

IIT Bhubaneswar holds end-semester exams by online during COVID-19 pandemic

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Bhubaneswar, July 1: The IIT Bhubaneswar conducted the End-semester examinations in the normal comprehensive way as per its standards, very successfully, in on-line mode from June 24 to 30 for its final year subjects.

The commercially available systems for online examinations are normally designed to hold computer based tests and not for conventional examinations in a comprehensive form and have certain limitations.

IIT Bhubaneswar created a innovative system in-house to hold conventional examinations online with invigilation in virtual examination halls and adopted the same for its final year students. The conceptual and architectural design of the system was provided by Prof RV Raja Kumar, Director and the system was developed by the Computer and IT Services Cell (CITSC) of the institute with Dr Barathram, Chairman and Chandra Vadde, the programmer carrying on the main development. The system uses a commercial system provided by Wheebox as its subsystem with a lot of customization and enhancements made as per the guidance of the institute.

The team claims that the inspiration for creating this innovation and its application has come from the call of our hon'ble Prime Minister ji "to convert the pandemic crisis into an opportunity towards creating self-reliant India".

While speaking on the occasion, Prof Raja Kumar, Director said, "One of the challenges faced in the system design is to provide fairness of access to students who have a lot of variation in available gadgets and internet connectivity. Since the answering can also be done with pen and

paper, the requirement of internet is reduced to question paper access, answer paper uploading and invigilation.

The institute provided multiple options to facilitate the students to take the test with fairness, though they have different levels of technology accesses (single to two gadgets). Though the institute scheduled two examinations to facilitate the students acquire facilities incase they do not have, all (100%) of them have availed the first opportunity and could take the exams successfully. In this system a conventional examination hall is made virtual, distributed across the personal environment of each student at own home and the control also partially depends on the cooperation from each student.

Our students cooperated well, they are highly technology savvy, participated in the examinations with seriousness and helped the institute in conducting their examinations in good standards.

The institute did put up an empowered Help Desk chaired by Dr SB Karanki, Assistant Professor which could interact, attend to and fix up the problems such as those related to gadgets and internet bandwidth of the students during the exams very well making it successful for 100% of the students.

Dr PR Sahu, Dean (academic) said, “The examinations could be held without any compromise on the regulations despite the pandemic situation.

The one change made is that the duration of the online End-sem exam is reduced to 2hrs from the usual 3hrs and accordingly the weightage to 40% in place of 50%, as recommended by our Senate”.

“Holding of the examinations in the new system was a challenge and putting it in to practice and holding the examinations of the institute with the same effectiveness as conventional examinations have given us a rewarding experience”, said Dr Rajan Jha, the Prof-in-charge, examinations.