Best Practices in my Institution for the year 2019-2020

Best Practise 1: Post Graduate Student Status Programme (PGSSP)

1. **Title of the practice**
   Working professionals who are employed and have the desire to pursue higher studies on a part-time basis can apply to the Post Graduate Student Status Programme (PGSSP).

2. **The context that required the initiation of the practice (150 words)**
   In recent times Hyderabad city has become the hub of the software and hardware industry. IIIT Hyderabad is strategically located in between the Hi-tech City and the Financial District. The institute understands the key requirement of engineering professionals who have taken up jobs for varied reasons but also harbours the thought of pursuing higher education to improve their future prospects. In order to meet the needs of such professionals the PGSSP program was initiated by IIITH.

3. **Objectives of the practice (100 words)**
   - To provide opportunities for industry professionals to acquire comprehensive knowledge and skills in advanced areas.
   - To provide flexibility to students to choose any course in areas based on their aptitude.
   - To provide course registrations for candidates without enrolling in any degree programme.
   - To ensure the liberty to choose courses a minimum of one and a maximum of up to two per semester.
   - To provide a chance of conversion into any part-time research programmes (MS or Ph.D.) with support from current IIITH faculty.

4. **The Practice (400 words)**

   The PGSSP programme is a well-established programme of IIITH and admission into this programme is conducted twice in a year. The applicants, who qualify and fulfil the admission criteria are advised to get a No-Objection Certificate from their employers. Most of the candidates appearing for it are interested in pursuing higher research degrees along with their regular job. However, they ensure that they will be able to manage both studies, and careers at the same time. In order to test their ability and competence before joining the program of MS or Ph.D., industry professionals prefer to join the PG Student Status Programme (PGSSP) which allows professionals to take individual courses of their interest without needing to fully enrol in a degree programme. They can enrol in a minimum of one and a maximum of two courses per semester. Once the professional is comfortable and wants to continue studying, he/she can enrol in a part-time research program with the support of an IIIT faculty member. They have to build a research proposal and align themselves with the faculty and their
ongoing research. Finally, on the recommendation of the concerned faculty, admission will be granted to the interested student.

5. Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them (150 words)

**Challenge 1: Attendance for this programme is mandatory.**

It is observed that professionals with their heavy industry workloads find it difficult to attend classes and follow an academic schedule. Hence, all interested candidates are asked to produce a No Objection Certificate from their employer to attend the classes even if they fall during office hours.

IIIT Hyderabad supports PGSSP students by providing material through online links and presentations related to the course. Further, doubt-clearing sessions through teaching assistants are also offered.

**Challenge 2: No certificate is awarded for this programme:** As it is knowledge-based and provides a gateway to postgraduate programmes in IIITH, a certificate is not awarded after completion of the course.

At the very outset of the course, the candidates are counselled if they are further interested in the PGSSP program and can be converted into part-time research programmes of MS or Ph.D., and in this way, the certification issue is mitigated.

6. Impact of the practice (200 words)

The students studying M.S and Ph.D. programmes in IIITH have to undergo mandatory coursework as a part of their research degree. The courses are offered as breadth and depth courses. The students, who enrol in PGSSP program can enrol in up to two courses per semester and complete the mandatory requirement as the credits gained from these courses will be carried forward into the main part of the degree program.

It has been observed that a good number of students are gaining entry into research programs of IIIT-H through this lateral entry mechanism of PGSSP and successfully completing higher degrees, simultaneously performing their regular jobs in the industry. Thus, IIIT-H has impacted the careers of these industry professionals to pursue their higher education and career at the same time and fulfill their aspirations and career goals. This also results in human resources for the country, with research skills, comprehensive knowledge, and skills in modern areas.

Another key impact of the program is that industry professionals get to team up with regular students to complete their project work. In this way, the students of IIITH will benefit from first-hand exposure to some of the best practices in the industry. This networking also improves employment and internship opportunities for regular students.
7. Additional Resources required

The PGSSP program does not require any additional facility/staff or laboratory infrastructure to offer this program. The PGSSP students attend the coursework along with regular students and follow the same semester schedule for theory and lab work.

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