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# DELHI UNIVERSITY TO APE

## STARTS A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMME



By Smita

**D**elhi University (DU) is all set to introduce the 4-year degree programme from the 2013-14 academic session despite serious doubts about its capability to handle the situation properly. Come July, there will be no admissions for the old-style BA, BSc or BCom programmes there. These courses are being discarded as an out-dated British legacy. The university officials maintain that this is what students and parents want. Under the new system the aspirants at the undergraduate level will be free to pick from a bouquet of courses combining science, arts and commerce for a 4-year degree. The new

The American system of four-year degree course being introduced in Delhi University is touted as one that would dramatically revolutionise the structure of higher education for the first time in this part of the world. Many teachers, however, say it would only make Delhi University a feeder institution for foreign universities. The step may not be as student-friendly as authorities want to claim....

experiment will bring the university to global standards so far as the flexibility in course designing is concerned, DU officials claim.

The 4-year degree programme was initially mooted a few years ago by Prof Deepak Pental, a former VC. However, seeing the fierce resistance to the semester system, the proposal was shelved.

The statutory bodies of DU-- Academic and Executive Councils--in December 2012 dusted up and approved

the old proposal---to replace the existing three-year degree programme by a four-year one---by an overwhelming majority. But many teachers alleged that this was being done in undue haste: due processes and deliberations had been given the go by and the voice of dissent totally discounted. Earlier, DU had introduced the concept of 'meta college system' and Meta University in a similar fashion.

A 61-member taskforce has been appointed by the university now to look

# AMERICAN SYSTEM

## Hire in one semester, fire in another

**I**ronically, after imposing the semester system, regular appointments have been stopped by DU. Instead of filling up the teaching posts on a temporary/ permanent basis through duly constituted selection committees, DU authorities are banking on ad hoc teachers. At present, about 4,000 teaching posts in DU are lying vacant. Against these posts either ad hoc teachers or guest lecturers are used. With uneven and lopsided workload following semesterisation, ad hoc teachers are often hired in one semester and fired in the next. They become hapless victims of this 'hire and fire' policy. Some of them have been working for years in this manner. They are denied all normal benefits including LTC, medical and maternity leave.

into the intricacies and modalities of the proposed 4-year degree programme. The taskforce is yet to finalise its detailed and final recommendations. Some teachers feel the new programme may have serious implications for the present university structure in myriad ways.

Before delving into the issues, it will be instructive to have a cursory view of the functioning and ramifications of the present semester system. It was introduced amidst stiff opposition from teachers, in July 2010. To start with only eleven courses came within the semesterisation scheme. From July 2011, DU enforced semesterisation for all courses.

It is alleged by some teachers that framing of syllabi for the semester mode was done in a hurry, without discussions among staff and students. These syllabi,



This is what many teachers in Delhi University wanted to say against the semester system. (Courtesy: DUbeat.com)

therefore, did not correspond with the number of calendar-days in each semester. This resulted in difficulties for teachers to complete the syllabi in the stipulated time. It also presented some problems for the students. The teaching-learning process badly suffered as a consequence.

The laboratories in various science streams, which were already under enormous stress on account of the expanded intake following OBC quota, suddenly proved inadequate to cater to the additional demands. The acute shortage of laboratory equipments further compounded the problem. The grim situation persists in most colleges in spite of repeated assurances of quick remedy. The lecture rooms also fall

**Introduction of semester system without proper discussion led to disastrous consequences for students and the teaching-learning process. The prevailing shortage of lab facilities got further compounded by this step.**



There was already a shortage of lab facilities in Delhi university colleges due to OBC reservation; the semester system aggravated the situation even more. What would be the condition when the 4-year degree course is started?

short, in both size and number, to accommodate students.

## The problem of workload

The workload of teachers also became uneven in the wake of semesterisation. The new guidelines on the issue left much room for arbitrary interpretation. For instance, in most science courses, four lectures plus one interactive period for the whole class have been provided in each paper. However, in some colleges, the workload has been inflated by throwing all the norms to the winds. Deshbandhu College, Kalkaji, a university-maintained institution, is a case in point. Here the interactive period per paper for the whole of the class has been interpreted to mean interactive period for a 'group of 15 students.' In other words, if a class has 75 odd students then going by this interpretation there will be 5 interactive periods for the whole class, whereas the DU guidelines only allow for one interactive period. Presumably, many such 'local' interpretations prevail in different colleges. Thus, semesterisation has given way to uneven, unstable and arbitrary distribution of workload.

## DU to prepare feedstock for foreign universities

One may wonder when even the semester system, whose introduction

Ironically, after imposing the semester system the university stopped regular appointments although about 4,000 teaching posts are lying vacant. Authorities are banking on ad hoc teachers. Introduction of the 4-year degree programme may worsen the situation.

saw a series of protests from the teaching community, did not firmly take roots, what was the exigency of replacing it with yet another complex one--the 4-year degree programme. The new one aims to align with the system in foreign universities, claim DU authorities. In keeping with the international practice, it will have credit-based and credit transfer facility. The students will be provided opportunities to choose from a bouquet of disciplines and streams with application courses. The new undergraduate programme will also have two exit options. A student can exit after the second year with an associate baccalaureate degree or after the third year with a baccalaureate degree. On completion of four years of study, a student will be awarded a baccalaureate honours degree.

While DU is all set to implement the new programme from July 2013, a section of teachers is vehemently opposed to it. They allege that since the government is in a hurry to attract investment, domestic and foreign, to higher education, moves are afoot to put in place new 'academic reforms' that are conducive to this objective. Apart from such (apparent) politically-motivated resistance, there are other objections too.

While exits after second and third years have been allowed, it will not be possible to know in advance how many students will leave after the second or



Teachers protesting against hasty introduction of the semester system without proper discussion and preparation.

### Structure of the 4-year degree programme

The 4-year degree structure approved by DU comprises Discipline-I and II course papers, 11 foundation course papers and 5 application course papers. In addition, there is provision for value-added education. To this end, there will be two papers on 'mind-body-heart' and six papers on cultural (or co-curricular) activities like NCC, NSS or sports. However, there will be no exams for these eight papers.

Discipline-I will have, in all, 20 papers out of which two will be project-based research papers. Discipline-I papers will start right from the first semester while Discipline-II papers will start from the third semester. A student will be given the option to choose two subjects, say, physics in Discipline-I and chemistry in Discipline-II. On completion of four years of study, he will get an Honours degree in physics. However, he will also become eligible to pursue masters in chemistry, the subject of Discipline-II.

third year. As a result, the workload, which has already been made unstable by semesterisation, will fluctuate and become even worse. The present infrastructure situation across the university departments, as also various colleges, would not allow any more lectures, tutorials and practicals.

The 4-year structure has not specified the tutorial group size and the frequency of tutorials. Nor has the number of practicals for the science disciplines been made clear. It is also feared by a section of teachers that in the 4-year programme, the ratio of discipline papers to the total number of papers is most likely to decrease. That is the basis of the allegation that DU authorities are maintaining a conspiracy of silence on lecture-class size and

frequency of tutorials and practicals.

Apparently modelled on US community colleges, the new programme, it is alleged, aims at continually shunting out students and making higher education exclusive---it does not seem to be student friendly. A section of left-leaning teachers also allege that the new programme is designed to appoint teachers on contract basis in line with the government's thrust on commercialisation of higher education through FDI, etc. These teachers also voiced their protest against the manner in which the new programme had been approved. There seems to be some substance in this as the 61-member taskforce is a mere nominated body and not a statutory body of the university. ■