

# Redefining the Role and Remuneration Structure of the IQAC Coordinator in Higher Education Institutions of India: A Policy Perspective

Dr. Sadashiv Sitaram Mengal

*Associate Professor & Head-Department of Economics, Indrayani Mahavidyalaya Talegaon Dabhade*

**Abstract:** The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) serves as the cornerstone for maintaining and advancing academic quality within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India. Functioning under the guidance of the NAAC, the IQAC ensures systematic documentation, evaluation, and enhancement of institutional processes. At the heart of this mechanism lies the IQAC Coordinator, whose leadership is essential for preparing the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR), Institutional Information for Quality Assessment (IIQA), and the Self Study Report (SSR). The coordinator's role extends beyond compliance it involves fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation across all dimensions of academic and administrative functioning. However, despite the growing responsibilities, the position of IQAC Coordinator continues to lack formal recognition, structural stability, and adequate remuneration. This paper argues for a comprehensive redefinition of the coordinator's role and professional status in light of emerging policy directions such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the revised NAAC Accreditation Framework, and the newly introduced Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) model. The proposed framework envisions the IQAC Coordinator not merely as an administrative functionary but as a strategic leader and quality architect, driving institutional excellence and accountability in alignment with national and global quality assurance standards.

**Keywords:** IQAC, NAAC, HEI, NEP 2020, MBGL, Coordinator, Quality Assurance, Remuneration, Policy Framework.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to ensure the maintenance and promotion of quality standards in higher education

across India. The formation of an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in every accredited HEI is a mandatory requirement. While the Principal acts as the Chairperson, the IQAC Coordinator is the operational head who oversees documentation, reporting, and quality improvement initiatives. Yet, the current structure fails to acknowledge the demanding nature of the coordinator's work through appropriate policy and financial support.

## II. THE EXPANDING ROLE OF THE IQAC COORDINATOR

The IQAC Coordinator's role has expanded significantly over the past decade. The introduction of ICT-enabled NAAC assessment frameworks (2017, revised in 2020) has made the position more technical and data-driven. The coordinator must now manage institutional documentation, digital submissions, and compliance with quality metrics across seven NAAC criteria. Furthermore, with the implementation of NEP 2020 and the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS), the coordinator's role includes integrating quality assurance with curriculum reform, research promotion, and outcome-based education models.

## III. INTEGRATION OF THE MATURITY-BASED GRADED LEVEL (MBGL) SYSTEM

The introduction of the Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) framework by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) represents a transformative shift in India's higher education quality assurance paradigm. Moving beyond the conventional reliance on quantitative scores and checklist-based evaluation, the MBGL model emphasizes the qualitative maturity of institutional processes,

governance systems, and academic practices. It envisions higher education institutions (HEIs) as dynamic, evolving entities that progress through graded levels of excellence each stage reflecting a deeper institutional commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Unlike the earlier accreditation models that primarily measured compliance, the MBGL framework focuses on process evolution and outcome integration. It evaluates how effectively an institution internalizes quality principles, integrates data-driven decision-making, and sustains best practices across academic, administrative, and societal dimensions. By linking maturity levels to specific developmental milestones, MBGL encourages institutions to move from basic compliance toward strategic excellence and transformational impact. For IQAC Coordinators, this framework introduces an advanced and multidimensional responsibility. They are no longer expected to merely compile data for accreditation but to function as strategic quality architects who guide the institution through successive maturity stages. This entails developing performance metrics, facilitating participatory governance, leveraging analytics for institutional diagnostics, and ensuring stakeholder alignment with quality goals.

Moreover, the integration of MBGL necessitates a shift in institutional mindset—from viewing accreditation as a one-time event to adopting a continuous improvement culture. Coordinators must build systems capable of capturing real-time data, assessing qualitative outcomes, and generating actionable insights for evidence-based policy interventions. Thus, the MBGL framework transforms the IQAC from a compliance-oriented body into a center of excellence for institutional transformation, positioning the coordinator as a key driver of innovation and accountability within India's evolving higher education landscape.

#### IV. CHALLENGES FACED BY IQAC COORDINATORS

While the IQAC Coordinator serves as the fulcrum of quality assurance and institutional development, the position continues to be fraught with structural, administrative, and professional challenges. Despite being a mandated component of NAAC's

accreditation framework, the coordinator's role remains inadequately institutionalized, leading to a persistent gap between expectation and empowerment.

i) Absence of formal recognition: A foremost challenge lies in the absence of formal recognition by higher education authorities. The IQAC Coordinator is often appointed through internal mechanisms without clear policy backing, service conditions, or tenure protection. This lack of statutory recognition undermines both the authority and continuity of the position, making it dependent on institutional discretion rather than regulatory mandate.

ii) Nonexistence of a structured remuneration framework: Equally pressing is the nonexistence of a structured remuneration framework. Although coordinators shoulder extensive responsibilities—ranging from managing accreditation processes and documentation to leading digital transformation and policy implementation most institutions fail to compensate this workload. Without financial or workload adjustment, the coordinator's duties become an additional burden rather than an acknowledged academic assignment, often leading to fatigue and diminished motivation.

iii) Administrative overload: The administrative overload further compounds these difficulties. Coordinators must simultaneously address the demands of NAAC, UGC, AISHE, NIRF, and affiliating universities—each requiring detailed, time-sensitive, and data-intensive reporting. The multiplicity of reporting formats, evolving digital portals, and constant follow-ups demand advanced ICT skills and a near-continuous engagement with documentation and compliance.

iv) Lack of systematic training and capacity building: Another significant obstacle is the lack of systematic training and capacity building. Despite the rapid introduction of new frameworks such as the Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) and outcome-based accreditation systems, most coordinators receive little to no formal orientation. The result is a widening skill gap between policy expectations and practical execution.

v) Institutional inertia: These challenges collectively create an environment of institutional inertia—where coordinators operate under heavy pressure but with

limited support or recognition. The absence of policy-level clarity and resource allocation not only demotivates coordinators but also restricts the IQAC's potential to function as a proactive and innovative quality assurance unit. If left unaddressed, these systemic gaps risk transforming the IQAC into a procedural body rather than a transformative engine for academic excellence.

#### V. POLICY GAPS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Although the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have made the establishment of an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) mandatory for all accredited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), there exists a profound policy vacuum regarding the administrative and financial status of the IQAC Coordinator. The regulatory frameworks, while comprehensive in outlining the functions and objectives of the IQAC, remain notably silent on the service structure, remuneration, and governance framework for coordinators. This omission has created inconsistencies in implementation and accountability across institutions.

The UGC guidelines primarily focus on the institutional mechanisms for ensuring quality enhancement but fail to delineate clear norms for the appointment, tenure, workload allocation, or incentives for the IQAC Coordinator. Similarly, NAAC manuals emphasize the operational efficiency of the IQAC but stop short of mandating resource allocation or financial entitlements for its leadership. As a result, the coordinator's role is perceived as additional duty rather than a structured, remunerated academic function. In practice, this has led to a diversity of institutional interpretations. Some forward-thinking universities and autonomous colleges have developed internal policies that recognize the IQAC Coordinator's contributions through honoraria, adjusted teaching loads, or administrative allowances. However, such measures are isolated, discretionary, and lack uniformity. In many state-aided or affiliated institutions, coordinators continue to shoulder extensive documentation, accreditation, and policy tasks without any tangible institutional support.

This absence of a standardized policy framework also creates disparities between public and private HEIs. Private institutions, driven by performance-linked quality mandates, often allocate financial incentives or dedicated administrative support to their IQACs. Conversely, public institutions, constrained by bureaucratic rigidity and funding limitations, rarely institutionalize such practices. Moreover, there is a lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that IQACs function as effective quality assurance systems rather than as compliance bodies. Without policy recognition of the coordinator's role as a statutory academic function, the IQAC remains vulnerable to underfunding, leadership discontinuity, and operational inefficiency.

Bridging this gap requires a national-level directive that clearly defines the position of the IQAC Coordinator its tenure, workload equivalence, and financial entitlements. Such a framework would not only ensure parity and transparency across HEIs but also strengthen the institutional culture of quality enhancement envisioned by NAAC and NEP 2020.

#### VI. TOWARDS A REDEFINED FRAMEWORK

To achieve lasting effectiveness, accountability, and institutional sustainability in the functioning of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), there is an urgent need to move beyond procedural compliance and adopt a policy-driven redefinition of the IQAC framework—one that recognizes quality assurance as a core academic function rather than an auxiliary task. This transformation must center around the IQAC Coordinator, whose leadership directly influences an institution's accreditation outcomes, quality trajectory, and overall academic reputation.

a) Formal Recognition and Statutory Status: The foremost requirement is the formal recognition of the IQAC Coordinator as a statutory position under the Department of Higher Education. This would grant the coordinator official status equivalent to other administrative and academic leadership roles, ensuring stability, authority, and continuity. Recognition under a state or UGC-approved statute would also prevent arbitrary appointments and terminations, thereby strengthening institutional accountability.

b) Fixed Tenure and Transparent Appointment: The appointment of coordinators must be conducted through a transparent and merit-based process, ideally for a minimum term of three to five years. Such tenure stability will ensure sustained quality initiatives, long-term planning, and continuity in NAAC and Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) documentation. This framework would also encourage faculty members to view the role as a career-enhancing leadership assignment rather than a temporary obligation.

c) Structured Remuneration and Workload Rationalization: The UGC and State Higher Education Councils (SHECs) should develop a uniform policy defining the remuneration structure for IQAC Coordinators. This could take the form of monthly honoraria, workload reduction, or additional increments within the Academic Performance Indicator (API) system. By institutionalizing financial recognition, HEIs can reinforce the seriousness and prestige of the role while reducing the perception of IQAC duties as unpaid or peripheral work.

d) Capacity Building and Continuous Professional Development: Quality assurance in higher education now requires sophisticated understanding of data analytics, benchmarking, and digital documentation. Therefore, NAAC must institutionalize regular training, orientation, and certification programs for IQAC Coordinators. These should include modules on MBGL, ICT tools, performance dashboards, and policy compliance systems. Certification can be made mandatory and linked to eligibility for reappointment or promotion under the Performance-Based Appraisal System (PBAS).

e) Integrated Accountability and Performance Evaluation Mechanism: Accountability should move from paperwork validation to performance-linked evaluation. Coordinators' effectiveness must be measured against the institution's NAAC grades, MBGL maturity levels, and progress in key performance indicators (KPIs) such as research output, student outcomes, and governance quality. This linkage will create a data-informed evaluation model where the coordinator's role is assessed objectively within the larger quality ecosystem.

The redefined framework envisions the IQAC Coordinator as a strategic leader—a bridge between

institutional governance and academic innovation. Recognizing and empowering this role through formal policy, structured remuneration, and measurable accountability will not only professionalize quality assurance practices but also align Indian higher education with global standards of excellence envisioned in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the MBGL-based accreditation model.

## VII. INTEGRATION WITH NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark transformation in India's higher education landscape, emphasizing quality, autonomy, innovation, and outcome-based learning. Its core vision is to shift the focus of higher education from rote learning and compliance-based evaluation to holistic, flexible, and competency-driven systems that nurture creativity, critical thinking, and institutional accountability. Within this evolving ecosystem, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and particularly the IQAC Coordinator assume a pivotal role as catalysts of change and strategic leaders of reform implementation.

The NEP 2020 framework underscores institutional autonomy and accountability—two pillars that directly intersect with the mission of the IQAC. The coordinator's redefined role must therefore extend beyond routine documentation and periodic accreditation. Instead, the Coordinator must function as a "Quality Mentor" who translates NEP's guiding principles into actionable institutional strategies. This involves promoting multidisciplinary integration, outcome-based curricula, research-driven pedagogy, innovation ecosystems, and inclusive governance—all while ensuring alignment with national and international benchmarks.

The integration of the Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) system within the NEP framework marks a significant step forward in operationalizing continuous quality enhancement. MBGL enables HEIs to assess their qualitative maturity levels—not just through performance metrics, but through the robustness of institutional processes, stakeholder engagement, and governance culture. By using MBGL as an internal audit and benchmarking mechanism, the IQAC can align institutional practices with NEP's emphasis on

evidence-based decision-making and lifelong learning ecosystems.

Furthermore, the NEP envisions the creation of Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) and Performance-Based Accreditation Systems, areas where the IQAC Coordinator's expertise becomes indispensable. As a strategic policy interpreter, the coordinator must facilitate the seamless integration of these reforms into institutional frameworks by coordinating among faculty, administration, and regulatory agencies. In the post-NEP era, the IQAC is no longer a compliance unit—it is an engine of transformation. The coordinator must embody the dual roles of visionary planner and execution strategist, ensuring that each aspect of NEP 2020—ranging from digital infrastructure and learner-centric pedagogy to research, equity, and global engagement—is translated into measurable institutional outcomes.

Thus, the synergy between NEP 2020 and the MBGL model redefines the higher education quality paradigm in India. It transforms the IQAC Coordinator into a change agent—not confined to preparing reports, but leading institutions toward self-sustaining excellence, data-informed governance, and a globally competitive quality culture.

#### VIII.CONCLUSION

In the contemporary landscape of Indian higher education, the role of the IQAC Coordinator has transcended its traditional administrative boundaries and emerged as one of the most strategically vital positions in institutional governance. As higher education institutions transition toward a more accountable, data-driven, and innovation-oriented framework, the IQAC Coordinator stands at the intersection of policy implementation, quality enhancement, and institutional transformation. Yet, despite being the nucleus of quality assurance processes, this role continues to be undervalued in formal policy and practice. The lack of statutory recognition, structured remuneration, and institutional empowerment has constrained the coordinator's potential to drive meaningful change. As India's higher education system aligns itself with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Maturity-Based Graded Level (MBGL) accreditation framework, a fundamental paradigm shift is required—one that

acknowledges the IQAC not as a compliance unit but as a strategic engine for institutional excellence.

The integration of MBGL represents a decisive move toward a future-ready quality architecture. By emphasizing process maturity, institutional learning, and evidence-based outcomes, MBGL offers a dynamic alternative to conventional numerical grading. It allows for a holistic assessment of institutional growth—evaluating not just performance indicators but also the underlying culture of continuous improvement, participatory governance, and ethical accountability. To harness the full potential of this transformation, regulatory bodies such as the UGC, NAAC, and State Higher Education Councils must institutionalize a comprehensive framework that ensures formal recognition, fair remuneration, and professional development pathways for IQAC Coordinators. Such policy reform would not only elevate the status of coordinators within institutional hierarchies but also enhance the credibility and sustainability of India's quality assurance ecosystem.

Ultimately, a redefined and incentivized structure for the IQAC and its leadership will help cultivate a new generation of academic quality leaders—faculty members who blend scholarship with strategic vision, administrative skill with technological literacy, and institutional loyalty with a commitment to national quality goals. Recognizing and empowering the IQAC Coordinator is, therefore, not merely an administrative necessity but a strategic imperative for realizing the holistic, inclusive, and globally competitive higher education landscape envisioned by NAAC and NEP 2020.

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