

IIT Bhubaneswar holds exams online with full attendance

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This second generation IIT customised the online exam system so that the examination could be conducted in a comprehensive form without any compromises, yet ensuring that students are not put at risk.



IIT Bhubaneswar (File image)

NEW DELHI: Even as top IITs ditched the final year exams and an increasing number of exams were cancelled in view of the prevailing Covid-19 outbreak, IIT-Bhubaneswar showed the way by not only conducting the endsemester exams online, but ensuring 100% attendance.

This second generation IIT customised the online exam system so that the examination could be conducted in a comprehensive form without any compromises, yet ensuring that students are not put at risk. The end semester examinations were conducted online between June 24 to 30, for the final year subjects where a total of 526 (which 100% of the batch size) students from BTech, dual degree, MSc, MTech and PhD participated.

This second generation IIT customised the online exam

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Even though they were called 'online exams', the requirement of the internet was limited to question paper access, answer paper uploading and invigilating the participants. As per IIT officials, 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.

The conceptual and architectural design of the system was provided by institute director Professor R V Raja Kumar and the system was developed by computer and IT services cell of the institute. The institute put in place a help desk which could interact, attend to and fix problems like those related to gadgets and internet bandwidth of the students during the exams.

Kumar, explained: "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 the 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)," and added "Though the institute scheduled two examinations to facilitate the students acquire facilities in case 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 their 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 put in place a help desk which could interact, attend to and fix the problems such as those related to gadgets and internet bandwidth of the students during the exams making it successful for 100% of the students.

PR Sahu, dea (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 exam was reduced to two hours from the usual three hours and accordingly the weightage to 40% in place of 50%, as recommended by our Senate."