

A Guide to Induction Program

1 Introduction

(Induction Program was discussed and approved for all colleges by AICTE in March 2017. It was discussed and accepted by the Council of IITs for all IITs in August 2016. It was originally proposed by a Committee of IIT Directors and accepted at the meeting of all IIT Directors in March 2016.¹ This guide has been prepared based on the Report of the Committee of IIT Directors and the experience gained through its pilot implementation in July 2016 as accepted by the Council of IITs. Purpose of this document is to help institutions in understanding the spirit of the accepted Induction Program and implementing it.)

Engineering colleges were established to train graduates well in the branch/department of admission, have a holistic outlook, and have a desire to work for national needs and beyond.

The graduating student must have knowledge and skills in the area of his study. However, he/she must also have broad understanding of society and relationships. Character needs to be nurtured as an essential quality by which he would understand and fulfill his responsibility as an engineer, a citizen and a human being. Besides the above, several meta-skills and underlying values are needed.

There is a mad rush for engineering today, without the student determining for himself his interests and his goals. This is a major factor in the current state of demotivation towards studies that exists among UG students.

The success of gaining admission into a desired institution but failure in getting the desired branch, with peer pressure generating its own problems, leads to a peer environment that is demotivating and corrosive. Start of hostel life without close parental supervision at the same time, further worsens it with also a poor daily routine.

To come out of this situation, a multi-pronged approach is needed. One will have to work closely with the newly joined students in making them feel comfortable, allow them to explore their academic interests and activities, reduce competition and make them work for excellence, promote bonding within them, build relations between teachers and students, give a broader view of life, and build character.

¹A Committee of IIT Directors was setup in the 152nd Meeting of IIT Directors on 6th September 2015 at IIT Patna, on how to motivate undergraduate students at IITs towards studies, and to develop verbal ability. The Committee submitted its report on 19th January 2016. It was considered at the 153rd Meeting of all IIT Directors at IIT Mandi on 26 March 2016, and the accepted report came out on 31 March 2016. The Induction Program was an important recommendation, and its pilot was implemented by three IITs, namely, IIT(BHU), IIT Mandi and IIT Patna in July 2016. At the 50th meeting of the Council of IITs on 23 August 2016, recommendation on the Induction Program and the report of its pilot implementation were discussed and the program was accepted for all IITs.

2 Induction Program

When new students enter an institution, they come with diverse thoughts, backgrounds and preparations. It is important to help them adjust to the new environment and inculcate in them the ethos of the institution with a sense of larger purpose. Precious little is done by most of the institutions, except for an orientation program lasting a couple of days.

We propose a 3-week long induction program for the UG students entering the institution, right at the start. Normal classes start only after the induction program is over. Its purpose is to make the students feel comfortable in their new environment, open them up, set a healthy daily routine, create bonding in the batch as well as between faculty and students, develop awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the self, people around them, society at large, and nature.²

The time during the Induction Program is also used to rectify some critical lacunas, for example, English background, for those students who have deficiency in it.

²Induction Program as described here borrows from three programs running earlier at different institutions: (1) Foundation Program running at IIT Gandhinagar since July 2011, (2) Human Values course running at IIIT Hyderabad since July 2005, and (3) Counselling Service or mentorship running at several IITs for many decades. Contribution of each one is described next.

(1) IIT Gandhinagar was the first IIT to recognize and implement a special 5-week Foundation Program for the incoming 1st year UG students. It took a bold step that the normal classes would start only after the five week period. It involved activities such as games, art, etc., and also science and other creative workshops and lectures by resource persons from outside.

(2) IIIT Hyderabad was the first one to implement a compulsory course on Human Values. Under it, classes were held by faculty through discussions in small groups of students, rather than in lecture mode. Moreover, faculty from all departments got involved in conducting the group discussions under the course. The content is non-sectarian, and the mode is dialogical rather than sermonizing or lecturing. Faculty were trained beforehand, to conduct these discussions and to guide students on issues of life.

(3) Counselling at some of the IITs involves setting up mentor-mentee network under which 1st year students would be divided into small groups, each assigned a senior student as a student guide, and a faculty member as a mentor. Thus, a new student gets connected to a faculty member as well as a senior student, to whom he/she could go to in case of any difficulty whether psychological, financial, academic, or otherwise.

The Induction Program defined here amalgamates all the three into an integrated whole, which leads to its high effectiveness in terms of building physical activity, creativity, bonding, and character. It develops sensitivity towards self and one's relationships, builds awareness about others and society beyond the individual, and also in bonding with their own batch-mates and a senior student besides a faculty member.

Scaling up the above amalgamation to an intake batch of 1000 plus students was done at IIT(BHU), Varanasi starting from July 2016.

2.1 Physical Activity

This would involve a daily routine of physical activity with games and sports. It would start with all students coming to the held at 6 am for light physical exercise or yoga. There would also be games in the evening or at other suitable times according to the local climate. These would help develop team work. Each student should pick one game and learn it for three weeks. There could also be gardening or other suitably designed activity where labour yields fruits from nature.

2.2 Creative Arts

Every student would chose one skill related to the arts whether visual arts or performing arts. Examples are painting, sculpture, pottery, music, dance etc. The student would pursue it every day for the duration of the program.

These would allow for creative expression. It would develop a sense of aesthetics and also enhance creativity which would, hopefully, flow into engineering design later.

2.3 Universal Human Values

It gets the student to explore oneself and allows one to experience the joy of learning, stand up to peer pressure, take decisions with courage, be aware of relationships with colleagues and supporting staff in the hostel and department, be sensitive to others, etc. Need for character building has been underlined earlier. A module in Universal Human Values provides the base.

Methodology of teaching this content is extremely important. It must not be through do's and dont's, but get students to explore and think by engaging them in a dialogue. It is best taught through group discussions and real life activities rather than lecturing. The role of group discussions, however, with clarity of thought of the teachers cannot be over emphasized. It is essential for giving exposure, guiding thoughts, and realizing values.

The teachers must come from all the departments rather than only one department like HSS or from outside of the Institute. Experiments in this direction at IIT(BHU) are noteworthy and one can learn from them.³

Discussions would be conducted in small groups of about 20 students with a faculty mentor each. It is to open thinking towards the self. Universal Human Values discussions could even continue for rest of the semester as a normal course, and not stop with the induction program.

Besides drawing the attention of the student to larger issues of life, it would build relationships between teachers and students which last for their entire 4-year stay and possibly beyond.

³The Universal Human Values Course is a result of a long series of experiments at educational institutes starting from IIT-Delhi and IIT Kanpur in the 1980s and 1990s as an elective course, NIT Raipur in late 1990s as a compulsory one-week o campus program. The courses at IIT(BHU) which started from July 2014, are taken and developed from two compulsory courses at IIIT Hyderabad first introduced in July 2005.

2.4 Literary

Literary activity would encompass reading, writing and possibly, debating, enacting a play etc.

2.5 Proficiency Modules

This period can be used to overcome some critical lacunas that students might have, for example, English, computer familiarity etc. These should run like crash courses, so that when normal courses start after the induction program, the student has overcome the lacunas substantially. We hope that problems arising due to lack of English skills, wherein students start lagging behind or failing in several subjects, for no fault of theirs, would, hopefully, become a thing of the past.

2.6 Lectures by Eminent People

This period can be utilized for lectures by eminent people, say, once a week. It would give the students exposure to people who are socially active or in public life.

2.7 Visits to Local Area

A couple of visits to the landmarks of the city, or a hospital or orphanage could be organized. This would familiarize them with the area as well as expose them to the under privileged.

2.8 Familiarization to Dept./Branch & Innovations

The students should be told about different method of study compared to coaching that is needed at IITs. They should be told about what getting into a branch or department means what role it plays in society, through its technology. They should also be shown the laboratories, workshops & other facilities.

Summary

Engineering institutions were set up to generate well trained manpower in engineering with a feeling of responsibility towards oneself, one's family, and society. The incoming undergraduate students are driven by their parents and society to join engineering without understanding their own interests and talents. As a result, most students fail to link up with the goals of their own institution.

The graduating student must have values as a human being, and knowledge and meta-skills related to his/her profession as an engineer and as a citizen. Most students who get demotivated to study engineering or their branch, also lose interest in learning.

The Induction Program is designed to make the newly joined students feel comfortable, sensitize them towards exploring their academic interests and activities,

reducing competition and making them work for excellence, promote bonding within them, build relations between teachers and students, give a broader view of life, and building of character.

The Universal Human Values component, which acts as an anchor, develops awareness and sensitivity, feeling of equality, compassion and oneness, draw attention to society and nature, and character to follow through. It also makes them reflect on their relationship with their families and extended family in the college (with hostel stay and others). It also connects students with each other and with teachers so that they can share any difficulty they might be facing and seek help.

⁴We are aware that there are advantages in mixing the students from different depts. However, in mixing, it is our experience that the continuity of the group together with the faculty mentor breaks down soon after. Therefore, the groups be from the same dept. but hostel wings have the mixed students from different depts. For example, the hostel room allotment should be in alphabetical order irrespective of dept.