



**The Gujarat Public Universities Act, 2023:
Promoting accreditation in Higher Education Institutions
- A Review Study**

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Abstract

Accreditation plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and credibility of higher education institutions (HEIs). This abstract highlights the significance of promoting accreditation as a fundamental mechanism for enhancing the overall quality of education, fostering institutional advancement, and meeting the dynamic demands of the contemporary educational landscape. The global higher education scenario is marked by rapid advancements, evolving pedagogies, and increasing expectations from stakeholders. Accreditation serves as a robust framework that evaluates and validates an institution's adherence to established standards, benchmarks, and best practices. It not only validates the quality of education but also ensures that institutions are equipped to provide students with relevant skills and knowledge for their professional and personal development.

Keywords: The Gujarat Public Universities Act - 2023, National Assessment and Accreditation Council - NAAC, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers - NABH.

Introduction

Promoting accreditation in HEIs encourages a culture of continuous improvement. Institutions engaged in the accreditation process are compelled to assess and reassess their programs, faculty qualifications, infrastructure, and support services. This ongoing self-evaluation fosters a commitment to excellence and innovation, driving institutions to adapt to emerging trends and technologies in education.

Accreditation acts as a powerful tool for accountability and transparency. Accredited institutions are accountable to external accrediting bodies, ensuring that they adhere to established standards and are held to a high level of scrutiny. This accountability not only builds trust among stakeholders but also provides prospective students and employers with confidence in the quality of education and graduates produced by accredited institutions.

Furthermore, accreditation serves as a catalyst for internationalization and global recognition. Institutions with accredited programs are more likely to attract students, faculty, and collaborations from around the world. The global recognition of accredited qualifications enhances the mobility of students and professionals, contributing to a more interconnected and collaborative academic environment.



Accreditation in higher education is a process of external quality assurance that evaluates and certifies the overall effectiveness and standards of an institution. This abstract explores the importance of actively promoting accreditation in higher education institutions (HEIs) to enhance educational quality, ensure accountability, and foster continuous improvement.

- **Context and Background**

Higher education is experiencing dynamic changes globally, driven by technological advancements, evolving pedagogies, and increasing expectations from diverse stakeholders. Accreditation, as a systematic evaluation process, ensures that HEIs meet established standards, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of education.

- **Ensuring Educational Quality**

Accreditation serves as a robust mechanism to guarantee the quality of education provided by institutions. By evaluating factors such as curriculum, faculty qualifications, student support services, and infrastructure, accreditation assures students and stakeholders that the institution maintains high educational standards.

- **Accountability and Transparency**

Promoting accreditation establishes a framework for institutional accountability and transparency. Accredited institutions are held to rigorous standards set by accrediting bodies, fostering a culture of accountability. This transparency builds trust among stakeholders, including students, parents, employers, and the broader community.

- **Continuous Improvement**

Accreditation promotes a culture of continuous improvement within HEIs. The self-assessment processes involved in accreditation encourage institutions to regularly evaluate and enhance their programs, teaching methodologies, and support services. This commitment to improvement ensures that institutions remain responsive to the evolving needs of students and the broader academic landscape.

- **Global Recognition and Collaboration**

Accreditation enhances the global recognition of institutions and their programs. Promoting accreditation attracts international students, faculty, and collaborative opportunities. Accredited qualifications are often recognized globally, facilitating student and staff mobility and fostering a more interconnected global academic community.

The Gujarat Public Universities Act, 2023

The 'Gujarat Public Universities Act – 2023' has been passed in the monsoon session of the Legislative Assembly held on 16th September, 2023 in order to unify law relating to the eleven universities such as Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat University, Sardar Patel University, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Saurashtra University, Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University, Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kachchh University, Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University and Shri Govind Guru



University in the State of Gujarat. The ‘Gujarat Public Universities Act – 2023’ was assented by Hon’ble Governor of Gujarat on 25th September, 2023 and the Act came into force in universities from 9th October, 2023.

- **Mandatory Criteria for Nomination of Members of the Board of Management/Executive Council/Academic Council:**

The members nominated by the Chairperson shall be from autonomous/affiliated/conducted/constituent colleges/Learner Support Centres of the concerned university which must be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). *“As per Circular No.GCU/2023/470/KH-1, Edu. Dept., GOG”*

This clause highlights the significance of accreditation as a mandatory criterion for the nomination of members within an educational context. The criteria, set forth by a chairperson or governing body, emphasize the pivotal role of accreditation in ensuring the quality and credibility of members serving various roles in educational institutions.

Accreditation serves as a fundamental prerequisite for individuals nominated to be part of committees, boards, or similar bodies within the educational framework. The individuals eligible for nomination must hail from specific types of institutions affiliated with the concerned university. These institutions encompass autonomous, affiliated, conducted, and constituent colleges, as well as Learner Support Centres.

The focal point of this mandatory criterion is the accreditation bestowed by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The NAAC accreditation is recognized as a hallmark of quality in the education sector, signifying that the institution has met predetermined standards of excellence. It ensures that the nominated members bring a level of credibility, adherence to established educational norms, and commitment to continuous improvement.

By stipulating accreditation as a non-negotiable condition, the nomination process aims to uphold and enhance the overall quality of education and institutional governance. This abstract underscores the importance of accreditation in shaping the composition of decision-making bodies, fostering a culture of excellence, and advancing the mission of educational institutions.

The impact of implementation of The Gujarat Public Universities Act, 2023 is that all autonomous/affiliated/conducted/constituent colleges/Learner Support Centres are eager to participate in NAAC and/or relevant National Accreditation.



Higher Education Institutions face challenges when participating in any national accreditation for the first time

Accreditation in higher education for the first time can encounter several barriers, impeding the process and creating challenges for institutions. Here are some common barriers:

- **Lack of Awareness:** Institutions unfamiliar with the accreditation process may face challenges due to a lack of awareness. Understanding the requirements, procedures, and benefits of accreditation can be a barrier for those navigating the process for the first time.
- **Resource Constraints:** Pursuing accreditation demands financial and human resources. Smaller institutions or those with limited budgets may find it challenging to allocate resources for the extensive documentation, site visits, and other requirements associated with accreditation.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Institutions lacking the necessary infrastructure and systems to meet accreditation standards may encounter difficulties. Adequate library resources, modern technology, and well-maintained facilities are often prerequisites for accreditation.
- **Resistance to Change:** The accreditation process often requires institutions to make changes to align with established standards. Resistance to change, whether from faculty, staff, or administration, can impede the smooth progress of the accreditation journey.
- **Complex Documentation Requirements:** Accreditation involves meticulous documentation of various aspects of institutional operations. The complexity of documentation requirements can overwhelm institutions, particularly those navigating the accreditation process for the first time.
- **Time Intensiveness:** The accreditation process is time-consuming, involving several stages such as self-assessment, preparation of documents, and site visits. Balancing these requirements with regular institutional responsibilities can be a significant barrier.
- **Mismatch with Institutional Mission:** Some institutions may find it challenging to align their unique mission and educational approach with the standardized criteria set by accrediting bodies. This can create a tension between institutional identity and accreditation requirements.
- **Insufficient Institutional Support:** Lack of support from leadership, including administrators and governing boards, can hinder the accreditation process. Institutional commitment and engagement are crucial for successful accreditation.



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- **Uncertainty about Benefits:** Institutions may be uncertain about the tangible benefits of accreditation, especially if they are going through the process for the first time. This uncertainty can act as a barrier, as the perceived advantages may not be immediately apparent.
- **Inconsistent Communication:** Poor communication between the institution and the accrediting body can be a barrier. Institutions may struggle to understand expectations and requirements, leading to a breakdown in the accreditation process.

Addressing these barriers requires careful planning, commitment from all stakeholders, and proactive measures to build awareness and capacity within the institution. Seeking guidance from experienced consultants or institutions with a successful accreditation history can also be beneficial for those navigating accreditation for the first time.

Conclusion:

This research study concludes that making accreditation a mandatory criterion for the nomination of members is a purposeful strategy that goes beyond compliance. It is a proactive step towards ensuring that educational leaders possess the credentials and commitment necessary to drive institutional excellence, ultimately benefiting students, faculty, and the educational community at large.

Promoting accreditation in higher education institutions is integral to ensuring quality, fostering continuous improvement, and meeting the diverse needs of students and the workforce. Accreditation is not merely a regulatory process but a strategic approach to elevate the standards of education, promote institutional excellence, and prepare graduates for success in a rapidly evolving global landscape. As higher education continues to evolve, the emphasis on accreditation becomes paramount in securing the future relevance and competitiveness of institutions worldwide.

Promoting accreditation in higher education institutions is crucial for ensuring educational quality, accountability, and continuous improvement. As institutions embrace accreditation, they position themselves as leaders in providing quality education, contributing to the holistic development of students, and preparing them for success in a rapidly changing global environment.

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