central libraries in terms of the library resources and researcher's access to them. Support is provided to increase the subscription capacity of libraries, digitize research literature and develop inter-library and library-to-user networking. UGC has developed a separate guideline and central libraries were invited to submit their proposals. Four central libraries of different universities were awarded the program.

Library Networking	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	5	4

6.2.3 Support for indexing Peer-Reviewed Journal

The purpose of this program is to provide financial support to nationally published peer-reviewed journals to upgrade their quality. The UGC also provides funding to establish new peer-reviewed journals in new discipline or in the area which currently does not have peer-reviewed journal.

The UGC Minimum Standard for National Peer-reviewed Journal and the UGC Guideline for awarding support to peer-reviewed journals are in progress.

6.2.4   Research Management Cell (RMC)

The purpose of this support is to help establish a research management cell, a research infrastructure consisting of management and regulatory structures essential for administrating research programs in HEI. The research management cells will provide necessary infrastructural and functional support to the respective institutions for better coordination in ongoing research and development activities.

| Research Management Cell (RMC)	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	19	10

6.3 Research Promotion

The promotion of the culture of research among individuals and institutions is one of the major objectives of UGC. This statutory body firmly believes that research not only enhances the academic knowledge of an individual but also of the concerned institution. To this effect, UGC has made a provision for research support programs since its inception.

6.3.1   Small Research Development and Innovation Grants

The purpose of this program is to support relatively small research projects (Research Category) and small development and innovation activities (Innovation Category) in the higher education institutions. Any basic research that can be completed within a year is regarded as a small research. In contrast, an innovation project is focused on new technology, product or service of commercial value or application for solving existing problems. Preliminary results or prototype of the product developed by the applicant is the primary criteria for evaluation of the proposals in the Innovation Category. Proposal format and the benchmarks for evaluation are slightly different for Research Project (R-Project) and Innovation Project (I-Project).

Small Research Development and Innovation Grants	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	59	45

Cluster-wise distribution of Small Research Development and Innovation Grants in the fiscal year of 2020-21 :
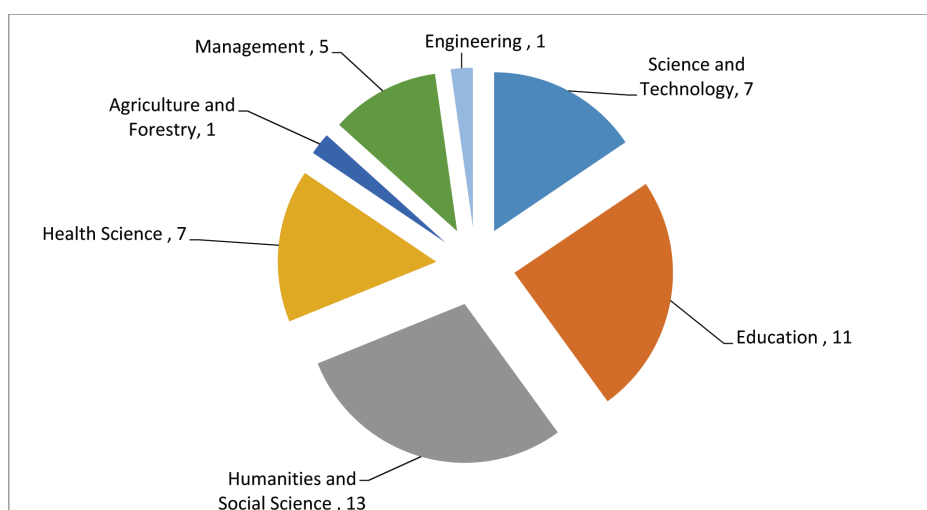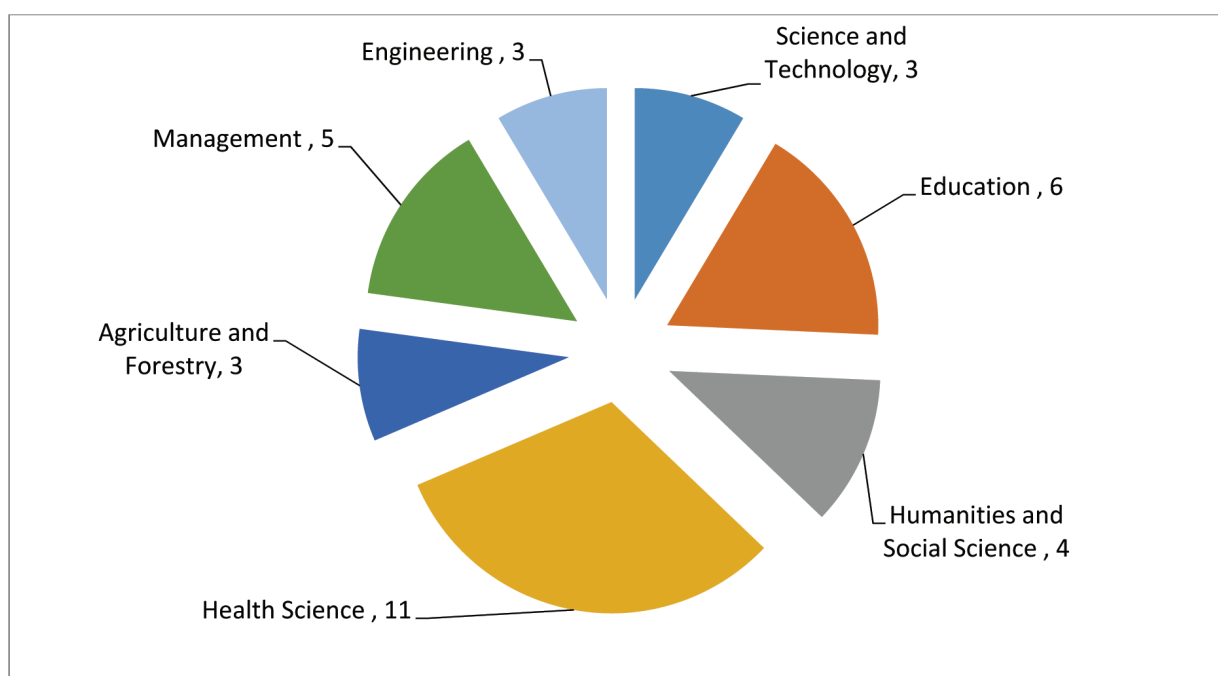
6.3.2 Faculty Research Grants

The purpose of this program is to foster research collaboration among smaller number of local faculty members, allow opportunity to train postgraduate students for their theses required for the degree, and make contribution in national research output. A two-year research project collaboration at least between two faculty members with commitment to train at least two students for their theses is funded with a medium size grant under this program. Collaboration involving underprivileged institutions including community campus is particularly encouraged. Such collaboration gets additional marks during the evaluation for award.

Faculty Research Grants	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	45	35

Following pie chart represents cluster-wise distribution of Faculty Research Grants in the fiscal year of 2020-21 :

6.3.3 Collaborative Research Grants

Funding is offered to collaborative research projects involving more than two faculty members of an institution or collaborating institutions. Such supporting grants are provided for relatively significant research areas, identified as areas of national priorities.

Collaborative Research Grants	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	13	6

6.3.4 Special Research

The purpose of this program is to support need-based research. Scientific research works on nationally important and urgent issues as well as policy and program research urgent or relevant to the UGC, universities or governmental agencies are supported under this program. Generally, the UGC will solicit research proposals on relevant issues from qualified individuals and institutions. The UGC might also consider investigator-generated research proposals. Research themes for each year and indicative framework for each theme are developed separately and are considered, after approval from the UGC, as a part of the UGC Research Guidelines.

6.3.5 Support for Publication of Research Articles in Ranked Journals

Under this program, the UGC will provide a limited financial assistance to the recipients of the UGC research funds and fellowships to pay for the publication/handing fee charged by the publisher to publishing their research work in ranked journals, on the basis of their need. This support can also be provided to the research funded by agencies other than the UGC, upon availability of the fund. The limit of funding per eligible research article is Rs. 50,000.

| Support for Publication of Research Articles in Ranked Journals	Year 2020-21	
	Total Application	Awarded
	48	48

Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA)

7.1 Introduction

The UGC, as mandated by the article 6 (1) (Cha) of the UGC Act 1993, has commenced the system of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in higher education in the country since 2007. With the endorsement of Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation Regulation (EQAAR) 2074 by the Government of Nepal, the functionally autonomous Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (EQAAC) is formed, which, through its secretariat, i.e. QAA Division at the UGC, is implementing the QAA system in the country. The EQAA Council formulates necessary policies and strategies on QAA, which becomes effective after their endorsement by the UGC. To support the QAAD and EQAAC, there is a Technical Committee (TC), to review the Self-Study Reports (SSR) submitted by the participating HEIs, and approving it to recommend the EQAAC to form the Peer Review Team (PRT) for the detail assessment of the institution for accreditation.

The EQAAC has developed its Strategic Plan (2021-2030) to strengthen the system and enhance the quality in higher education in Nepal. To attain the objectives set by the Strategic Plan, the system has been further refined by making specialized indicators with reference to the governance structure of the institution, level of degree offered, and nature of programs (technical/general). The Nepali QAA system follows a formative approach, which means the QAAD facilitates participating HEIs in various ways so they meet the accreditation requirement. The process of QAA starts by submission of the Letter of Intent (LOI) by an institution. There are nine milestones an HEI required to complete before it is eligible for accreditation.

7.2 Cyclical Chain of QAA Process in Nepal
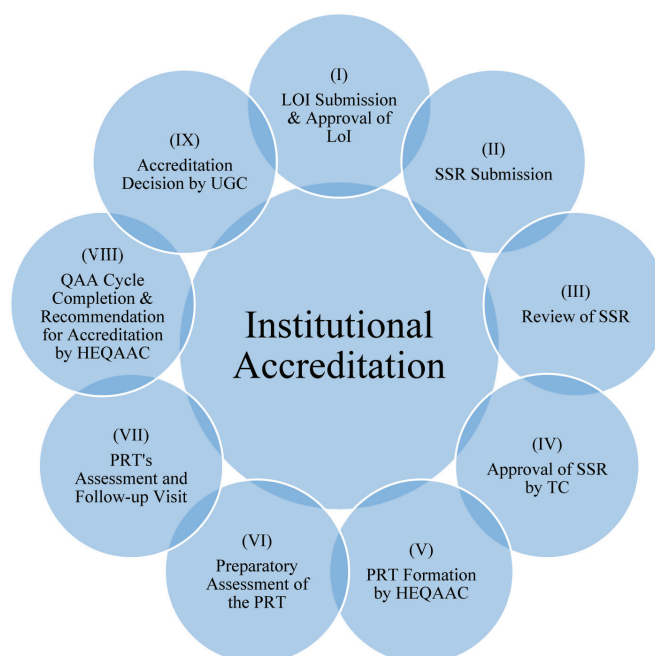
7.3 Annual Activities of the EQAAC in FY 2077/78

The EQAAC in the year 2077/78 has made various policy-decisions having long-term impacts. A total of 13 meetings of EQAAC have been held that made 44 important decisions. Likewise, the Technical Committee met for six times and approved SSRs of 20 HEIs.

Major Policy-decisions of EQAAC in FY 2077/78:

- Amendment in Eligibility Criteria for Submission of LoI,
- Amendment in Eligibility Criteria for Submission of SSR,
- Amendment in Standards and Indicators,
- Amendment in HEQAAC Directives – 2074,
- Six months of time extension was given to those HEIs whose 5 years validity period of accreditation status has been rolled out in between Chaitra 10, 2076 – Bhadra 31, 2077. This decision was made in response to COVID-19 induced nation-wide lockdown.
- Recognizing their engagement and knowledge in the field, the UGC Chair, Member-Secretary, Vice-Chancellors, and QAA Director; after completing their tenure in the respective position, shall be eligible to be included in the in the roster of QAA Assessors and are eligible to be nominated as a Coordinator/Member of the PRT.
- Approval of the 'Code of Conduct' applicable to UGC and EQAAC authorities, PRTs and HEIs participating in QAA process
- The EQAAC has set Standards to recommend UGC Board for the Accreditation of HEIs, apart from the PRT Recommendations
- The HEIs who have exceeded 5 years to enter to next milestone of QAA have been de-listed as the QAA participants.

7.5 HEIs' Participation in QAA

The FY 2077/078 ended up with momentous contribution in overall progress of the QAA. A total of HEIs enrolled into the QAA is reached to 384, followed by 167 HEIs submitting SSR. A total of 129 SSRs approved. Among them, 119 HEIs have already entered into the PRT assessment stage, followed by 100 HEIs who have witnessed the completion of preparatory assessment. The most critical stage for HEIs, the final PRT assessment, has been completed in 75 while 53 HEIs so far have been accredited. The 20 HEIs are in the process of accreditation soon as they are working in the PRTs recommendations. This number also includes seven HEIs participating in re-accreditation.

Throughout the FY 2077/78, the number of new HEIs joining into the process through formal submission of Letter of Intent (LoI) is 26. Among the added HEIs, six are Constituent Campuses, four are Central Departments, seven are Community Colleges and nine are Private institutions. Similarly, a total of 30 HEIs submitted SSR in this FY, of which, 20 SSR were approved by the Technical Committee.

Once the SSR of a HEI is accepted, the EQAAC forms PRT for the detail assessment of HEIs for accreditation. The assessment takes place in two to three stages: pre-PRT (Preparatory), PRT (actual assessment) and post-PRT (Follow-up to check if HEIs have implemented the recommendations of PRT). In FY 2077/78, a total of 23 PRT were formed, which includes PRT reformation of two HEIs, who's PRT was dissolved due to various reasons.

Award Ceremony at UGC Conference Hall on February 26, 2021

The UGC decides for the accreditation of the HEI following the recommendation of the EQAAC. The QAAD organizes a formal award ceremony to provide the certificate of institutional accreditation to the HEIs. Four HEIs were accredited in the FY 2077/078, contributing to make a total of 53 accredited HEIs in the country. Among the total accredited, majority are community colleges. Following table illustrates the distribution of HEIs in various stages of assessment process.

Distribution of HEIs participating in QAA by their stage of Progress towards accreditation

Particulars	FY 2077/78	QAA Participating HEIs till date	QAA Participating HEIs till date (excluding HEIs in Re-accreditation Process)
LOI Submission	26	385	385
SSR Submission	30	167 (7 in Re-accreditation Process)	160
SSR Approved	20 (3 in Re-accreditation Process)	129 (5 in Re-accreditation Process)	124
PRT Formed	23 (Including reformation of PRT of 2 HEIs)	119 (2 in Re-accreditation Process)	117
Preparatory Assessment	13	100 (2 in Re-accreditation Process)	98
PRT Completed	20	75 (2 in Re-accreditation Process)	73
Cycle Completed	18	73 (2 HEIs in Re-accreditation Process)	71
Accredited	4	53 (7 Re-accredited)	53

7.6 Orientation and Workshops

The frequency of orientation workshops remained low this year because of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although informal orientation to HEIs was provided in different occasions, a formal collective event was organized only once, at the UGC Seminar Hall. A total of 58 personnel represent-

ing 27 HEIs of the country participated in the orientation. The QAAD Director along with the other staff facilitated different sessions covering the thematic areas such as: global context of QAA, policy linkage, horizon of the QAA, methods of preparing SSR. The Member Secretary and Chairman of the UGC also delivered their key notes on to the QAA process.

Orientation and Facilitation for SSR Preparation to the LOI Accepted HEIs at UGC Conference Hall

7.8 International Engagement and Networking

The EQAAC is a full member agency of International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). The Membership of both of the Networks have been renewed annually. The EQAAC has also established formal relation with National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India. In the future, EQAAC is planning to enter into the bi-national and multinational higher educational quality networks. The Division is conducting a research entitled 'transition to digital era of accreditation' in with the support of the INQAAHE. Presentation of the Council Chairman and QAA Director at the international symposium on regional cooperation for quality in higher education, organized by Daffodil University of Bangladesh has provided international visibility of the QAA efforts made by the UGC in Nepal.

7.9 Overall Achievements of QAA

The QAA system has completed almost one and a half decades in Nepal with the growing number of participating institutions in the QAA. This certainly indicates the widening scope of the system. Key achievements of the system till the date are summarized as:

- Academic, administrative, infrastructural, and research activities are improved in the accredited HEIs after the QAA award. Teaching-learning activities, availability of books and journals in the library, physical condition of the building, health and sanitation related facilities are increased or improved. This has, at some scale, increased the pass rates and enrolment rates and reduced the dropouts.

- Different Universities have established a QAA Center to facilitate and assist the campuses to

enroll into the QAA process and achieve the accreditation status.

- Each HEIs enrolled in the QAA has formed IQAC, with IQAC Guidelines, in their respective institution as an apex body for the quality enhancement in the institution.

- Practice of Internal Academic Audit has been initiated in most of the participating HEIs.

- Faculties has been able to enhance their horizon of knowledge in research and consultancy services and sharing of research outputs

- Institutions are facilitating their faculties obtain research degrees and capable for quality research

- Use of ICT based teaching-learning has been encouraged among the faculties of the HEIs involved in QAA process.

- To encourage digitalization in teaching-learning pedagogy, HEIs are advancing their ICT infrastructure and documenting the institutional details (administrative, financial and academic) under the EMIS.

- HEIs in the QAA process have been able to strengthen and expand national and international linkages for collaborations and cooperation.

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

UGC closely monitored the Covid-19 pandemic situation and its impact on higher education since the pandemic hit the country. UGC maintained its regular contact with the HEIs in Nepal and required support was offered to the HEIs to manage their academic programs during the pandemic.

9.1 University Coordination Committee Meeting

The Commission organized a video conference of the University Coordination Committee (UCC) on the 3rd of April 2020 to discuss challenges faced by the universities amidst the pandemic. All the Vice -Chancellors of the universities attended the online meeting and shared how they were managing their classes during the pandemic. Also, the participants discussed the major issues and challenges the HEIs were facing to manage the academic programs amidst the lock-down.

A virtual meeting of UCC was held on 16th August 2020 in the presence of Mr. Giriraj Mani Pokhrel, Honorable Minister of Education, Science, and Technology. Ten university Vice-Chancellors participated in the meeting. The meeting discussed the impacts of Covid-19 on higher education, current situation and the achievements made so far; implementation and effectiveness of Alternative Learning Guidelines in higher education - 2077; activities and programs implemented under the UGC grants; current academic session and action plan for next six months to response Covid-19.

A follow-up meeting of the UCC was also held on 8 Dec 2020 in the special presence of Mr. Giriraj Mani Pokharel, Honorable Minister of Education, Science and Technology. The meeting discussed on the impact of Covid-19 in higher education sector and updated the latest progress on online teaching learning, research, exam along with other academic and administrative activities of the universities. Honorable Minister urged the university leaders for making a two-year special plan and switching the academic and administrative activities as per the plan. He directed the universities to ensure continuity in learning during the time of university closures due to pandemic and continue the online delivery of lessons.

9.2   UGC Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of Learning in Higher Education

University Grants Commission (UGC) issued a document entitled Guidelines for Facilitating Alternative Mode of Learning in Higher Education. This was a part of the UGC's initiative to address the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 and regularize the academic activities of the universities and higher education institutions.

9.3   Restructuring and Reallocating Fund for Alternative Mode of Learning to Respond to Covid-19

University Grants Commission, working in close collaboration with the World Bank, the development partner

for Higher Education reform Project (HERP), 2015-2020, restructured its funding mechanism of the HERP to immediately respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This restructuring was basically necessary for conducting online classes and carrying out research projects on corona virus in the universities and campuses. For this, additional disbursement link indicator, DLI 8, was incorporated in the Higher Education Reform Project (HERP) Implementation Guidelines, 2071, and budget was allocated with a total of Rs. 470000000. The grants were managed from the HERP funded by the World Bank.

DLI8 Indicators	Disbursement Criteria
Learning Management System	Setup, configuration, Hosting, administrator, Training, Student Training, User Manual for Teacher, Administrator, Students etc.
Faculty Development and Training	Modularization of courses, online pedagogy, e-assessment and inter-activity
Live Classes	Setup, configuration, Hosting, administrator, Training, Student Training, User Manual for Teacher, Administrator, Students etc.
Video Recording of the Lessons	Training for Teachers
Institutional Support for the Infra-structure for Online Classes	Block Grants for Logistic supports

UGC supported the Universities, Schools, Central Departments, Constituent Campuses and Community Campuses in the followings ways:

DLI8 Indicators	Units	Target	Rate (Rs. In thousand)	Allocation (in thousand)
Learning Management System	HEI		450	13,50,00
Faculty Development and Training	HEI		250	7,50,00
Live Classes	HEI		150	4,50,00
Video Recording of the Lessons	HEI		150	4,50,00
Institutional Support for the Infrastructure for Online Classes	Universities	11	250	2750
	Constituents of the HEIS	300	250	7,50,00
Financial Support to the Students from Poor and Disadvantaged Families	Students	11,400	6,000	68,40
Collaborative Research	HEIs	3	10000	30000
UGC Online Connectivity System Capacity Enhancement				10,00

9.4 Endorsement of COVID-19 Protocol in Assessment for Accreditation

To response to the severe impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the QAA Process, the HEQAAC Nepal developed and endorsed alternative measures of conducting online assessment on June 22, 2020. By this, soft copies of related SSR and associated supporting documents are received online and distributed to peer reviewers for review and assessment, avoiding direct meetings. Although it would be a challenging task, this was the only option available during the pandemic. Therefore, the Council endorsed the Protocol with the following key provisions:

- Establishing official website/digital platform for peer assessment.

- Limiting the number of participants from HEI to 15 during online interaction with stakeholders, and in case of in-person face-to-face meeting, standard COVID-19 security protocols must be followed.

- Preparing video for virtual site visit and live-streaming of the elements that the PRT desires to observation from distant, by institution.

- Conduct most of the discussions/interactions with stakeholders in online platform.

- In case of requirement for the field visit to inspect the HEIs - such as physical facilities and learning resources, a one day visit can be arranged through land-travel using Office Vehicle and sticking to the COVID-19 Security Protocol (CSP).

- Use of digital signature for verification, approval.

9.5 Funding for Covid-19 Collaborative Research

UGC awarded seven projects to carry out collaborative research on various aspects of Covid-19 during the fiscal year. The Commission had invited proposals from the Nepali Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to conduct collaborative researches. This new funding opportunity provided the HEIs to do research aimed directly at combating the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resulting COVID-19 disease, and also for research into the societal and economic effects of the pandemic. The following projects were selected under this scheme.

S.N	Research Title	Name of Institution
1	Evaluating synergies and tradeoffs among health, education and economic sectors in the fight against the Covid-19 in Nepal: Evidence and policy responses	Central Department of Chemistry, TU
2	Covid-19: Investigation on Secondary Metabolites from Natural Products through Computational Chemistry and Immunochemistry Approach	Central Department of Economics, TU
3	An Appraisal on Covid-19 Pandemic and Optimal Containment Measures in Nepal : Socio-economic Implications and Impact on Maternal and Child Health	Institute of Medicine, TU
4	Study of Impact on Hydropower Generation due to Glacier Variation in two River Basins of Nepal in the Context of Climate Change	Kathmandu University, School of Science
5	Condition Based Predictive Maintenance of Hydro-Generators and Transformers	Pokhara University, School of Engineering
6	Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Poultry Sub-sector in Nepal	Agriculture and Forestry University, Faculty of Animal Science, Veterinary Science and Fisheries
7	Using Advanced Data Systems to Improve Health in Early Life in Rural Nepal	Patan Academy of Health Sciences

9.6 QAA Response during Pandemic

Leaving behind the pandemic, the QAA system of Nepal is gradually unveiling back to the track. Though the system put its best effort to defuse the challenges created by the pandemic with the optimum utilization of

digital tools, full replacement of the convention is still of a challenge. The QAA system under the umbrella of EQAAC has performed various activities even during the pandemic. The major activities are highlighted as following:

Peer Reviews

- Virtual Peer Review Team Assessment of 16 Higher Education Institutions.

- Conducted Peer Review Team Assessment of 5 Higher Education Institutions through blended mode.

Preparatory Assessments

- Virtual Preparatory Assessment of 8 Higher Education Institutions.

Awards:

- Award ceremony conducted to virtually award 3 Higher Education Institutions

Meetings

- Virtual meeting of Higher Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council, Technical Committee and Portfolio Meeting.

Policies

- Endorsement of Covid-19 protocol, 2077 by Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council.

- Since the pandemic the foreign expert have joined the assessment virtually as per the decision of Higher Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council.

Summary of the Achievements of the Higher Education Reform Project (HERP, 2014-2020)

An evaluation study was undertaken to evaluate the impact of Higher Education Reform Project (HERP-2015-2020) implemented by the University Grant Commission with financial support of the World Bank. The study analyzed the impact of the Project in terms of six thematic areas, namely (a) accreditation, (b) effectiveness of formula-based/performance based funding, (c) autonomy, (d) quality reform of higher education institutions, (e) poverty target approach, and (f) academic excellence and research. The study was mainly based on primary data and information gathered from the sample campuses, faculty members and students. Besides, interaction meetings were organized with the Peer Review Team members, Deans, Campus Chiefs, Head of Central Departments, Director of Schools in order to gather their views and perceptions on various issues related with reform of higher education institutions (HEIs) to complement the quantitative data and information obtained from the field survey. Likewise, interaction meetings were held with the Directors of UGC looking after research and accreditation in order to obtain their feedback, comments and suggestions during different stages of this study. In addition, discussions were held with the Directors of TUPIO and TUQAA Center to find out their role in enhancing the quality standard of higher education.

Data and information required for survey were collected from a total of 120 campuses, 754 faculty members and 3126 students (Ph.D. and M.Phil.-99, Masters and Bachelor level-2639 and students receiving financial support from SFAFDB-388). The study was carried out in a very tough period of COVID-19 pandemic which had led to closure of almost all campuses. Students, teachers and management committee members were all confined to their residences and they were scared of talking with field survey team. Inter-district transportation was also suspended for a long time which affected the field visits. However, the study was completed and highlights of the findings drawn from the evaluation are given below:

10.1 Accreditation

- QAA was awarded by the UGC after a thorough review and assessment of various aspects of HEIs relating to academic and infrastructural facilities. TU has also established a QAA unit to facilitate and assist the campuses in the process of acquiring QAA. By now, there are 46 accredited, 93 PRT formed and 107 SSR accepted and 53 cycle completed HEIs.

- Fairness in the entrance examination was reported by 62.8 percent students of SSR/PRT stage campuses followed by accredited (57.5 percent), cycle completed (54.6 percent) and LOI submitted (60.1 percent).

- Even though TU has not been able to implement its academic calendar in terms of examination and result publication schedule, campuses have published their own academic calendar for course completion and internal examination.

- The proportion of students reporting 100 percent course completion as per academic calendar was 44.4 percent students of cycle completed campuses, followed by, accredited campus (41.6 percent), SSR/PRT phase campuses (35.6 percent) and LOI submitted campuses (29.9 percent).

- Conducting internal examination by campuses as per academic calendar was reported by 88.2 percent

students of accredited campuses, followed by cycle completed campuses (85.4 percent), LOI submitted campuses (78.4 percent) and SSR/PRT campuses (76.7 percent).

- Various types of teaching methods were being used but the lecture method was found most common, while the use of audio-visual method was at very low level. An overwhelmingly large and almost equal proportion of students of all categories of campuses reported regularity of teachers in classroom and answering students' questions, and giving extra time to students.

- Availability of text books in the library was reported adequate by 54.6 percent students of cycle completed campuses, followed by accredited campus (50.7 percent), LOI submitted campuses (48.6 percent) and SSR/PRT campuses (44.7 percent). In terms of reference books in library the proportion of students reporting 'adequate' was 51.5 percent of cycle completed campuses, 45.8 percent of accredited campuses, 38.7 percent of LOI submitted campuses and 34.4 percent of SSR/PRT phase campuses. Similarly, availability of adequate journals/periodicals in library were reported by 40.3 percent students of cycle completed campuses, 33.4 percent of accredited campuses, 25.7 percent of SSR/PRT phase campuses and 24.5 percent of LOI submitted campuses.

- With regard to quality of canteen, the proportion of students reporting 'very good' was highest (31.6 percent) in cycle completed. Students reporting 'good quality' of canteen was 62.2 percent in accredited campuses, 57.5 percent in SSR/PRT campuses, 59.6 percent in LOI submitted campuses and 56.3 percent in cycle completed campuses. Regarding facility of safe drinking water, highest proportion (49.5 percent) students of cycle completed campuses reported 'very good', followed by accredited campuses (31.6 percent), LOI submitted campuses (21.4 percent) and SSR/PRT phase campuses (20.2 percent). In case of cleanliness of toilets, students' responses were of the same pattern as of quality of canteen and facility of drinking water.

- Adequacy of labs for practical work was reported by almost equal proportion (38 percent) students of accredited and cycle completed campuses, followed by 26.1 percent students of LOI submitted campuses and 22.7 percent students of SSR/PRT phase campuses. With regard to involvement of students in research activities, the proportion of students reporting 'positive' was highest in accredited campuses (75.2 percent), followed by SSR/PRT phase campuses (74.3 percent), cycle completed campuses (71.6 percent) and LOI submitted campuses (67.6 percent).

- Regarding organization of workshop by campuses, 70.9 percent students of cycle completed campuses reported 'yes'. The same was reported by 61.4 percent students of accredited campuses, 53.8 percent of SSR/PRT campuses and 51.5 percent of LOI submitted campuses. Likewise, the proportion of students giving positive answer in case of organizing seminar by campus was highest in cycle completed campuses (84.0 percent), followed by accredited campuses (78.5 percent), SSR/PRT campuses (72.7 percent) and LOI submitted campuses (70.6 percent).

- The proportion of faculty members reporting 'very fair' recruitment process was highest in accredited campuses (31.6 percent), followed by cycle completed campuses (26.8 percent), SSR/PRT phase campuses (25.8 percent) and LOI submitted campuses (25.7 percent).

- In case of fairness in promotion criteria, the proportion of teachers reporting 'very fair' was highest (26.3 percent) in accredited campuses. The proportion of teachers reporting 'fair' promotion criteria was almost same (70 percent) in the remaining three categories of campuses.

- With regard to fairness in appointment in administrative posts, such as head of department and campus chief, teachers reporting 'very fair' were highest in accredited campus (25.9 percent), followed by cycle completed (18.7 percent), SSR/PRT phase (16.4 percent) and LOI submitted (13.1 percent)

campuses.

- On the issue of teacher mentoring, relatively higher and almost the same percentage teachers of accredited (39.5 percent) and cycle completed campuses (39.8 percent) reported 'frequent' mentoring as compared to 29.6 percent teachers of SSR/PRT campuses and 25.2 percent teachers of LOI submitted campuses. Likewise, the proportion of teachers reporting 'frequent' monitoring of their performance was exactly the same in cycle completed and accredited campuses (35.0 percent each), while it was 34.0 percent in SSR/PRT campuses and 26.7 percent in LOI submitted campuses.

- Regarding counselling of students for job placement, highest proportion teachers of cycle completed campuses (42.3 percent) reported 'frequently', followed by accredited campuses (30.5 percent), SSR/ PRT phase (26.4 percent) and LOI submitted (23.8 percent) campuses.

- With regard to availability of books in library teachers reporting 'adequate' were 59.4 percent in accredited campuses, 54.5 percent in cycle completed campuses and 44.7 percent in SSR/PRT phase campuses and 42.2 percent in LOI submitted campuses. Timely revision of curriculum was reported by more than 60 percent of teachers of all categories of campuses. An overwhelming proportion of teachers in each category of campuses reported consultation with the experts while introducing new programs. Involvement of stakeholders in curriculum design/revision was reported 'frequently' and 'sometimes' by more than 50.0 percent of teachers.

- With regard to interaction with students in classroom, the proportion of teachers reporting 'frequently' was highest in accredited campuses (78.9 percent), followed by cycle completed campuses (73.2 percent), and 70.4 percent teachers of each SSR/PRT and LOI submitted campuses. Similarly, the proportion of teachers reporting 'frequent' arrangement of special classes to weak students was also highest in accredited campuses. With regard to system for addressing teachers' grievances in campuses, the proportion of teachers providing positive answer was higher in accredited (68.8 percent) and cycle completed (65 percent) campuses compared to remaining two categories of campuses.

- Majority of HoDs/campus chiefs reported relatively longer time period in completion of various stages of QAA process. The major reasons as forwarded by them were delay in response from UGC and their internal problems in timely preparation of SSR.

- The role of PRT was judged very constructive in guiding the campuses in the finalization of issues required for QAA process.

- Almost all the HODs and campus chiefs opined that acquiring QAA was very challenging and it would be even more challenging to sustain it for a long time. However, they had no clear perception of how to sustain the QAA and move on to the next cycle.

- The PRT members unanimously opined that use of same bench-mark criteria and indicators for assessing QAA of general and technical (engineering, medical) HEIs is not appropriate. Application of single model irrespective of the type and level of education is unfair to those HEIs, which by nature do not need to have the specific facilities demanded by the benchmark criteria of Self Study Report. For example, questions 49 to 52 and 57 listed under Criterion 4 of SSR demand answers respectively on enrolment in M.Phil./Ph.D. programs, award of Ph.D. during the last five years, and offering consultancy services are irrelevant to community, constituent and private campuses.

- Sustainability of QAA is a serious issue that may pose daunting challenges to the campuses. It appears that campuses are mainly allured to QAA by the grant money they would get from FINAL REPORT-2020 Evaluation of Higher Education Reform Project (HERP, 2014-2020) XV HERP/

UGC in each stage right from LOI to final stage of accreditation. The issue of sustainability does not currently appear to be in the mindset of campuses, as their main concern seems to acquire the benefits associated with QAA.

10.2 Performance Based/Formula Based Funding

• Year-to-year approval of fund under DLI-2 to 80 HEIs covered by the survey in the last five years shows an increasing trend. The approval of fund has soared from Rs. 2.8 million in 2015 to Rs. 173.3 million in 2019, reflecting almost 62-fold increase during the five-year period.

  The impact of increased funding under DLI-2 can be seen in terms of an increase in student enrollment, pass rate, publication of annual report and tracer study report and construction of buildings.

• Enrollment of Dalit students at Bachelor level was found increasing over the years. It has more than doubled in the last five years. But in the case of indigenous students, enrollment fluctuated from year to year. However, the number of students enrolled at Bachelor level in the last five years has increased by more than 60 percent. Enrollment of Dalit students at Masters level did not show increment. The same scenario holds true in the case of indigenous students.

• About 50 percent of the financial support under performance-based funding was allocated to resource mobilization which has helped establish the foundation for better teaching-learning environment. The HEIs have been able to build various types of infrastructure, procure text as well as reference books and purchase furniture and software.

10.3 Autonomy

• Tribhuvan University started the policy of granting autonomy to the constituent including the community campuses in 2005 by introducing formally a set of rules and conditions. These rules were amended in 2016. According to autonomy rules, TU can grant autonomy to constituent or separately constituted Schools and Institutions to run specialized or new academic programmes based on market demand, or justified in terms of national need. Even though, TU introduced the policy of granting autonomy to constituent as well as affiliated campuses in 2005, but the progress on autonomy has been very slow. So far, seven constituent campuses have been granted institutional autonomy and four community campuses have been given academic autonomy.

• Faculty members of autonomous campuses reported considerable improvement in academic environment, administrative system and infrastructural facilities than before autonomy. However, with regard to research facilities, the responses show an awkward picture. Those saying 'very good' has been less after autonomy as compared to before autonomy.

• With regard to recruitment process of teachers, 23.5 percent of autonomous campuses said 'very fair' as against 18.1 percent of non-autonomous campuses. In case of teacher mentoring, the proportion of teachers saying 'frequently' was 35.3 percent in autonomous campuses as against 22.3 percent in non-autonomous campuses. Frequent monitoring of teachers' performance by campus management is very low, as slightly more than one fourth (26.5 percent) teachers in total reported this practice. As between autonomous and non-autonomous campuses, proportion of teachers saying 'frequent monitoring' was found higher in former (30.9 percent) as compared to latter (23.4 percent).

• In terms of adequacy of books in campus library, a little more than half (55.9 percent) teachers of autonomous campuses said 'adequate' compared to 36.2 percent teachers of nonautonomous campuses. Regarding quality of campus lab facilities, a high and almost the same proportion of teachers of

autonomous campuses (64.7 percent) as well as nonautonomous campuses (60.9 percent) said 'good'.

- Autonomous campuses had the practice of consultation with experts frequently while introducing new programs, as a large majority of teachers (63.2 percent) reported this. On the other hand, non-autonomous campuses are not allowed to introduce new program, yet 45.7 percent teachers reported the practice of consultation with experts.

- Regarding opportunities for workshop/seminar, the proportion of teachers saying 'very fair' nomination was higher in autonomous campuses (29.4 percent) as compared to nonautonomous campuses (17.0 percent).

- An overwhelming percentage of students reported requirement of entrance examination --- higher in autonomous (93.3 percent) than in non-autonomous (84.3 percent) campuses. On fairness of entrance examination, the proportion of students saying 'very fair' was higher in autonomous (35.1 percent) than in non-autonomous (20.3 percent) campuses. However, those saying 'fair' were higher in non-autonomous campuses (63.3 percent) than in autonomous campuses (54.8 percent).

- A relatively higher percentage students of autonomous campus reported their campuses assigning term paper/project work 'frequently' than that of non-autonomous campus -- 41.0 percent as against 34.2 percent. However, those reporting 'some times' constituted the same percentage (48 percent) in both autonomous and non-autonomous campuses. Regarding invitation of senior professors from outside as 'guest lecture' in the campus, 22.2 percent students of autonomous campuses reported 'frequently' while 12.5 percent students of non-autonomous campuses reported so.

- Organization of workshop by the campus was reported by 59.0 percent students of autonomous and 52.7 percent non-autonomous campus. Likewise, organization of seminar was reported by 77.8 percent of autonomous and 63.3 percent of non-autonomous campus.

- The HEIs which have obtained institutional or academic autonomy do not show evidences of sustainability of autonomy. Campus chiefs of some HEIs which have started new academic programs reported exploration of newer and newer programs after saturation of market demand of earlier programs as a challenging task. Some of the HEIs with institutional autonomy appeared to be confused about what the autonomy implied for them and to what extent they could exercise financial and academic autonomy owing to lack of clear TU policy.

- Most of the campus chiefs reported lack of adequate support from the university, problems in retention of experienced and qualified teachers, particularly of community campuses and inadequate amount of Block Grant from TU. They also wanted increased fund for research activities.

10.4 Quality Reform of Higher Education

- The findings of the study show that there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching -learning activities in HEIs due to financial support provided by UGC for quality reform. The quality of higher education depends on a number of factors, such as student enrollment system, quality of faculty, curriculum standards, physical, educational and technological infrastructure, research environment, student support services, libraries, journals, books, laboratories, administrative policies and procedures, etc.

- Student enrollment system has improved because almost all students had to appear in the entrance examination, and for a large majority of students the entrance examination was fair. Compared to 2018 survey, fairness in entrance examination has improved. Corse completion in time as per academic calendar has improved, but there still remains some scope for improvement. Teachers' regularity in

the class has been very high and an improvement over the situation two years ago. Students reporting teachers giving time to them for consultation is very high (80.7 percent). There has also been some shift in teaching methods from the traditional lecture method to modern interactive method and use of audio-visual method. With regard to physical facilities, a large majority of students felt safe building, well ventilated class rooms, adequate space of class rooms, hygienic canteen and availability of safe drinking water.

- Although all the HEIs covered by the study had maintained library, but the adequacy of text books, reference books and journals was still lacking. Other areas where improvement is still needed are students' access to Wi-Fi, e-library and subscription to Jestor for access to articles and books not unavailable from any other source. Field work and educational tours of students has increased compared to 2018 survey. Students of science and technology and engineering reported inadequacy of lab. Extra-curricular activities appeared to be satisfactory to the students.

- Faculty members' responses revealed that all three types of campuses (constituent, community campuses and central departments) maintained fairness in recruitment and promotion but community campuses are on the top in this regard. Appointments to administrative post (dean, campus chief, head of the department, etc.) is not totally fair, which means there is favoritism and nepotism on the basis of political and personal link in getting opportunity for such posts. Teacher mentoring is rarely practiced in all types of campuses. Regarding office space to the faculty members, central departments lag behind community and constituent campuses.

10.5 Poverty Target Approach

- One of the objectives of HERP is to assist students of under-privileged and deprived families to increase their access to higher education. The assistance is channeled through Student Financial Assistance Fund Development Board (SFAFDB). A total of 2,500 students from grade XI and XII and 7000 students from bachelor's level have been benefitted so far from this program.

- Poverty target approach is highly relevant in a poor country like Nepal where more than 18 percent of the populations are below the poverty line. The selection procedure adopted by SFAFDB appeared to be scientific in identifying the target students eligible for scholarship. The scholarship amount provided to students was reported not sufficient to meet their expenditure on education. It is suggested that scholarship amount should be increased and linked to inflation rate. Students desired that the scholarship program should be extended up to Master Level education.

- Sustainability of poverty target approach seems problematic when the fund is stopped. As the fund provided under HERP/UGC was managed by SFAFDB, absence of alternative sources of fund would mean closure of this program.

10.6 Academic Excellence and Research

- The research grant provided under the Project has been effective in motivating faculties to produce and publish quality articles based on research in the journals. But this is limited to some teachers, particularly those of central departments. There is still lack of intensive research both in natural and social sciences to produce innovative outcome in order to claim for patent right. The main reason appears to be lack of adequate fund to carry out intensive research for a longer period of time. Students who have received thesis grant have not also been able to produce high quality thesis worthy of publication.

- The survey revealed that the proportion of males is higher than that of females at the student as well

as faculty member levels in receiving research grant. At Masters level, females constitute 45 percent compared to 55 percent males, at M.Phil./Ph.D. level, females constitute 40 percent while males constitute 60 percent. In the case of faculty members receiving research grant, females constitute only 12.4 percent.

• Regarding publication of research output in peer review journals as well as in book form, none of the Masters level students had this plan, while 12.7 percent of MPhil/PhD scholars and 11.9 percent faculty members responded that they would publish their output in both form.

• Both faculty members and students reported that they had not been able to conduct research with the objective of producing innovative outcome. On the issue of patents, although students as well as faculty members' responses showed that some had tried for patents of their research output and some were successful in obtaining patent. However, it appears doubtful whether they had received patents for their work. It seems that they do not have clear understanding of patent rights and the institution awarding patent.

• Instead of providing small research grants to many research students and faculty members, it is desirable to provide sufficient amount to enable them to carry out meaningful research on contemporary issues of national as well as provincial importance. The research grant can be provided to the faculty members on group basis on competitive basis. It should be made mandatory to the faculty members to include students in such research works.

• In order to promote research activities in the HEIs on sustainable basis there is a need of perennial sources of fund. HEIs need to take initiatives to mobilize fund from both the internal as well as external sources by demonstrating their capacity in conducting high quality research.

10.7 Conclusion and Suggestions

Project impact was observed in building construction, well management of library with increased number of books, reference books, and journals, internet facility and access to ebooks/journals, comfortable chairs and desk-bench, separate toilets for boys and girls, availability of drinking water, hygienic canteen, etc. Besides, project impact was observed in teaching methods, regularity of teachers in classroom, introduction of new academic subjects, course completion and internal examination as per the academic calendar, increase in extracurricular activities, students' involvement in research activities, organization of workshop, seminar, etc. HEIs have also learnt the significance of Strategic Plan as their guiding framework for the next five years with vision, mission, core values, goals, targets and action plan.

Even though, accreditation of HEIs for improving the quality standard of education is very important but this is a partial approach because the entire academic activities are controlled by the parent universities. Presently, there is no policy of accrediting universities which set the overall academic standard, design curriculum, regulate admissions, conduct examinations and publish results. It is therefore, important to accredit universities as many of the functions of universities affect the quality standard of education at the HEIs. Moreover, accreditation of universities would also ensure university accountability and transparency in the use of public fund and allocation of budget to the constituent campuses.

It seems that HEIs have prepared impressive and ambitious strategic plan in order to get accreditation and financial grant from the UGC, but they do not have sustainability plan of continuing, maintaining and expanding the achievements/improvements made in various infrastructural facilities and teaching-learning activities. Future projects need to pay attention to this issue at the time of awarding accreditation to the campuses.

Findings from this research confirm that accreditation of HEIs greatly contributes to the improvement of

quality of teaching. As there still exist a large number of HEIs to be accredited, the process of accreditation needs to speeded up. There should also be provision for accreditation of universities as they set the overall academic standard, design curriculum, regulate admissions, conduct examinations and publish results. There is also a need to have two independent bodies for accreditation and funding. UGC is currently functioning as a single body for both these tasks and this has impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission. Furthermore, it is vital to sustain the quality reforms that the HEIs have achieved with the support from HERP/ UGC in the process of accreditation. Hence, it is desired that there should be next phase of HERP not only for sustaining the achievements made so far, but also for providing support to a large number of HEIs that remain accredited.

NEHEP (2021 – 2026) – Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program

11.1 Background

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP) is a pragmatic and systematic effort of the government of Nepal (GoN) including University Grants Commission (UGC) designed to sustain the achievements from the previous reform initiatives and also to add to the new endeavors for the overall expansion and development of the higher education sector in Nepal. NEHEP is the sub set of the National Higher Education Program (NHEP) and will contribute to attain development objectives set by the NHEP. The major objectives of NEHEP revolves around three intended outcome areas viz. (a) to strengthen labor market relevance and quality of higher education, (b) to boost collaborative research and innovation, and (c) enhance equitable access for underprivileged and disaster affected groups.

The overall responsibilities of the implementation lies at UGC with the MoEST in the supervisory role. Additionally, Tribhuvan University will establish a dedicated office/ unit which will be a subsidiary agency to implement NEHEP interventions specific to TU's constituent campuses, schools and central departments. The total estimated cost of NEHEP will be USD 60 million which will be financed from the International Development Agency (IDA)/ World Bank credit. The program will be implemented for the period of five year commencing in 2021/22 till 2025/26.

11.2 Program Development Objectives (PDOs)

The PDOs are *"to strengthen labor market relevance and quality of higher education, boost collaborative research and innovation, and enhance equitable access for underprivileged and disaster affected groups"*.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to measure achievement of the PDOs:

Indicator 1: Number of students completed first year in labor market relevant programs;

Indicator 2: Number of HEIs/ Programs Accredited/ completed peer review for quality assurance and accreditation

Indicator 3: Number of collaborative research projects awarded

Indicator 4: Number of higher education students supported from bottom quintiles

Indicator 5: Share of students registered in online/ blended learning

11.3 Components

There are two major components embedded to the NEHEP. The first component supports reform of higher education through four results areas. The second component is designated to support the capacity development of MoEST, UGC and subsidiary implementing agencies.

Component 1: The program is structured in the Program for Result (PforR) instrumental approach of the IDA/ WB. This component supports the key reform areas identified under the national higher education program

through result based financing. There are four result areas for reform interventions briefly mentioned as the following:

a) Results Area 1 - Improved Labor-market relevance, Entrepreneurship, and Collaborative Research: This Results Area aims to improve the overall graduate employability and boost research and innovation by HEIs in Nepal.

Sub-RA 1.1 - Improve employability and labor market relevance of teaching: The Sub-RA will support in the following areas:

i. To strengthen academic autonomy: The Sub-RA will help promote and strengthen academic autonomy by supporting competitively selected autonomous/ accredited HEIs to introduce and enhance their own autonomous academic programs that are aligned with local job market needs in the federal context. A total of 100 market-driven autonomous programs will be introduced by the end of the program.

ii. To support the establishment of continuous professional development (CPD) programs for faculty: The Sub-RA will also help to promote teaching and leadership excellence. A total of 1600 faculties will be trained and academic leaders will be sensitized.

Sub-RA 1.2 - Promote collaborative research and innovation: The Sub-RA will provide support in the following areas:

i. To support collaborative research and innovation: This Sub-RA will have support provisions to enhance collaborative research and innovation with more focus on collaborations with industry partners. The program will provide additional competitive research funding for select accredited HEIs, Schools, Central Departments, and Centers of Excellence (COE) to finance collaborative research and innovation with priorities on STEM disciplines. The UGC will set up a national knowledge-sharing platform for research, innovation, and patent management.

ii. The Sub-RA will support in revising and developing regulatory provisions in line with global practices to promote innovation and patenting. Universities will also revise regulatory frameworks for collaborative research and patent management; and

iii. The Sub-RA will also have support provisions to aid in establishing a system for curbing plagiarism.

Sub-RA 1.3 - Encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment: The Sub-RA will focus on the following areas of interventions:

i. To support entrepreneurship: Under this provisions students, graduates, and faculty will be encouraged for entrepreneurship and self-employment. Competitively selected participants will receive entrepreneur support packages that will include entrepreneurship skills training, legal training, financial education, and seed funds. UGC will form a committee of qualified individuals to evaluate the proposals for their innovative ideas and potential to grow as a start-up. Current students, recent graduates, and faculty members from public and private HEIs will be eligible.

b) Results Area 2 - Strengthening Governance and Financing of Higher Education: This Results Area aims to strengthen quality assurance, financing, and governance systems to improve the quality and market relevance of higher education.

Sub-RA 2.1 - Strengthen Autonomy, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation (QAA) and Quality Enhancement (QE): The Sub-RA will have the following support provisions:

i. Support for expansion of QAA and promote QE activities: The provisions under this category will

help in expanding the existing QAA program nation-wide with the emphasis on QE activities. The accreditation of universities will also be initiated during the program period.

ii.   Support for transition to deemed university: The provision will provide support as dedicated performance grants to around five accredited and autonomous campuses that opt to become 'deemed universities' as per the provision of the New Higher Education Act 2020. The support will aid the transitional requirements of the concerned HEIs. There will be a reasonable distribution across the provinces. The deemed universities will be in areas of provincial development priorities in coordination with respective provinces.

iii.   Support for capacity building: The Sub-RA will also support capacity building training for managers/ principals of HEIs and policymakers on academic management and leadership.

Sub-RA 2.2 - Extend performance grants for improving quality and governance: The Sub-RA will have the following support provisions:

Support to extend the Performance Based Funding (PBF): The provisions under this category will support the expansion of the performance grants system for HEIs to promote good practices for excellence. High-performing campuses, schools, and departments will receive additional grants based on a range of performance indicators. Performance criteria would include, among others, the major criteria such as (i) the merit-based selection of HEIs' leadership and excellence-based recruitment of faculty; (ii) student centric teaching and learning process; (iii) evaluation of classes and campuses by students, teachers, and other stakeholders; (iv) student and faculty mobility; (v) academia-employer collaboration; (vi) distance learning practices and digitization; (vii) graduate tracking and employability; and (viii) research outputs including action researches.

Sub-RA 2.3 - Expansion of non-government sectors for enhancing technical education: The Sub-RA will have the following support provisions:

The support provisions under this Sub-RA will strengthen policy and regulatory systems to create a conducive environment for expanding technical education to address the low share of technical education in higher education. It would also allow accredited affiliated institutions to conduct such programs. The program will support the development of guidelines to facilitate such partnerships with non-government sectors, including monitoring arrangement.

c) Results Area 3 - Widening Access to Quality Higher Education for Disadvantaged Students: This Results Area aims to enhance equitable access to higher education in Nepal, focusing on underprivileged students, particularly from disadvantaged provinces and disaster affected regions.

i.   Support to underprivileged students/ disadvantaged women: The support provision will continue to support the proxy means testing (PMT) based scholarship program initiated in the earlier higher education reform projects. The scholarship will flow directly to beneficiaries' individual bank accounts. The PMT criteria will also be revised to include students affected by disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic. A particular focus will be on enrollment and continued education for disadvantaged women.

ii.   Support to HEIs in lagging/ disaster affected provinces: The provisions will support HEIs in lagging and/or disaster affected provinces received equity grants and encourage special arrangements to attract quality teachers and improve teaching in these provinces, including in strengthening connectivity, conducting online courses, making peer learning arrangements from other HEIs/provinces, and sharing resources for efficient use, and capacity building.

d) Results Area 4 – Extending Digitization of Higher Education: This Results Area aims to improve the

policy and governance system for digitization and connectivity and strengthen the institutional capacity to digitize teaching and learning and administration of higher education.

Sub-RA 4.1 - Improving the policy and governance of digitization and connectivity: The provisions under this category will support the preparation of a new ICT strategy for the higher education sector, including strategies to improve the available broad-band connectivity facilities under the NREN or similar institutions. The NREN facility will support online platforms for blended learning and research and innovation. The program will set up more collaborative governance arrangements for the NREN or similar institutions with the presence of the MOEST and other regulatory provisions.

Sub-RA 4.2 - Strengthening campus networks and distance learning capabilities: The Sub-RA will support in the following areas:

i.   Support for strengthening connectivity: This category of support provisions will aid competitively selected HEIs with digitization grants to promote connectivity in a cost-sharing approach through (i) establishing last-mile connectivity with the NREN; (ii) strengthening the bandwidth for better connectivity; and (iii) installing in-campus wifi connectivity.

ii.   Support for capacity building in online/ blended teaching and learning: The support provisions will assist in capacity building of HEIs for integrating online/digital learning for all aspects of academic activities, from student enrollment to class teaching, examination, and graduation. HEIs will engage in peer learning opportunities by bringing together the experience of COVID responses under HERP and online programs of the Nepal Open University and TU Open and Distance Education Center (TU ODEC).

*Sub-RA 4.3 - Digitization of UGC and university administration***:** This sub-results area will support UGC and the universities to enhance their digitization system. The key areas will cover a resource planning system to manage the universities' human resources, finances and procurement tasks, student administration including the admissions, examination, alumni relations and student scholarship/aid functions, and to efficiently manage monitoring & evaluation.

Component 2: This component will support the capacity development of MOEST, UGC and subsidiary implementing agencies in strengthening their core regulatory and financing functions of the higher education sector. The capacity building will cover key reform actions under the four Results Areas.

Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) and Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs)

The NEHEP has a total of six Disbursement Link Indicators (DLIs) across the four results areas. Similarly, each DLI has a set of Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) that are mapped across the five-year period towards the achievement of PDOs. Most of the DLRs will support the achievement of specific outputs to incentivize the successful implementation of critical reform actions. Among the supported DLIs, results related to the institutional and system-level actions for enhancing the quality and market relevance receive higher value (DLI 1, DLI 3, DLI 4, and DLI 6) to bring more emphasis on urgent reform actions to generate highly skilled professionals for the economy. DLI 2 and DLI 5 will support the strengthening of research and innovation and enhancing equitable access, respectively. More specifically, the DLIs and corresponding DLRs are mentioned as the following:

DLI 1 - Labor market-driven autonomous courses, faculty members training and academic leaders' sensitization: This DLI will map the scope of the achievements of the targets set to boost the interventions intended by the result area 1 viz. 'Improved Labor-market relevance, entrepreneurship, and collaborative research'. There are three corresponding DLRs that will used for assessing the total targets achieved by the end of the

program period under this DLI.

DLI 2 - Collaborative research and entrepreneurship program: The DLI 2 will also support the result area 1. There are three corresponding DLRs in this DLI.

DLI 3 - Quality Assurance and Accreditation, and Quality Enhancement: This DLI will support the result area 2 which intendeds to strengthen governance and financing of higher education for quality assurance and enhancement. There are three DLRs in the DLI.

DLI 4 - Performance Based Grants: The DLI will also support the result area 2. There are two DLRs corresponding to this DLI.

DLI 5 - Enrollment of disadvantaged students and in lagging and/or disaster affected provinces: This DLI comes under the result area 3 which focuses on widening access to quality higher education for disadvantaged students.

DLI 6 - Online teaching, learning and digitized administration: This DLI will support the result area 4 which intends to extend digitization of higher education.

11. 4 Program Direct Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of the NEHEP will be the students, teachers, staff, leaders, authorities of the HEIs and the constituent campuses, community campuses, schools and central departments of the HEIs. Similarly, the institutions such as the universities, dean's offices, exam office, implementing agencies that include MOEST, UGC and subsidiary IAs will also benefit from this program.

11.5 Program Financing/Cost

The total program cost for the GoN's National Higher Education Program (NHEP) will be US$ 603.4 million over the period of five years, of which International Development Agency (IDA)/ World Bank share will be US$ 60.0 million for the implementation of the Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP). The NEHEP will support NHEP. The Component 1 of the IDA supported program will have the ceiling of US$ 55.0 million and is based on the Program for Results (PforR). The component 1 will support key reforms clustered around four Results Areas. Similarly, the Component 2 of the IDA supported program will be of US$ 5.0 million which will be an Investment Project Financing (IPF) from the IDA/ WB. The second component will support capacity building for Program Management, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The component 1 with the ceiling of USD 55 million will use results-based financing and disburse funds to the Treasury following the verified achievements of a set of agreed Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). The fund allocations for different DLIs are determined based on the relative importance of individual results in terms of the national agenda. The results-based financing will provide critical fiscal space for UGC to accelerate sectoral reform actions planned under the national program and achieve the program development objectives. Considering the constraints emerged due to COVID-19 Pandemic and following GON request up to 25% of the total DLI values could be claimed as an advance in Year 1 to facilitate create a fiscal space for the MOF. All DLRs can be achieved and claimed anytime during the program period unless otherwise specified.

11.6 Institutions and Implementation Arrangements

University Grants Commission (UGC) will be the principal implementing agency. Tribhuvan University will be the subsidiary implementing agency which will primarily responsible in implementing the program activities specific to the university. UGC will work closely with all of the subsidiary implementing agencies including the MoEST. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) will be responsible for program coordination and policy matters at the government level.

11.7 Implementing Agencies

1. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)

The MoEST is the line ministry of the government of Nepal which will have the responsibility regarding NEHEP in overall coordination and also, in matters related to the policies at the federal, provincial and local government levels. The ministry will be the supervising entity for overall policy guidance. The MoEST will be responsible for overall coordination of fiduciary management as an oversight Ministry to facilitate budget approval, implementation of fiduciary management of the programs including timely release of the approved program and budget to UGC and ensure monitoring and reporting.

2. University Grants Commission (UGC)

UGC will be the primary implementing agency and will be responsible for overall implementation arrangement of NEHEP. UGC will channelize all of the program implementation activities including grants administration, financial management, procurement, safeguards, M&E, and reporting arrangements through the government system. UGC will work in coordination with the MoEST and other subsidiary implementing agencies including the beneficiary higher education institutions (HEIs) and other beneficiaries. UGC in coordination with respective affiliating universities will also provide training, management, and monitoring support to the beneficiary HEIs. UGC will coordinate all the FM functions from planning and budgeting, accounting and reporting and coordination for internal and external audits. The following are the roles and responsibilities of UGC, among other in regards to the implementation of NEHEP:

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Coordination with MoEST, MoF and other ministries
- Preparation of the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB)
- Implementation of the programs including….
- Coordination with subsidiary implementing agencies
- Preparation of the results achievement reports
- Hiring of an Independent Verification Agency (IVA)
- Coordinate with the IVA for the verification
- Preparation and approval of required SOPGs and POM
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Program Support Secretariat (PSS) at UGC

The program support secretariat (PSS) will be established at the UGC to implement the program activities effectively and efficiently. The PSS will consist different divisions and sections including planning, monitoring, procurement, financing, safeguards, etc. The secretariat will provide overall implementation support to UGC. The PSS will be provided with the technical support team with additional human resources.

TU as a Subsidiary Implementing Agency

TU will be one of the major subsidiary implementing agencies which will be accountable to implement the program activities specific to the university. TU in support, coordination and supervision of the UGC will conduct the university specific program activities through a designated Program Support Secretariat established at the university.

Beneficiary Universities/ HEIs

At the beneficiary level, where most of the expenditures are made, the main frontline actors are the universities and their constituent and affiliated institutions. The governing bodies of these institutions will be responsible for managing all of the institution-level activities. The beneficiary Universities/ HEIs will have respective Program Coordinators to facilitate implementation support and coordination with UGC.

11.8 Other Institutional Arrangements

Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO): The major responsibility of the FCGO is to act as the accounting and treasury management agency of the GON, overseeing all government expenditures against the budget, recording unified accounts of revenue collection and other receipts, and preparing consolidated financial statements. With 4 divisions and 14 sections, the FCGO's field offices are spread across all 77 districts of the country. Each district has a District Treasury Controller Office (DTCO) that is involved in making payments based upon request of the spending units within the approved budgets of government offices, budgetary controls, and reporting. There are Provincial Treasury Controller Offices (PTCO) in all 7 provinces under the FCGO.

Ministry of Finance (MOF): The MOF, through its International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division (IECCD), is responsible for mobilization of foreign aid resources. The Budget and Program Division prepares public expenditure plans. The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Secretariat coordinates PFM reform activities. The role of PEFA Secretariat is important as several fiduciary improvement actions will require coordination between the MOEST, UGC, MOF, FCGO etc.

National Planning Commission (NPC): The NPC formulates development policies and prepares periodic development plans within the framework of a long-term development perspective. The role of the NPC will also be in finalizing the ceiling of annual budget for the Program.

Office of the Auditor General (OAG): The OAG is the supreme audit institution (SAI) in Nepal - a constitutional body mandated to conduct the external audit of all government offices, including UGC and most of the universities as specified by law. The OAG provides audit opinion in the integrated financial statements of the GON including the of state-owned enterprises and DP-assisted projects/programs and follows up previous audit observations/ recommendations. As mandated, the OAG presents annual report to the President, who then presents the report to the Parliament.

Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA): The CIAA, a constitutional body, is an anti-corruption agency with authority to file corruption cases in the special court. As mandated, the CIAA presents an annual report to the President, who then presents the report to the Parliament.

Public Accounts Committee (PAC): The PAC is a parliamentary committee of the House of Representatives tasked to examine the GON financial transactions and accounts and discuss the OAG's report. It directs the government in prominent issues regarding financial irregularities and prepares annual report of its work.

Public Procurement Monitoring Office (PPMO): The PPMO prepares a public procurement policy; coordinates procurement, including debarment proceedings; and supports capacity building through professional development plans and training for public officials. It also monitors public procurement through site visits.

11. 9 Independent Verification Agency (IVA)

NEHEP has provision of hiring an independent verification agency (IVA) for conducting third party verifications against the DLI and DLR achievement claims by the implementing agencies. The IVA can be private or autonomous public entity with adequate institutional capabilities, human resources, qualifications, and track

record of reliably conducting verification processes, and should have the ability to act independently from the direct influence of the leading implementing agency. Capability of contributing to GON long-term systemic strengthening will also be one of the key criteria for the IVA.

UGC will recruit an IVA for third party verification and reporting of DLI and DLR achievements. The IVA will be responsible for verifying the DLI achievement evidence submitted by the implementing agencies according to the DLI definitions and verification protocols. IVA reports will be submitted to the IDA/ WB team for clearance and processing for disbursement. The selected IVA would be engaged in mid- to long-term contracts, conditional upon their satisfactory performance.