

NEP 2020 And the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (Fyugp) At Gauhati University and Its Affiliated Colleges in Assam: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to transform Indian higher education through holistic and multidisciplinary learning, curricular flexibility, learner choice, skill development, research orientation, technology integration and multiple pathways through undergraduate education. Gauhati University (GU) has translated these principles into the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (GU-FYUGP), implemented from the 2023–24 academic session in the University campus and affiliated colleges. This paper examines the relationship between NEP 2020 and GU-FYUGP, focusing on curriculum structure, major-minor choice, common courses, multidisciplinary learning, multiple entry and exit, research orientation, assessment and institutional preparedness. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive and analytical approach based on documentary analysis of NEP 2020, UGC frameworks and official Gauhati University materials. The analysis indicates that GU-FYUGP provides a substantial institutional mechanism for implementing the major principles of NEP 2020 and creates opportunities for student choice, interdisciplinary exposure, skill development and more flexible progression. However, effective implementation across a diverse affiliated-college system is challenged by differences in faculty strength, infrastructure, digital access, timetable management, academic counselling, assessment practices and institutional capacity. The paper argues that curriculum reform must be accompanied by continuous faculty development, adequate physical and digital infrastructure, student support, transparent credit management and systematic quality assurance. It concludes that GU-FYUGP can strengthen inclusive and multidisciplinary higher education in Assam if implementation remains context-sensitive, evidence-based and supported by sustained University-college collaboration.

Keywords: NEP 2020; GU-FYUGP; Four-Year Undergraduate Programme; Gauhati University; affiliated colleges; multidisciplinary education; academic flexibility; multiple entry and exit; Academic Bank of Credits; Assam.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian higher education is undergoing a major structural and pedagogical transformation following the National Education Policy 2020. The Policy responds to concerns relating to curricular rigidity, fragmented learning, limited interdisciplinary exposure, inadequate skill orientation and the need for greater student choice. It proposes a more holistic model of undergraduate education that combines disciplinary knowledge with communication, critical thinking, vocational exposure, research, values and experiential learning (Ministry of Education, 2020).

NEP 2020 envisages flexible undergraduate programmes, multiple entry and exit options, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), multidisciplinary education and a stronger connection between higher education and employability. The UGC has subsequently developed frameworks to support these objectives, including the Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes and guidelines relating to internships and academic credit. Gauhati University has an important role in translating these national reforms into the context of Assam. Its NEP portal identifies GU-FYUGP as the University's flagship undergraduate programme and records implementation from the 2023 academic session in the University campus and affiliated colleges. The programme therefore represents not only a change in programme duration but a wider restructuring of undergraduate curriculum and academic progression. The affiliated colleges of Gauhati University are diverse in location, student composition, faculty strength, infrastructure and institutional capacity. This

diversity makes implementation both significant and challenging. The same formal curriculum may generate different educational experiences if colleges differ in their ability to provide courses, laboratories, digital facilities, academic advising and qualified teachers. The present paper consequently examines both the opportunities and practical challenges of GU-FYUGP.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the major higher-education principles of NEP 2020 relevant to undergraduate education.
- To analyse the relationship between NEP 2020 and GU-FYUGP.
- To examine major curricular features of GU-FYUGP, including multidisciplinary learning, major-minor choice, common courses and multiple entry and exit.
- To identify major opportunities and implementation challenges in affiliated colleges in Assam.
- To suggest measures for effective and equitable implementation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative descriptive and analytical methodology based primarily on documentary analysis. It draws upon NEP 2020, UGC frameworks and guidelines, and official Gauhati University materials relating to GU-FYUGP, syllabi, course structures, notifications and examination regulations. Documents were examined thematically under the categories of curriculum, flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, credit and progression, skill development, research, assessment, technology, faculty preparedness and quality assurance.

The study does not present fabricated survey results or statistical findings. It is a policy-oriented analysis intended to understand programme design and implementation requirements. A limitation is that documentary analysis cannot establish the actual satisfaction or learning outcomes of students and teachers; these issues require field-based empirical studies.

IV. NEP 2020 AND UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

4.1 Holistic and multidisciplinary education

NEP 2020 places holistic and multidisciplinary education at the centre of undergraduate reform. It seeks to develop intellectual, social, emotional, ethical and practical capabilities rather than restrict students to narrow disciplinary knowledge. Students are expected to develop communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative abilities alongside subject knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Multidisciplinary learning is particularly relevant in Assam because graduates participate in diverse sectors such as education, administration, entrepreneurship, community development, agriculture, culture, tourism and digital services. Exposure to more than one disciplinary perspective can improve adaptability and understanding of complex social and professional problems.

4.2 Flexibility and multiple pathways

NEP 2020 proposes flexible undergraduate structures with multiple entry and exit options and the use of ABC for credit accumulation and transfer. The objective is to reduce the academic disadvantage faced by learners whose education is interrupted because of economic, family, employment or geographic circumstances. However, flexibility requires reliable academic records, clear progression rules, credit recognition and effective counselling.

4.3 Skills, internships and employability

The Policy promotes internships, vocational exposure, research and practical learning. Such experiences can connect classroom knowledge with workplace and community contexts. For Assam, meaningful internships can be developed with schools, government offices, NGOs, enterprises, research institutions and community organisations. Employability, however, should be understood broadly: graduates need disciplinary depth as well as communication, digital competence, ethical judgement and adaptability.

V. GU-FYUGP AT GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

Gauhati University began NEP-structured educational programmes from the 2023 academic session, with GU-FYUGP serving as the principal undergraduate framework. Official University information describes it as a four-year Bachelor's programme with multiple entry and exit and states that it is implemented in the University campus and affiliated colleges.

The University's FYUGP resources provide information on syllabi, subject combinations and course structures. The syllabus framework includes course identity, level, graduate attributes, prerequisites, theory and practical components and learning resources. This indicates a movement toward a more structured and outcome-oriented curriculum.

5.1 Major-minor and multidisciplinary structure

A significant feature of the FYUGP model is the opportunity to combine a principal area of study with other academic areas. The University's curriculum-development instructions distinguish core papers forming Major or Minor study and allow interdisciplinary subjects to be developed within the approved structure. This can broaden student choice and encourage combinations that connect disciplinary knowledge with career interests.

For example, a student of Education may benefit from exposure to Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Statistics, Languages or Digital Studies, subject to the University's approved combinations. Yet course choice must be accompanied by counselling because students need to understand prerequisites, workload and progression requirements.

5.2 Common courses and holistic learning

GU-FYUGP includes common-course categories such as Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC), Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC), Multidisciplinary Courses and Value Added Courses (VAC). These components can strengthen communication, practical competence, interdisciplinary understanding and social or ethical awareness.

The common-course structure therefore reflects the holistic orientation of NEP 2020. Its effectiveness,

however, depends on the quality of teaching and assessment rather than merely the presence of course titles.

5.3 Multiple entry and exit

Multiple entry and exit is one of the defining features of the NEP-aligned undergraduate structure. Gauhati University's FYUGP regulations provide qualification pathways associated with different stages of undergraduate study, subject to the prescribed academic and exit requirements. This can provide students with greater flexibility when circumstances prevent continuous study.

The mechanism will work effectively only when ABC records, credit transfer, re-entry provisions and counselling are reliable. Colleges must ensure that students understand the consequences and requirements of each pathway.

5.4 Research orientation

The four-year structure creates greater scope for research-oriented undergraduate education. Research projects, field studies and internships can strengthen analytical ability and prepare interested students for postgraduate study and research. However, genuine research orientation requires trained supervisors, access to literature and databases, research-methodology support, ethical guidance and time for project work. Affiliated colleges with limited resources may benefit from collaboration with Gauhati University and nearby institutions.

VI. OPPORTUNITIES OF GU-FYUGP

- Greater student choice through major, minor and common-course options.
- Multidisciplinary exposure that can improve critical thinking and adaptability.
- Skill development through SEC, internships, projects and practical activities.
- More flexible academic progression through multiple entry and exit provisions.
- Scope for research, fieldwork and experiential learning within the extended undergraduate structure.

- Greater opportunity to connect curriculum with Assam's local society, economy, culture, ecology and development needs.
- Potential for colleges to improve academic advising, digital learning, interdisciplinary activities and community engagement.

VII. MAJOR IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

7.1 Faculty preparedness and workload

Teachers are central to the success of FYUGP. They must interpret new syllabi, support multidisciplinary learning, conduct internal assessment, guide projects and advise students. Where staffing is inadequate, these responsibilities may increase workload and reduce the time available for quality teaching. Continuous professional development is therefore essential.

7.2 Infrastructure and institutional inequality

Affiliated colleges differ in laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, internet connectivity and financial resources. Uniform curricular requirements may consequently produce unequal implementation. Colleges with limited facilities require targeted support, shared resources, digital libraries and collaborative arrangements.

7.3 Course combinations and timetable management

Greater choice increases scheduling complexity. Major, minor, AEC, SEC, VAC and multidisciplinary courses must be accommodated within available staff and classrooms. Colleges should publish realistic combinations in advance and use transparent scheduling procedures.

7.4 Academic counselling

Students cannot benefit fully from flexibility without reliable information. First-generation learners in particular may need help understanding credits, majors, minors, ABC and progression routes. Academic advising should therefore be institutionalised through designated faculty advisers or counselling cells.

7.5 Digital divide

Digital systems can improve credit management and learning but can also create inequality when students lack devices, connectivity or digital skills. Colleges should provide computer facilities, help desks, orientation and accessible alternatives where necessary.

7.6 Assessment reform

Holistic learning requires assessment that measures more than memorisation. Appropriate combinations of written examinations, assignments, presentations, practical work, projects and field-based activities can better reflect learning outcomes. Internal assessment should use clear rubrics and moderation to maintain fairness.

7.7 Quality assurance

Implementation should be monitored through evidence rather than compliance alone. IQACs and academic committees can review course availability, teacher training, student feedback, internships, digital access, assessment quality and progression. Regular review can identify problems before they become systemic.

VIII. DISCUSSION

GU-FYUGP can be understood as an institutional translation of NEP 2020. NEP provides the national vision, UGC frameworks provide broad academic and credit mechanisms, and Gauhati University translates these principles into regulations, syllabi and programme structures. The strength of the reform lies in the fact that the University has adopted several core NEP features rather than simply extending the duration of the Bachelor's degree.

Nevertheless, policy design and implementation are not identical. A flexible curriculum does not automatically create flexible learning. Students require genuine course choices, teachers require preparation, colleges require resources and administrative systems require accuracy. Implementation quality may therefore vary across affiliated colleges.

The Assam context also requires balance between common standards and local responsiveness. The University must maintain academic comparability across colleges while allowing institutions to connect learning with local languages, culture, ecology, economy and community needs. Such contextualisation can strengthen rather than weaken the objectives of NEP 2020.

The role of teachers is also changing. Teachers increasingly act as facilitators, mentors, assessors, project supervisors and academic advisers. This is an opportunity for professional development, but institutions must recognise the associated workload and provide training and support.

IX. SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- Conduct systematic induction programmes explaining FYUGP structure, credits, majors, minors, common courses and progression.
- Provide continuous faculty development in outcome-based education, multidisciplinary pedagogy, assessment, digital teaching and academic counselling.
- Establish academic advising cells in affiliated colleges.
- Provide targeted infrastructure and digital support to colleges with limited resources.
- Strengthen libraries, e-resources and inter-college resource sharing.
- Publish feasible course combinations and timetables before registration.
- Develop meaningful internships and fieldwork with local institutions and community organisations.
- Use transparent assessment rubrics and moderation for internal and project-based assessment.
- Strengthen research-methodology support and collaboration for undergraduate research.
- Use IQAC-based monitoring and student/teacher feedback for continuous improvement.
- Maintain regular communication between Gauhati University and affiliated colleges regarding implementation problems and revised regulations.

- Encourage locally relevant projects dealing with Assam's social, cultural, environmental and developmental issues.

X. CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 seeks to create a flexible, multidisciplinary, learner-centred and skill-oriented higher education system. GU-FYUGP represents Gauhati University's principal mechanism for translating these objectives into undergraduate education in Assam. Its major-minor structure, common courses, multidisciplinary orientation, multiple entry and exit and research possibilities provide significant opportunities for improving the quality and relevance of undergraduate education.

At the same time, the success of the programme cannot be measured only by formal curriculum structures. Students need meaningful choice, teachers need preparation, colleges need adequate resources and academic administration needs reliable systems. The diversity of affiliated colleges makes targeted institutional support especially important.

GU-FYUGP should therefore be treated as an ongoing reform process rather than a one-time syllabus change. Sustained faculty development, student counselling, digital and physical infrastructure, quality assurance, research support and University-college collaboration are necessary for successful implementation. If these conditions are strengthened, GU-FYUGP can contribute substantially to inclusive, flexible, multidisciplinary and locally responsive higher education in Assam.

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