

Report of the Peer Team on Institutional Accreditation of The American College Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Section - 1: Introduction

The American College (Autonomous), Madurai, affiliated to the Madurai Kamaraj University, decided to avail themselves of the opportunity for assessment by the National Assessment & Accreditation Council for the purpose of accreditation by the latter (NAAC). Consequently, the College submitted a self-study report to NAAC during the month of November 1999. NAAC constituted a Peer Team to visit the Institution with the following members: Dr. A.N.P. Ummerkutty, former vice-chancellor, Calicut University (Chairman), Dr.K.V.Rao, Dean, CDC, Mangalore University and Dr. Seshadri Naidu, Director, Academic Staff College, S.V. University, Tirupati. The Peer Team visited the American College from 14th to 16th December 1999.

The College is a centenarian institution started in 1881 as a second grade college, affiliated to the then Madras University. The College was shifted to the present site in 1909 and it became a first grade institution four years later. It is interesting to note that the College was started and initially funded entirely by an American missionary group. In 1934 the College became independent of the mission and was placed under a Governing Council registered under the Societies Act of 1860. Several amendments were made in later years in conformity with the changing needs. When Madurai University (which is now the Madurai Kamaraj University) was established in 1965-66, the affiliation was shifted to the new University. The College became autonomous in 1978-79, one of the first four autonomous colleges in the country.

It is satisfying to note that the main intentions of the College in volunteering for assessment and accreditation are: (i) to identify their standing in relation to other institutions of repute; (ii) to discover their weak areas and strengthen them and to find out their strong areas so as to build upon them; (iii) to attract talented teachers and students and (iv) to prepare themselves for a

vertical movement academically. The intentions are indeed educationally sound and practically achievable.

The Peer Team analysed the self-study report submitted by the College and during the visit validated whatever materials were available to them. During the stay at the college campus the team visited all the academic and administrative units of the institution, interacted extensively with its various constituents and scrutinized all the relevant documents. The academic departments of studies and specialized centres like the SCILET, related facilities such as laboratories, library, computer centre and supporting units of the institution that contribute to its curricular, co-curricular and extension activities were covered during the visit.

Detailed discussions were held with the Governing Council, the Principal, Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents, Alumni and other stake holding groups. Based on a thorough study of the self report submitted by the College and on the above mentioned elaborate exercise during the visit and also keeping the criteria identified by NAAC as the frame of reference, the Peer Team assessed the quality of education that is being imparted in the institution.

The assessment of the Peer Team in terms of the criterion-wise approach and the overall analysis, including the commendations and suggestions for further growth of the College, are presented in the following pages:

Section-2: Criterion-wise analysis

Criterion I: Curricular Aspects

The College offers a wide range of curricular programs to meet the choice of students which include 13 three-year degree programs, 12 two-year Master's programs and PG Diploma course in Computer Applications. M.Phil and Ph.D. Programmes are conducted at the research level. The programmes are designed keeping in view the social needs and vocational relevance. The curriculum covers major, non-major and elective areas to provide diversity and flexibility. Diversity was also made possible through multidisciplinary approaches in the curriculum. Because of flexibility, students have freedom to choose optionals under Part-I (languages) and in Part-IV that deals with extracurricular activities like NSS, NCC & physical education. The

college offers nearly sixty electives and some of them are useful to the students to perform better in the competitive examinations at the State and National level. The college offers electives to the third year students of the same department as well as to the students of other departments. The curriculum provides opportunities for the students to improve cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of Higher Education.

The curriculum for the various courses is revised at least once in three years. The curricular aspects are formulated through good planning with the help of faculty, Boards of Studies, expert committees and Academic Council. The college takes necessary steps to implement the revised curriculum in a year after approval by the Academic Council. New programmes such as B.Sc.(Computer Science), Biochemistry, Microbiology, B.Com(evening), M.A. (Social Work), MBA and MCA are introduced on self-financing mode. The academic programmes are reviewed by autonomy review committee once in two years. Laboratory work, field trips, study tours, projects etc form an integral part of each programme for effective learning. The curriculum also includes extension activities, physical education and ethics to develop value consciousness among students. Student representation in the Boards of Studies and in Academic Council enabled the college to develop a learner -centered curriculum. The autonomy of the college helped to design courses with relevance and diversity to meet the requirements of the students and the society. The choice based credit system planned by the college for the future will be of immense help to fulfil the objectives of higher education and autonomy. The college has already made efforts to introduce choice based credit system with the help of Oberlin Shansi Association. It can try to utilize the existing resources to offer many more useful short duration diploma and certificate courses. Student feed back on the existing courses is collected but requires more systematisation, Experts from neighbouring states may also be invited while revising/monitoring the curricula. Modular type of curriculum with contextualisation of the content, if prepared, will accelerate the teaching-learning process in the coming years.

Criterion II: Teaching-learning and Evaluation

The students are admitted into various courses through entrance tests, interviews, academic records and a combination of these. The college observes sufficient number of working days as

well as teaching days as per requirement. 75% of the total budget is allocated to the academic programmes. In order to have better learning experiences for the students, seminars, projects, field training, internships, on-the-job training programmes, inter-collegiate and inter-university workshops etc are conducted in addition to classroom teaching. Guest lectures and audio/video lessons are also arranged. Students are trained in organising workshops, seminars and exhibitions. Bridge and remedial courses are arranged occasionally to improve communication skills of the students.

The faculty members are appointed as per the UGC and state Government norms based on the expertise required for the departments. Nearly 98 per cent class-work is carried out by full-time faculty. Nearly 80% of the teachers possess additional qualifications such as M.Phil and Ph.D. Majority of the faculty have shown interest to improve their professional competencies through participation in refresher courses, workshops and National and International seminars. They have published several books and research papers in reputed journals. The department of Computer Sciences offers basic programmes in Computer Applications for the benefit of students and faculty. Academicians of good standing from outside have been invited to conduct training programmes. The College follows feedback and self-appraisal methods to evaluate the performance of the teachers but introduce peer group evaluation on teaching to improve the quality further. The college has established commendable national and international linkages and exchange programmes for both students and teachers. A few teachers have received awards. The management shows keen interest in the professional development of the teachers. Campus workshops on classroom communication and professional efficiency are conducted.

The students are evaluated both on continuous and summative basis. The question papers cover entire syllabus with different aspects like knowledge, understanding, application, analysis and critical evaluation. Tests, Quizzes, Assignments, Seminars, Laboratory work etc are the common forms of continuous assessment. The paper-setting is done by experts and course teachers and the valuation is done at the college. The college follows the practice of double valuation without moderation. The college deserves appreciation in publishing the results within reasonably short time. This is one of the distinctive features of the institution. Repeat

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examinations held in every June help the students to complete the papers within the same academic year.

The good practices of the college for teaching-learning-evaluation helped to maintain quality. The autonomy enabled the institution to develop suitable teaching-learning-evaluation strategies which helped to develop higher intellectual skills among the students, thus fulfilling the goals of the institution.

Criterion III: Research, Consultancy & Extension

The College has attempted to encourage research during last several years and the PG Departments of Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology, English and Economics have attained the research status. 40% of the faculty are engaged in research activities in the respective areas. Several teachers have published papers in reputed journals. Many Full time and Part time research scholars are currently working and a few of them receive Fellowships. The college has attracted eight major Research projects worth rupees 25 lakh. They are funded by Department of Biotechnology, UGC, TN Council for Science and Technology, Department of Environment, I.I.Sc., United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, USA and R & D unit of the college. The areas of Research include immunology, medicinal plants and bio-diversity. The College has a separate Research & Development Committee to review and monitor the research activities. A unique feature of the college is a provision of a corpus fund of Rs. 15 lakhs exclusively for research which started in 1974 itself. English, Botany and Zoology Departments have been well recognised for the innovative research work. Some of the teachers have established collaborative work with multinational companies and also received leadership awards and international fellowships in recognition of the research work. With the available resources of all kinds the management can motivate the teachers to guide more number of M.Phil/Ph.D. scholars.

The American College is a nodal agency for western ghats conservation programmes. The College has good potentialities for consultancy service in the areas of Library Science, Translation Work, Medicinal Plants, Plant Biochemistry, Vaccine development, vector ecology and control. But it is not explored fully. The consultancy is provided free of cost, but college



can try to generate funds through consultancy services. All the departments are to be encouraged to involve in consultancy work to the extent possible.

The College organises extension activities with the help of a faculty member holding additional charge for extension work. It is suggested to have a Full time teacher for effective role in these activities. The staff and students are involved in extension programmes formally and informally. The broad areas of extensions include eradication of illiteracy among rural people, medicare to tribal people, inservice training to higher secondary students etc. The College was chosen by TN State Council for Science & Technology to conduct one month young scientists programme for children. Some of the departments have also undertaken outreach programmes. Adoption of a village, classes for rural children, social survey on rickshaw pullers and medicare to slum dwellers are worth mentioning. The college engages in extension activities with the help of voluntary organisations.

The NCC cadets have been performing very well in the certificate examinations and in various camps at the national level. The units have participated in blood donation camps and rescue missions. The NSS unit organised workshops on consumer awareness, civil rights, issues on women and children and environmental aspects. Adult education extension project and reading services for blind students are the highlights of the unit. In the past 14 years the community outreach programmes supported by UBCHEA has helped the college to develop meaningful college-community interaction to promote micro-level planning for villages, folk-arts, adult education and tribal development. The college has more than 2000 students on rolls and there is ample scope for extension activities and outreach programmes. The College should make efforts to motivate the students to participate in community oriented outreach programmes especially in rural and slum areas.

Criterion IV: Infrastructure and Learning Resources

The College has excellent infrastructural facilities which are put into optimum use and are being constantly improved. Administrative Offices of the Principal, Vice-Principal, the Bursar and Dean of Academic Affairs are computerised. Internet & e-mail facility are available in the campus. A documentation centre is also maintained for the convenience of staff and students.

Separate laboratories and classrooms are available for UG and PG students. The General Library is computerised and is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. There are departmental libraries also for the use of students.

Adequate number of journals are available for most of the departments. Others make use of the journals available elsewhere (e.g. University Library) for their research work.

General facilities like staff quarters, health centres, cooperative stores, hostels for students and staff are provided by the management. A separate hostel for physically handicapped students is noteworthy.

Sports and Games have received extra attention in the form of well maintained playgrounds. The college is recognised by the Government as a residential coaching centre in hockey. Physical Education forms an integral part of the curriculum along with NSS & NCC.

Computer facilities are available in all the departments. The College takes care to see that software's are updated and students and staff are provided central computing facilities.

The laboratories are well equipped and some departments have developed research facilities (like Study Centre in Indian Literature in English and Translation, Plant Tissue Culture Centre etc.)

Criterion V: Student Support and Progression

The student support system available in the campus is very good. Some departments have kept records of those who have appeared for national level examinations and have kept track of bright students of the college.

The pass percentage appears to be bit lower for UG students but is very good for PG students. This may be due to the problem of the change of medium of instruction, getting used to autonomy concepts etc in the beginning. Extension activities (like immunology programmes, candle making, mushroom culture, business electronics etc) help the interested students for self employment and to find jobs. Many students have taken up projects linked with local problems.



Students are also helped to prepare themselves for interviews and competitive examinations. While placement efforts are made for courses like MBA and MCA, it is desirable to have a full-fledged placement cell and career guidance cell for the institution as a whole.

Some innovative schemes which deserve a special mention are the 'Earn-while you learn' scheme and the cultural exchange programmes with American Universities. Many Departmental student associations have been active in organizing extension lectures, exhibitions and seminars with the support of staff.

The Alumni Association has helped the college in funding its programmes.

Criterion VI: Organisation and Management

The Governing Council of the College controls the functioning of the institution. Principal is the Secretary of the Governing Council and is also the Correspondent. He is the link between the management, staff and students. Various committees are designated for specific purposes which report to the Principal.

The final decision about implementation of the specific programmes/projects will be taken by the Governing Council. So far, there is no problem about it and the Governing Council generally conveys its decisions sufficiently early. It also provides funds based on the projects/proposals submitted to it. Staff members are recruited as per rules of the Government through open advertisement and merit alone is the criterion for selection. However, preference is given to Christian candidates. Wherever Government has not approved the salary of the staff, management has provided the salary component almost on par with the Government scale of pay. Self-financing courses have their staff paid by the funds generated by the courses themselves.

The management has taken care to take two elected staff representatives in the Governing Council. There is a University Nominee also. The feed-back system suggests that the management is willing to listen to problems of the staff and the students.



Efforts on the part of the management has resulted in good resources mobilisation. It may be desirable that the expertise available in many departments (like Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, MBA, MCA) is also properly utilized to generate resources.

Criterion VII: Healthy Practices

The American College, which is one of the very few centenarian higher education institutions in the state of Tamil Nadu, has introduced many healthy practices in its organization and functioning from the very early stages of its existence. A democratic structure is the most notable-feature -various constituencies of the institution getting their due share of participation in academic and administrative areas. The Principal is given a fulcral position in all affairs of the college. This is indeed most welcome. Faculty members get a dominant presence in the Governing Council which has full autonomy in the decision making process. It is good to note that the authorities still consider education next only to piety in the regeneration and elevation of the people. The original aims and objectives are accordingly reviewed and modified as per the changing needs of the society.

Student representation in the Boards of Studies and Academic Council is another bold initiative. The arrangement seems to be functioning well.

The Management has built up a sound system of resource mobilization and more than Rs.40 lakhs is more or less assured from different sources, including that from the American College Trust in the USA and from organisations like United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia and Oberlin College of USA. The college has constructed a shopping complex in its campus making use of the main road frontage available. This complex reportedly fetches nearly Rs.20 lakhs every year.

There are several other aspects which are covered under the Overall Analysis as commendations.



Section-3: Overall Analysis

Spread over a sprawling 40 acre lively campus, the centenarian American College has made a mark on the educational scenario of Tamil Nadu. The range of courses offered, the facilities got prepared for their effective implementation and the sheer size of the student and faculty population are indeed impressive. Though the best is yet to come in any endeavor in higher education, the American College, Madurai has made many forward strides in imparting quality education to its wards. The Peer Team would like to commend, particularly on the following notable features:

- Adequate exclusive buildings are available for the various academic units and for the different administrative branches.
- Important functionaries such as the Principal, the Vice-Principal and the Bursar are staying in the official quarters provided in the campus and are readily accessible for solving any problem.
- The general maintenance and upkeep of the campus, its facilities and surrounding are good. A full-time ground superintendent and a team of gardeners and sweepers carry out their work meticulously.
- The magnificent Main Hall and additional common facilities available give ample opportunities to students and faculty for the development of their curricular and co-curricular capabilities.
- Computer literacy and familiarity courses are optionally imparted to the students and the faculty.
- In addition to the 12 PG Programmes, research facilities are provided both for M.Phil and Ph.D. students, the number of students collectively belonging to these categories being nearly one third of the student population.
- A separate Research & Development Fund is constituted by the Management with an initial paid-up capital of Rs.15 lakhs. Research proposals are funded out of the interest accrued. This Research & Development Fund thus acts both as a nucleus and as a catalyst, building up a research culture.

- The College has established sustained linkages with other like-minded agencies both national and international. This has facilitated many exchange programmes both for students and for the faculty.
- 'Study Centre for Indian Literature in English & Translation' (SCILET) is a pioneering initiative by the college. It now attracts many scholars interested in Indo-Anglican literature.
- Majority of the faculty have M.Phil./Ph.D qualifications.
- Campus life seems to be quite congenial to the students and have many built-in facilities like Bank Extension Counter, Shopping Complex, separate Alumni building, Seminar room with audio-visual aids, all-purpose auditorium, flood-lit basket ball and volley ball grounds etc.
- A documentation centre with a programmable duplicating machine is an added convenience to the students.
- Out of 14 Governing Council members, 5 are teachers of the college including the Principal who is also the Secretary of the Council and the correspondent of the College.
- Department of Applied Science (DAS) runs an employment-oriented Computer programme for the physically handicapped under the Jivana Jyoti Programme.
- The handicapped students have a separate hostel with ramps for wheel chairs.
- Student representation in the Board of Studies and Academic Council is a welcome progressive step and helps towards a student orientation in the teaching-learning process.
- Providing residential quarters for Officers/Wardens/Non-teaching staff since inception.
- Location of IGNOU centre with satellite facility.
- Orientation Programmes for new entrants of UG & PG courses
- Strong support from Alumini Association
- Endowments and scholarships
- Automation of administrative work.

The College may also consider the following suggestions for its further development.

- Introduction of Choice-Based Credit System which allows horizontal mobility to the students may be expedited as the proposal is reportedly already in the pipeline.
- Vocationalization of some courses at the degree level may be attempted on the model of similar UGC courses which the college had already implemented earlier.

- Remedial coaching particularly in English is recommended to help the socially and economically backward students.
- Since a great deal of the evaluation system is internalised, clearer guidelines to the paper-setters and greater care in their selection may be taken.
- Feedback from the students on academic and other matters may be systematised and followed up regularly. It will be a worthy tradition for a centenarian institution.
- Research and Consultancy may be strengthened with ample facilities and wide public contact. There is plenty of scope for both, and sponsored fellowships could be explored.
- Since the Alumni Association is strong, their expertise and services could be better utilized.
- It will be worth while to compile a computerised data-base on the Alumni, particularly in respect of their progression and placement in life.
- It will be advisable to have a sustained link with the parents through a Parents-Teachers Association.



The Peer Team wishes to thank Prof.A.Gnanam, Chairman, NAAC for the opportunity given to them to participate in the onerous task of assessing the American College, Madurai which is a prestigious institution in Tamilnadu. Thanks are due to Dr. Antony Stella, Dy.Adviser, NAAC, for her unstinted co-operation and help in the assessment work and preparation of the report. Dr. D. Samuel Sudanandha, Principal, deserves sincere thanks for extending all co-operation for the work of the team. Dr.J.Johnson Sundararaj, Vice-Principal and Co-ordinator of the Steering Committee and his teammates did a good job. Thanks are due to them for their sincere and hard work.

The Peer Team wishes all success to the Institution in its future endeavour.

Name of the Peer Team member

Signature

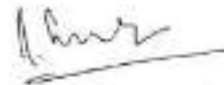
1. Dr. A.N.P. Ummerkutty



2. Dr. K.V. Rao



3. Dr. R. Seshadri Naidu



Date: 16-12-89

Place: Madurai

I have gone through the report
and I agree with it. J. J. N.

Signature of the Head of the Institution