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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FOUR YEARS UNDERGRADUATE (FYUG) PROGRAMME PROPOSED BY NEP-2020: A GATEWAY OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

According to National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) students will join the initial research programme at the fourth year of undergraduate course. This study focused on the paradigm of higher education as per NEP 2020, the idea of research integration with undergraduate course as per NEP2020, the structure of research credit in four year undergraduate course, and a step forward for quality research in higher education (Doctoral degree. UGC recommended a four year undergraduate course in all the degree colleges and universities. Students can choose their research stream in their fourth year (7th semester). Student can enrol themselves in research for the last two semester (7th and 8th semester), if they scored 75% or higher in their first six semester or 7.5 CGPA. This four year undergraduate honours course with research will initially prepare the students for conducting good research project. This programme will open up a new window of doctoral research to the modern generation learners at the undergraduate level. This paper will give a direction towards the research to improve the quality of research in multidisciplinary environment. Moreover it fulfils the goal of better society and country economy through the quality education with research at the undergraduate level. Integrated research programme provide qualified and expert researcher to the teaching-learning arena. Students will be knowledgeable, expertise and skilled in research in multi-disciplinary environment. This will save time and energy to the students as they can directly join the Ph.D. programme after completion of undergraduate course with research.

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INTRODUCTION

"No research without action,
No action without research."
-----Kurt Lewin
German American Psychologist

The 21st century has brought about a paradigm shift in in the undergraduate course, emphasizing the essential skills for navigating the research interconnected with other discipline. By integrating these skills undergraduate students become well-rounded, multi-faceted individuals who will contribute to the quality research in higher education. Thus, integrating research skills into the undergraduate curriculum supports them to conduct good research at younger age which aims to ensure quality research. The guidelines of the National Education Policy (NEP) have so far implemented a four-year undergraduate programme in 150 universities across the country in the academic session 2023-24. In the forthcoming academic session 300 more institutions will launch it reported by University Grants Commission (UGC). With the implementation of this four year programme student will get an undergraduate honours degree with research specialization and the duration of their post graduate course will be 1 year instead of existing 2 year structure. However this is optional. Going by the provision of NEP, this 4-year programme allows students to choose between a 3-year UG degree or a 4-year hons./research degree. For significant enhancing employability skills students will takeinternships, research projects, and practical training in the additional year (4th Year).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- This study focuses on the importance of equipping individuals with research knowledge & skills to provide opportunities for multidisciplinary work including in academia, government, industry, research institution.
- Younger generation involve themselves in quality research.
- The research explains the need to integrate skills at undergraduate level into modern educational systems.
- The research skills at undergraduate level will foster global collaboration in broader perspective.

- This study highlights the entry point of research at the undergraduate level which is the gateway of doctoral degree. It motivates many students who intended to do research without wasting any time.
- This study provides valuable views about the newly introduced four year undergraduate programme.
- This study will helps to the development of strategies and initiatives taken by the undergraduate students, college teachers, educators, parents for the sake of academic progress of students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Panchal (2024) focused on the new innovations especially in the research section in NEP 2020. In this research paper various educational stages are highlighted, This study also included the advantages of NEP 2020 as well as some suggestions regarding the policy for further improvement. It is a qualitative research paper based on secondary data, collected from various sources like books, journals and official documents. The findings suggest that in the research section of any innovation there should be merit-based appointments of institutional leaders. Moreover, in India the research and innovation investment is now 0.69% of GDP and the global average of 3% of GDP. The minimum period of Ph.D. for a full-time and part-time research scholar is three to four years. In this stage the students are able to pursue high quality research with any multidisciplinary subject. The one year M.Phil. programme was terminated.Das (2023) conducted a study to highlight the crucial changes in the higher education system as per NEP 2020 and the current issues, challenges of the present higher education system of the NEP 2020 as well as the impact of NEP 2020 on higher education especially research and doctoral studies.

The study was purely descriptive in nature, which was based on qualitative work and secondary data. In this study data collected from various books, journals, periodicals, official documents etc. The theoretical information used here. The findings indicate that the Four Year UG program is helpful for multiple entry and exit options, academic bank of credit, and termination of M.Phil. Programme encouraging research and innovation. The program works as a pathway for obtaining a doctoral degree.Aithal (2020)was highlighted and overview the policies, priorities and innovations of NEP 2020. The significance of the study lies to the prediction of the implications of NEP 2020 of the Indian higher education system, especially on research and innovation. The methodology used here by using Focus Group Discussion Method (5-6). The Predictive Analysis Technique (7-8) and various suggestions are given based on Focus Group Analysis.Kumar (2019) conducted research where the objective is to study the attitude of student teacher towards a four year integrated teacher education program. It is a quantitative study. The researcher applied Survey method to study the problem. The sample was 192 student- teachers of 4th year of four year integrated teacher education system of Central University of South Bihar and Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar. An Attitude scale for student Teachers (Asst.) was constructed and standardized. The statistical methods like standard deviation and T-test were applied. Findings are helpful for policy making and to know the perception of student teachers regarding the course as well as the research and doctoral studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Obj-1: To discuss the paradigm of higher education as per NEP 2020.

Obj-2: To explore the idea of research integration with undergraduate course as per NEP2020

Obj-3: To discuss the structure of research credit in four year undergraduate course.

Obj-4: To know how undergraduate degree with research create a step forward for quality research in higher education (Doctoral degree).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the paradigm shift of higher education as per NEP 2020?

RQ2: How research credit integrated with undergraduate course as per NEP2020?

RQ3: What is the structure of research credit in four year undergraduate course?

RQ4: How to develop research skills at undergraduate level?

RQ5: How undergraduate degree with research create a step forward for quality research in higher education (Doctoral degree)?

METHODOLOGY

A systematic study always needs a better methodology for achieving its expected objectives. It is a qualitative study. Methodology in case of thisqualitative research study includes various activities like study the literature reviews, draft of new education policy, UGC draft on four year integrated course, Higher education department recommendation for introducing four year undergraduate course, previous and new structure of undergraduate course of state and central universities.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: What is the paradigm shift of higher education as per NEP 2020?: Under the modern UG and PG system introduced by NEP 2020, important changes have been made to strengthen flexibility and adaptability. The UG program has been restructured into a four-year multidisciplinary degree with multiple entry and exit options. A certificate will be provided to the students after one year if student will exit the course, a diploma will be provided after two years, after three years students will get a regular bachelor's degree, and will get a scope to complete the four-year program for an honours or research-based degree. The curriculum is now more flexible, allowing students to choose major and minor subjects across disciplines. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) facilitates students to store and transfer their credits, facilitating re-entry into education at any point. At the PG level, NEP 2020 introduces a one-year master's program for students who have completed a four-year UG degree, while those with a three-year UG degree will continue with the traditional two-year PG program. The new system facilitates experiential learning, skill

development, and interdisciplinary studies, making higher education more vibrant and aligned with universal standards. This transformative shift is expressed through the figure-1:

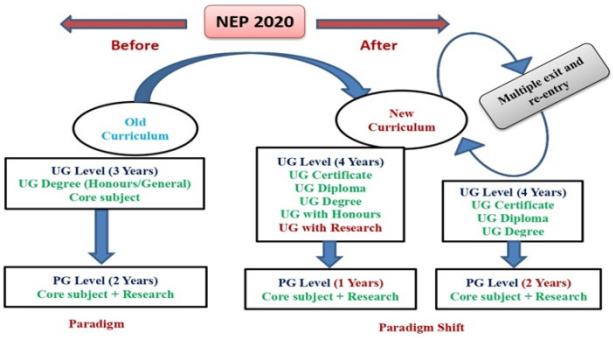


Figure 1. Paradigm Shift in Higher Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 generates a transformative modification in India's higher education system by promoting flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, and a skill-based education system. NEP 2020 envisions a more holistic and extensive education model that facilitates critical thinking and creativity among learners. A crucial shift is the introduction of a Multiple Entry and Exit System(figure-2) enabling students to leave and rejoin higher education at various stages while accumulating credits in an Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). This confirms that learning is not disrupted because of personal or financial restrictions. Previously Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) systems followed a rigid pattern with restricted flexibility. The undergraduate (UG) programs were commonly three years and students were required to attain the full duration to earn their degrees. There were no provisions for multiple exit options, meaning students who left the course midway would not receive any certification. Earlier, the curriculum was greatly discipline-specific, with little scope for interdisciplinary learning. Assessments were mostly based on final examinations, and there was no system to stock or transfer academic credits.

Similarly, at the postgraduate (PG) level, the system followed a two-year structure. Students who completed a three-year UG degree were competent to pursue PG programs. Research alternatives were limited to specialized fields, and M.Phil. degreeserved as an intermediate degree between PG and PhD. The focus remained on theoretical knowledge, with lesser emphasis on skill development, interdisciplinary learning, or real-world application.

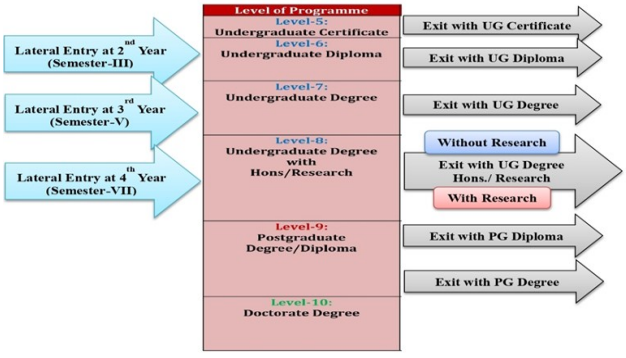


Figure 2. Multiple entry and exit points and re-entry options with/without Research

RQ2: How research credit integrated with undergraduate course as per NEP2020?

NEP envisages several transformative initiatives in higher education but structural reformation in undergraduate course is as below

- Introducing Holistic Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Education.
- Developing Human being skills like intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, ethical and moral in an integrated manner.
- Developing soft skills like complex problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills etc.
- Adoption of flexible curricular structures in multidisciplinary context.
- Provide the opportunities for internships with local industry, business, craft person as well as research internship with faculty and researcher at their own or other HEI or research institution to improve their employability

Advance Disciplinary/ Interdisciplinary courses required to support/undertake research, including research methodology course and a research project: At the beginning of the 7th Semester each student will take up a research project along with advances courses and research methodology courses. The final semester will be devoted exclusively to a research project. The project would be related to a topic in the chosen major disciplinary programme of study or an interdisciplinary topic that has a substantial overlap with the major disciplinary/ interdisciplinary programme of study.

Research-oriented courses & internship and research project: All students pursuing 4-year bachelor's degree with honours/research will be required to take up research-oriented advance courses, research methodology courses and research project. A total of 18 credits shall be allotted for the research project. The students are expected to complete activities relating to the research project involving 8 credit hours in the 7th semester. These activities will include writing of project/research proposal, review of related literature and collection of required data. The remaining 10 credits of the research project will be earmarked for research related activities during the eight semesters. These activities include writing the research report. All students pursuing 4-year bachelor's degree with honours/research will also undergo 4 credits internship with faculty and researchers at their own or other HEIs or research institutions during the eight semesters.

RQ3: What is the structure of research credit in four year undergraduate course?

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underlines a multidisciplinary, credit-based structure for both Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) programs, incorporating research at different levels.

Four-Year Undergraduate (FYUGP) Research Credit Structure

- ❖ First Year (Semesters 1 & 2) – Foundation Stage (40 Credits) General Elective Courses (GEC), Ability

Enhancement Courses (AEC), Skill-based Courses (SEC), Value Added Courses (VAC). *Obtaining UG Certificate*

- ❖ Second Year (Semesters 3 & 4) – Exploration Stage (40 Credits, Total: 80 Credits) Subject specialization begins with General Elective Course and Value Added Course. *Obtaining UG Diploma*
- ❖ Third Year (Semesters 5 & 6) – Specialization Stage (40 Credits, Total: 120 Credits) Advanced subject knowledge. Internship and Project Work. *Obtaining UG Degree*
- ❖ Fourth Year (Semesters 7 & 8) – Research Stage (40 Credits, Total: 160 Credits) Research Pathway: Students undertake Research Methodology, Discipline Specific Elective Courses (DSE) and Thesis/Dissertation. Eligible for direct Ph.D. admission or one-year PG (if research-focused). *Obtaining UG with Honours or UG Honours with Research*.

One Year PG (For four year UG students-40 Credits)

Postgraduate (PG) Research Credit Structure:

One-Year PG (for FYUGP students with research experience – 40 Credits). Advanced research training, Discipline Specific Elective Courses (DSE) with Research and Dissertation (40 Credits, Total: 200 Credits) *Obtaining a PG degree.* Prepares students for Ph.D. or industry-based research.

Two-Year PG (for three-year UG students – 80 Credits): This structure ensures progressive research integration, fostering critical thinking, innovation, and skill development for higher education and industry.

The comprehensive credit structure is given in the Table-3 below.

Table 1. Comprehensive Credit Structure of UG and PG in New system

YEAR	SEMESTER	CORE	MINOR	GEC	AEC	SEC	Internship/ CE/Project	VAC	Research/ Dissertation	Total
1	I	4	4	3	4	3		2		20
	II	4	4	3	4	3		2		20
UG Certificate		8	8	6	8	6		4		40
2	III	4+4	4	3		3		2		20
	IV	4+4+4+4	4							20
UG Diploma		32	16	9	8	9		6		80
3	V	4+4+4	4				2+2 (I+CE) OR 4 (I)/ 4 (CE)			20
	VI	4+4+4+4	4							20
UG Degree		60	24				4			120
4	VII	4+4+4	4						4 (RM)	20
	VIII	4+4	4						8 (D)/ 4+4 (DSE)	20
UG with Honours Or UG Homours with Research		80	32						12	160
5	IX	4+4+4	4						4 (P)/4 (DSE)	20
	X	4+4	4						8/4+4 (DSE)	20
PG Degree		100	40						24	200

GEC=Generic Elective Course; AEC=Ability Enhancement Course; SEC=Skill Enhancement Course; VAC=Value Added Course; RM=Research Methodology; D=Dissertation

Table 2. Admission requirement and Credit requirement in UG and PG level

Level of Programme	Entry/Admission Requirement	Credit Requirement
Level-5: Undergraduate Certificate	After Successful completion of Grade12 or equivalent stage of education	After successful completion of 1st year (first 2 semesters) involving total credits 40-44.
Level-6: Undergraduate Diploma	Continuation of study or lateral entry in the 2nd year (3rd Semester)	After successful completion of 2nd year (first 4 semesters) involving total credits 80-88. At level-5: 40-44 At level-6: 40-44
Level-7: Undergraduate Degree	Continuation of study or lateral entry in the 3rd year (5th Semester)	After successful completion of 3rd year (first 6 semesters) involving total credits 120-132. At level-5: 40-44 At level-6: 40-44 At level-7: 40-44
Level-8: Undergraduate Degree with Hons/Research	After completing all the requirements of a 3-years bachelor's degree. Candidates who meet a minimum CGPA7.5 * in the Bachelor's degree will be allowed to continue studies in the 4th year of the undergraduate programme leading to the bachelor degree with research	After successful completion of 4th year (all 8 semesters) and involving Total credits of 160 to 176. At level-5: 40-44 At level-6: 40-44 At level-7: 40-44 At level-8: 40-44 On NHEQF
Level-9: Postgraduate Degree/Diploma	✓ 4-years Undergraduate Degree with Hons/Research for 1-year (2-semesters) Master's Degree Programme ✓ 3-years Undergraduate Degree for 2-year (4-semesters) Master's Degree Programme ✓ 3-years Undergraduate Degree for 1-year (2-semesters) Postgraduate Diploma	1-year (2-semesters) Post graduate Degree requires total credit 40-44 2-year (4-semesters) Post graduate Degree requires total credit 80-88 1-year (2-semesters) Post graduate Diploma requires total credit 40-44
Level-10: Doctorate Degree	After completing 1-year (2-semester) Postgraduate Degree, or 2-year (4-semesters) Post graduate Degree, or 4-years Undergraduate degree with Research	Original Research Work. Course work and Thesis submission with published work.

RQ4: How to develop research skills at undergraduate level?

- To develop requisite research skills at the undergraduate level all the students have to scored CGPA=7.5 or above to get the entry at Bachelor degree with research. Students have to prepare a good research proposal in the 7th semester and to submit a quality research report in the end semester (8th semester).
- At the undergraduate level students will acquire knowledge about review of literature, research methodology (variables, population and sample, tools, statistical techniques), procedure of data collection and use of software for data analysis.
- Student should obey the research ethics while conducting any research.
- Research skills will be developing through analytical skills, data analysis skills, time management skills, critical and creative thinking skills, citation and referencing skills

RQ5: How undergraduate degree with research create a step forward for quality research in higher education (Doctoral degree)?

Illustration of SGPA & CGPA

Table 3 & 4. Grade Point & Calculation of SGPA

Letter Grade	Grade Point
O (Out Standing)	10
A+ (Excellent)	9
A (Very Good)	8
B+ Good)	7
B (Above Average)	6
C (Average)	5
P (Pass)	4
F (Fail)	0

Course (Sem-I)	Credit	Grade Letter	Grade Point
Core Course-1	4	A	4 X 8= 32
Minor-2	4	B+	4 X 7= 28
GEC-3	3	A	3 X 8= 24
AEC-4	4	O	4 X 10= 40
SEC	3	C	3 X 5= 15
VAC	2	B	2 X 6= 12
Total	20	-----	151
Thus, SGPA= 151/20= 7.55			

Under NEP 2020, students achieve grades based on their performance in each subject. These grades are converted into Grade Points on a 10-point scale (figure-5). Each subject also has Credits, which represent the weightage of the course. Research-based courses typically transmit higher credits, underscoring their importance.

For example:

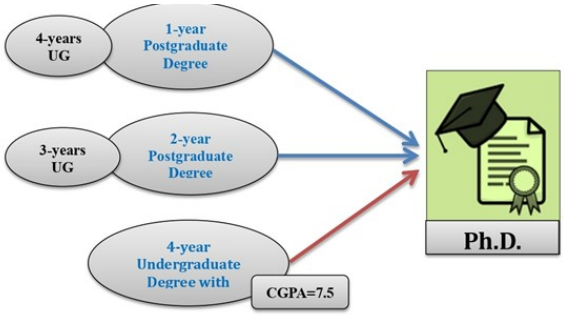
Grade: A+ = 9 Grade Points
Grade: A = 8 Grade Points
Grade: B+ = 7 Grade Points

Table 5. Calculation of CGPA

Semester-I	Semester-II	Semester-III	Semester-IV	Semester-V	Semester-VI
Credit=20 SGPA=7.55	Credit=24 SGPA=7.8	Credit=26 SGPA=8.9	Credit=20 SGPA=6.75	Credit=20 SGPA=7.4	Credit=24 SGPA=6.7

Total Credit= 20+24+26+20+20+24=134
Thus, CGPA= (20X7.55+24X7.8+26X8.9+20X6.75+20X7.4+24X6.7)/134
= (151+187.2+231.4+135+148+160.8)/134 = **7.56***

Calculation of CGPA and SGPA are shown in table 6 and table-7. Figure-7 revealed that if a student's CGPA over 4 years of UG degree is 7.56 it indicates his strong preparation for doctoral studies (Ph.D.). The Undergraduate Degree with Research under NEP 2020 assures students obtain research aptitudes through graded projects, credit-based learning, and a strong CGPA. This structured procedure bridges the field between undergraduate and doctoral education, promoting quality research in higher education.



CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clear that a student will get 4-year UG Degree (Honours with Research) who secure 75% marks in the first six semesters and choose a research stream in the fourth year of UG course. A research project or dissertation under the guidance of a faculty member of the university/college should be completed in the 8th semester. The research project/dissertation will be in the major discipline. The students, who will secure 12 credits from a research project/dissertation in the last year out of total 160 credit of all semester, will be awarded Under Graduate Degree (Honours with Research). For educational sustainability in higher education means engaging the young researcher's cognitive domain i.e. mind, psychomotor domain i.e. hand and affective domain i.e. heart which are considered as the most appropriate catalyst in educational research. This will acts as an important driver for the change in the research route. I hope all the undergraduate students who will be the young researcher, can jointly promote our society through quality research so that the purpose of higher education can progress in a well-defined pathway beyond the 21st Century.

Finally, two debatesare arises……

- Is the 4-year undergraduate programme with research blessing or burden for younger generation?
- What is the fate of M.Ed. Course in future specially for education background students?

Few suggestions for the better implementation of four year undergraduate course

- There are lacks of quality research due to poor research interest. So, there must be increase the competency and research attitude among undergraduate students.
- Adequate and appropriate infrastructures in the college/university and autonomous institution should be established who are running the four year integrated course.
- There is an urgent necessary to change the mind-set of the people to accept this course.
- For science, best laboratory and other equipment facilities should be needed.
- More number of skilled and efficient teachers should be recruited for this course those will be more capable to teach the research theoretically and conduct the research project with the students collaboratively.

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