# Chapter 2
Students Progression towards Employment and Higher Studies

This chapter discusses the most important outcomes of higher education that is, increasing students progression towards employment or vertical progression to higher studies. Audit analysis, findings, and recommendations in respect of this outcome and related contributing factors are discussed in the succeeding sections of this chapter.

Audit Objective 1: Whether the Higher Education system led to increased employability and progression to higher studies

Increase in employability and progress to higher studies were identified as the most important outcomes that students expect from higher education. Various factors and institutional initiatives contribute towards satisfactory achievement of these outcomes. The relationship between students' progression and the various factors, mechanisms and systems contributing to their achievements can be understood through the following representation:
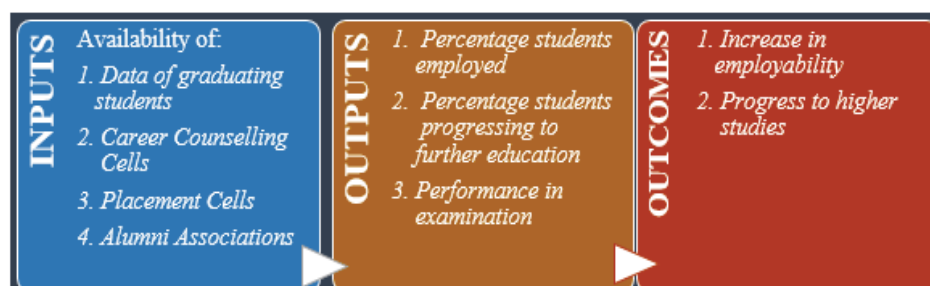
The existence and effective functioning of such facilitating mechanism as career counselling and placement cells, alumni associations, *etc*., is essential to increase employment opportunities for graduating students.

2.1   Employability and Students Progression to higher studies

As stated above, employability and progression to higher studies are the two most important outcomes expected by students from higher educational institutions.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines Employability as the presence of skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change. According to this, individuals are most employable when they have broad-based education and training, basic and portable high-level skills, including teamwork, problem solving, information and communications technology (ICT), *etc*.

Achievement of these outcomes are directly dependent on factors such as quality of education imparted, availability of Career Counselling Cells, Placement Cells, Alumni Associations, Job Fairs and proper maintenance of data of graduating students.

Audit findings related to effective functioning of these facilitating factors and the evaluation of the higher educational institutions in Odisha with respect to the outcomes generated by these are discussed below.

2.1.1 Placement Cells, Career Counselling Cells, Alumni Associations and Job Fairs

Facilitating mechanisms in higher educational institutions, such as Placement Cell, Career Counselling Cell and Alumni Association help the students with appropriate guidance to establish linkages with the world of work and locate career opportunities *vis-à-vis* the realities and job profiles in the context of highly competitive emerging occupational patterns. The gaps in perception about the market demands and individual expectations can be bridged through effective working of such mechanisms[1].

As per India Skills Report 2020[2], at an All India level, B.Sc., B.A. and B.Com undergraduate programs have provided, on an average, 37.28 *per cent*, 31.86 *per cent* and 29.8 *per cent* employable graduates respectively during the period 2014-15 to 2018-19. Further, during accreditation of an institution, NAAC considers the average percentage of placement of outgoing students from the institution during the last five years as one of the important factors while grading the HEIs.

2.1.1.1 Placement Cells

Audit scrutiny of existence and functioning of placement cells in the two universities and 32 test checked colleges revealed the following:

Utkal University and North Odisha University

A Placement Cell was in existence in Utkal University but no such cell existed in North Odisha University. In Utkal University, the placement cell was managed by one Placement Officer (contractual) assisted by one Peon. There were no details available in records, regarding any process/calendar followed by the Cell for carrying out placement activities. During the years 2014-19, the number of post graduate students (in 26 general courses[3]) of Utkal University who enrolled, registered and were placed in jobs was as depicted in the table below:

Table 2.1: Showing percentage of students registered in the placement cell of Utkal University from general courses and their placements for the years 2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Enrolled	1,056	1,057	1,057	1,074	1,090	5,334
Registered	353	372	343	368	322	1758
Percentage of Registered to Enrolled	33.43	35.19	32.45	34.26	29.54	32.96
Placed	36	77	48	73	51	285

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1   As per NAAC Manual Para 5.1

2   India Skills Report is a joint initiative by Wheebox, and People Strong in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry along with partners like UNDP, AICTE and AIU. This report is a combination of an assessment of 3,00,000 candidates from 3,500 educational institutes across 28 States and nine Union Territories of India, and more than 150 corporates spread across nine industrial sectors. This is the seventh edition of the Report with annual editions being released since 2014

3   Out of total 29 courses in UU, two are newly introduced in 2018-19. Students of Law department did not register nor did get placed through the Placement Cell

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Percentage of placed to registered	10.20	20.70	13.99	19.83	15.84	16.21

(Source: Records of Placement Cell of Utkal University)

Audit noticed that during 2014-19, of the 26 general courses, students of only 22 courses were registered with the Placement Cell. Further, as per the details made available, of these 22 courses, students of only 12 courses in Utkal University finally got placed during these years.

It was also noticed that only between 29.54 and 35.19 *per cent* of the total number of students enrolled in the University, registered with the Cell for placements. The number of students who finally got placed by the Placement Cell during the years 2014-19 continued to remain low reaching a maximum of only 20.70 *per cent* in 2015-16.

Thus, even after existence of a Placement Cell in Utkal University, students from only 12 courses[4] out of the 26 courses mentioned in the table above, could be placed.

Test checked colleges

None of the 32 test checked colleges of Utkal University and North Odisha University had a Placement Cell in existence during 2014-19. These test checked colleges did not even maintain the data of students who might have been placed after passing out.

Thus, despite the fact that Placement Cells played a crucial role in achieving the desired outcome of employability, the assessment of their functioning revealed that either these were completely absent (as in case of North Odisha University and the test checked colleges) or, if they were in existence, they were able to place only a small number of registered students in jobs.

Government accepted (September 2020) the fact that Higher Educational Institutions did not maintain records properly and the Department would review the work of these Cells in universities and colleges for their proper functioning.

2.1.1.2 Career Counselling Cell (CCC)

University Grants Commission (UGC) formulated guidelines for the establishment of Career Counselling Cell (CCC) in universities and colleges under 12th Five-Year Plan. The objectives of the scheme were Soft Skill Development, improvement of communication skills for competitive tests, imparting job training, conducting add-on or vocational courses, constructing a resource centre of information and to gather information on placement. As per the guidelines, a CCC would be managed by part-time staff comprising a Co-ordinator, a Clerk and a Peon.

During 2014-15 to 2018-19, DHE released funds to ten universities[5] for the establishment and functioning of CCCs. The two test checked universities and four of the test checked colleges (32) received ₹ 41.50 lakh from the State Government for this purpose. While Utkal University received ₹ 17 lakh

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4   Courses excluded/ not placed: Ancient Indian History, Geography, History, Mathematics, Odia, Political Science, Psychology, Public Administration, Statistics and Zoology
5   Utkal, Ravenshaw, Rama Devi, Fakir Mohan, Jagannath, Berhampur, Sambalpur, Gangadhar Meher, North Odisha University and Khallikote Universities

(₹12.50 lakh in 2016-17 and ₹ 4.50 lakh in 2017-18), North Odisha University received ₹ 12.50 lakh (2017-18) and four test checked colleges[6] received ₹ 3 lakh each during 2018-19. This amount was to be spent on honorarium for the teaching/ non-teaching staff, furniture and fixtures and modern teaching aids. Audit noticed that the test checked Universities and Colleges could utilise only a total of ₹ 10.46 lakh (March 2019). The shortcomings in the establishment and functioning of CCCs are discussed below:

Utkal University

Of the total amount of ₹ 17 lakh received by Utkal University, only ₹ 0.29 lakh could be spent and this too was spent by the University only on organising the inauguration function for the CCC. The Cell was inaugurated on 4 March 2017 but was not made functional thereafter.

Out of the 24 test-checked colleges under Utkal University, CCCs were functioning only in five colleges detailed in table below. As shown in table, three of these colleges established their CCCs only in 2018-19 on receipt of funds from the DHE, while two others, already had CCCs in place, prior to 2018. Status of functioning of CCCs in these colleges is mentioned in the table below:

Table 2.2: Details of the CCCs functioning in five test checked colleges under Utkal University for the years 2014-15 to 2018-19

Sl. No.	Name of the College	Year of establishment / functioning	Amount received (₹ in lakh)	Amount Spent (as of March 2019) (₹ in lakh)	Total Students enrolled in colleges since setting up of CCC	Students benefitted	Percentage of students benefitted from CCC
1	Rajdhani College	2018-19	3 (2018-19)	2.75	1338	150	11.21
2	Model Degree College	2018-19	3 (2018-19)	2.21	308	225	73.05
3	Dhenkanal Autonomous College	2018-19	3 (2018-19)	2.14	1520	458	30.13
4	Kendrapara Autonomous College	2016-17	-	-	985	85	8.62
5	MA Mahavidyalaya, Lemalo	2014-15	-	-	2890	690	23.87

(Source: Records of respective colleges)

Thus, CCCs were not functioning in approximately 80 *per cent* of the colleges of Utkal University. Even in the five colleges where these were functioning, except one (Model Degree College), the number of students who were able to benefit from career counselling remained insubstantial.

North Odisha University

North Odisha University received ₹ 12.50 lakh for setting up of a CCC in 2018-19 and of this, only ₹ 2.13 lakh (17 *per cent*) could be utilised by the University as of November 2019. As per information made available, a total of 373 students were enrolled with the CCC and of these, around 200 students were benefitted from the activities of the Cell.

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6   Rajdhani College, DD Autonomous College, Dhenkanal Autonomous College and Model Degree College, Nayagarh

Out of the eight test-checked colleges under North Odisha University, CCCs were functioning in only two of the test-checked colleges[7]. Of these two, the CCC in DD Autonomous College was set up in 2018-19 when funds were received from DHE. However, the college did not maintain any records of students availing the services of the Cell. In case of Baripada Degree College, the Cell was functioning from 2014-15 onwards and 299 out of 1,267 students (24 *per cent*) availed career counselling services.

Thus, CCCs were not functioning in Utkal University and 25 (out of 32) test-checked colleges. Both, the Universities had received funds for the creation and functioning of the CCCs which remained almost unutilised. The objective of the functioning of CCCs to provide crucial guidance to students in most of the test checked HEIs could, thus, not be achieved.

2.1.1.3   *Alumni Association*

As per NAAC Manual Para No. 5.4, alumni are a strong support to any institution. An active Alumni Association can contribute towards academic matters, student support as well as mobilisation of resources, both financial and non-financial. The Alumni are involved in a university's activities in a number of ways *viz*., mentoring students, leveraging their contacts to support university administration/ faculty/ students in their various endeavours, providing donations, *etc*.

The audit findings related to formation and functioning of Alumni Associations in the test checked universities and colleges are as follows:

Utkal University

Utkal University did not have an Alumni Association for the University as a whole, however, these were existing at the departmental level during 2014-19. Out of the 24 test checked colleges, only one college (Rajdhani College) had an Alumni Association at present. During the period 2014-19, three meetings of the Association were held[8].

North Odisha University

In case of North Odisha University also, Alumni Associations were in place in four of the 13 departments of the University and there was no Alumni Association in existence for the University as a whole.

In these four departments, 17 meetings of the Association were held[9] during the period 2014-15 to 2018-19. Out of four departments, in case of three departments (Botany, Biotechnology and Zoology), annual meetings of the Association were held during 2014-19. In the remaining department (Department of Chemistry), only two meetings were held during 2014-19.

Out of the eight test-checked colleges under North Odisha University, only one college (Kaptipada College) had an Alumni Association and the meetings of the group were held each year during the last five years.

In absence of Alumni Associations in most of the test -checked colleges and irregular meetings, where they exist, the students could not derive the constant

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[7]   DD Autonomous college (Government) and Baripada Degree college (Non-Government)
[8]   One meeting in 2015-16 and two meetings in 2016-17
[9]   Total 17 meetings during 2014-15 to 2018-19 in four departments (Botany- 5, Chemistry - 2, Biotechnology – 5 and Zoology-5)

support and guidance from their Alumni mainly in terms of networking, corporate linkages for placements, donations for development of colleges, *etc*.

Government stated (September 2020) that Utkal University had organised a mega Alumni meeting between 23-27 November 2019. State Government had also initiated a scheme called "Mo College Abhijan " for giving a platform to the old students to get connected with their alma mater. The steps being taken by the University and the Government are in right direction, and Alumni Associations and their meetings may be encouraged to tap the benefits of mentoring, networking and encouraging alumni to contribute towards meeting the needs of the students in a regular manner.

2.1.1.4 Organising Job Fairs

A job fair is a recruiting event in which employers and recruiters meet with potential candidates/employees and where job seekers find more scope about job openings at potential employers. Scrutiny of information regarding organisation of job fairs in the two test checked universities and 32 colleges during 2014-19 revealed the following:

Utkal University

In Utkal University, 194 Job Fairs were organised during 2014-15 to 2018-19, in which 1,089 students got placements. The data regarding total number of students who participated in the Job Fairs during this period was not maintained due to which the success ratio of these fairs in the University could not be evaluated.

Out of the 24 test checked colleges under the University, only three colleges organised Job Fairs, during 2014-19 and 80 students got placements as per available records. The number of students actually participating in these job fairs were not maintained by the colleges.

In the remaining 21 colleges under Utkal University, no Job Fairs were organised during 2014-19.

North Odisha University

As per the information furnished to Audit by the University, six job fairs were organised[10] during 2014-15 to 2015-16 and 70 students got placements from these. The data regarding total number of participating students was not maintained due to which the success ratio of these fairs could not be ascertained.

Out of eight test-checked colleges under North Odisha University, only one college organised two job fairs in the year 2017-18. A total of 300 students participated in these two fairs organised, of which only 12 students got placed. In the remaining seven test checked colleges of the North Odisha University, no job fairs were organised.

Thus, while Utkal University organised a substantial number of job fairs during the five-year period (2014-19), in the absence of data regarding number of participating students, the success of these fairs could not be established. In case of North Odisha University, both the number of job fairs organised and the number of students placed was far below the expected levels. Out of 32 test checked colleges, job fairs were not organised in 28 colleges (88 *per cent*) which

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[10] Data for remaining three years (2016-2019) were not furnished

was a constraining factor in providing due exposure to students to their potential employers.

The Government stated (September 2020) that organising job fairs in colleges is a herculean task. However, some big colleges located in urban areas and having better logistic facilities, organise such job fairs.

However, it was observed by Audit that out of nine sampled colleges located in urban areas, Job Fairs were not conducted in six colleges. Further, students of colleges located in rural areas, which are already remote and do not enjoy ease of accessibility available to urban areas, were deprived of placement assistance by non-organisation of job fairs.

2.1.2   Evaluation of Higher Educational Institutions through indicators

In this section, the performance of test checked HEIs in enhancing employability and encouraging progress to higher studies have been assessed by evaluating certain known and acceptable indicators used by accrediting and ranking agencies.

2.1.2.1   Status of Job placement of students

Job placement of students refers to a student getting employment through various efforts made by the institution before the student completes his program. To assess an institution's performance in providing job placements, *the average percentage of placement of outgoing students during 2014-19 was used as an indicator (Sl. No. 1 of Appendix 2).* This indicator is also one of the key indicators used by NAAC during the assessment and accreditation process of HEIs. For this, students placed through Placement Cell and Job Fairs are taken.

The placement percentage of students in both these Universities is shown in Table below:

Table 2.3: Status of percentage of placement of students of the two test checked Universities

Year	Utkal University	North Odisha University
2014-15	23.47	15.05
2015-16	29.62	03.90
2016-17	24.49	0
2017-18	27.80	0
2018-19	25.16	0

(Source: Information furnished by Universities)

In case of Utkal University, on an average 26.10 *per cent* of outgoing students were placed. Utkal University performed better than North Odisha University in this regard, where, of the total number of outgoing students, only a very minimal number *i.e.*, an average of 3.79 *per cent* could be placed. The placement percentage of students in North Odisha University remained very low, leaving significant scope for improvement in terms of organising more Job Fairs, having more active Placement and Career Counselling Cells and Alumni Associations.

With regard to the test-checked colleges, during 2014-19, this crucial data regarding job placements was not maintained in any of the 32 test checked colleges despite the fact that this is one of the key indicators used by NAAC for assessment and accreditation process. Due to non-maintenance of this data, the

placement of outgoing students in these 32 test checked colleges could not be analysed by Audit.

During accreditation of universities, NAAC awards maximum scores to the institutions where 20 *per cent* and above outgoing students are placed. Based on the placement data available, the performance of North Odisha University was far below the benchmark established for the criteria.

In reply, the Government (September 2020) stated that universities and colleges were overburdened with teaching and other schemes of the State Government and Central Government and they hardly get any time to maintain such records. Students passing out do not provide data of their employment to their alma mater. Therefore, the figures given are not actual ones. Government stated that as more emphasis has been given to employability in the 'New Education Policy 2020', clear instructions would be issued to all higher educational institutions under administrative control of DHE in this regard.

2.1.2.2 Progression to Higher Studies

Along with employment, progress to higher studies for post-graduation, doctorate and post-doctorate studies, *etc*., are other options that students aspire for. As per Para 5.2 of NAAC Manual, the institution's concern for student progression to higher studies is a pertinent issue. The institutional provisions facilitate vertical movement of students from one level of education to the next higher level or towards gainful employment.

In order to assess how well test checked universities and colleges did in sending their students for higher studies, percentage of students progressing to higher education was used as an outcome indicator. It is also one of the key indicators used by NAAC during the assessment and accreditation process of HEIs. ***Key Outcome Indicator 2: Increase in percentage of students progressing to higher education during 2018-19 (Sl. No. 1 of Appendix 1).***

During accreditation of universities, NAAC awarded maximum scores to the institutions where 20 *per cent* and above students progressed to higher studies. Even though Utkal University and North Odisha University were accredited by NAAC in the year 2015 and 2017 respectively, both the Universities had not maintained data regarding students progression to higher studies. Further, the test checked 32 colleges also did not maintain the data on progression of students from one level to another.

Hence, due to non-maintenance of relevant data, Audit could not comment on the performance of both the universities and colleges with respect to this indicator.

2.1.2.3 Qualifying in Competitive Examinations

Competitive examinations held at the National and State levels provide immense opportunities for student's progression. Several competitive examinations were held for graduating students to qualify for employment or for progressing to higher studies. Qualifying in competitive examinations is an important criterion of NAAC's assessment and accreditation process of higher educational institutions.

In order to assess an institution's ability to adequately equip its students for qualifying such examinations, ***the average percentage of students qualifying***

in State/National/International level examinations during 2014-19 (NET/ SLET/ GATE/ GMAT/ CAT/ GRE/ TOEFL/ UPSC/ State Government), was used as an indicator (Sl. No. 2 Appendix 1).

Percentage of students enrolled in UU and North Odisha University who qualified in different competitive examinations like NET/ CAT/ GATE /PSC/ UPSC, *etc*., during 2014-19 are shown in the table below:

Table 2.4: Showing percentage of students who qualified in competitive examinations against enrolment

Year	Utkal University	North Odisha University
2014-15	2.23	3.71
2015-16	40.19	3.50
2016-17	27.10	7.72
2017-18	15.32	6.26
2018-19	-	4.10

(Source: Information furnished by the universities)

In case of Utkal University, it was observed that of the total number of students enrolled in the University, the percentage of students who qualified in different competitive examinations like NET/CAT/GATE/PSC/UPSC, *etc.* was 40.19 *per cent* in 2015-16 and in the remaining years, the same ranged between 2.23 to 27.10 *per cent*.

In case of North Odisha University, the percentage of students who qualified in the aforesaid competitive examinations, ranged between 3.50 and 7.72 *per cent* (average 5.06 *per cent*) of the total number of enrolled students, during the years 2014-15 to 2018-19.

During accreditation of universities, NAAC awards maximum scores to institutions where 30 *per cent* and above students qualify in competitive examination. Both the test checked Universities were below the average percentage (30 *per cent*) as required by NAAC to get maximum grade point in this aspect.

Further, despite the fact that qualifying in competitive examinations is an important criterion of NAAC's assessment and accreditation process, none of the 32 test checked colleges in either of the two Universities maintained any data regarding students who qualified in State/ National/ International level competitive examinations during 2014-19.

The poor performance of the students indicates that there is enough scope to improve the quality and effectiveness of higher education towards bettering the avenues for students' progressions and employability. Further, in order to better assess the outcome of education being imparted, focus also needs to be paid towards tracking progression of students who qualify at a later period *i.e.,* after completion of their higher education.

(A)   *Non-continuance of Civil Services Coaching Centre*

For improvement in the performance of students of Odisha in Civil Services Examination, the State Government decided (November 2016) to set up specialised training centers for imparting training for civil services examination and accordingly ₹ 1.70 crore (sanctioned in April 2017 and February 2018) was released to seven universities[11].

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[11]   Utkal, Fakir Mohan, Ravenshaw, Rama Devi, Berhampur, Sambalpur and GM University

Utkal University received ₹ 30 lakh (₹ 20 lakh in May 2017 and ₹ 10 lakh in March 2018) from the State Government for the above purpose. Anticipating the release of funds, in March 2017, Utkal University, initiated the same scheme at one of its constituent colleges, *i.e.*, Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education (DDCE). Two batches comprising 60 students each were admitted during 2017-18, however, none of them qualified in UPSC examination. After this, in 2018-19, the State Government discontinued the scheme.

Audit also observed that despite having received the funds from DHE, the same was not transferred to DDCE (November 2019) by Utkal University, impacting the implementation of the scheme. Reasons for non-transfer of funds were not available on record.

It was observed that the scheme was initiated without a detailed implementation plan in place. DDCE failed to reappoint a Coordinator for the Coaching Centre after the retirement of the initial incumbent to the Post (November 2017). Further, they also failed to engage trainers from professional coaching centres, invite successful and experienced Indian Administrative Services and Odisha Administrative Services Officers to share their experience with aspiring students. The DHE also on its part, disbursed the funds to the University, without ascertaining endpoint utilisation of the same for the assigned purpose. According to the guidelines for the scheme, a detailed timeline for the coaching courses needed to be displayed on the University website, a detailed Management Information System (MIS) Report should have been made available to DHE and tracking of students from preliminary to personality test was to be carried out. However, none of these monitoring activities were carried out either by the University or the Department.

Thus, in spite of availability of funds, the University did not show any interest in continuing the scheme for the betterment of its students by formulating any plans for continued implementation of the scheme. Coaching for civil services is a continuous process which should continue without any interruptions. Due to lack of planning and monitoring, the scheme was closed after 2017-18.

On being pointed out by Audit, while the facts have been accepted by DDCE, no reply has been provided either by the University or DHE.

2.2   Performance of students in examinations

NAAC states that the real test of the extent to which teaching learning has been effective in a higher educational institution is reflected in the student performance in the examinations. Student performance is seen as the realisation of learning outcomes which are specifications of what a student should be capable of doing on successful completion of a course and/or a programme[12]. NAAC and NIRF in their assessment criteria have identified that effectiveness of a higher educational institution is reflected through many student centric aspects including student performance in the examinations, average pass percentage of students, percentage of students graduating with higher divisions, *etc*.

In this context, test checked HEIs were evaluated on the basis of examination results using the indicator, ***average pass percentage of Students during 2018-***

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[12]   Para 2.6 of NAAC Manual

19 (Sl. No. 2 of *Appendix 2).* This indicator is derived from one of the key indicators used by NAAC during assessment and accreditation process of HEIs.

The data relating to average pass percentage of all students who appeared in final year examinations in under-graduate and post-graduate programs of Science, Arts and Commerce streams during 2018-19 in two test-checked Universities[13] are given in *Table 2.5* below:

Table 2.5: Performance of students in examinations at two test checked universities and test-checked colleges during 2018-19

	Utkal University			North Odisha University[14]		
	Appeared	Passed	Pass percentage	Appeared	Passed	Pass percentage
All affiliated College level students (except Autonomous) **(Undergraduate)**	61,606	52,503	85.22	14,578	9,137	63.00
University level students (Postgraduate)	1,216	1,069	87.00	607	550	90.60

(Source: Records furnished by two test checked universities)

In case of UU, the average pass percentage at the post graduate level during 2014-19, was 87 *per cent*. In case of North Odisha University, this same pass percentage was 90.6 *per cent*.

During accreditation of universities, NAAC awarded maximum scores to the institutions where 90 *per cent* of students passed in the examination. While Utkal University was close to achieving this benchmark with a grade point of 87 *per cent*, NOU performed well and was eligible to score the maximum grade point. The NAAC accreditation is undertaken individually at college level. Therefore, the performance of all affiliated colleges cannot be commented upon here collectively as an average *per cent*.

Summing up and Recommendations

Employability and Students progression to higher studies

The system of maintenance of data related to critical parameters such as job placement of outgoing students, progression to higher studies at both university and college levels was not satisfactory. This was despite the fact that these were important criteria that were used for assessment by NAAC during the accreditation process. Further, available data showed that the placement of students in North Odisha University and test checked colleges in the State remained much below the mark.

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[13] Except the data of 20 (17 in UU and three in North Odisha University) Autonomous colleges under these two universities, which publish their examination results individually

[14] At North Odisha University, the courses included Science and Arts streams only as there was no Commerce stream available at the University level

Opportunities for providing placements to larger number of students were not tapped optimally as placement facilitating platforms like Placement Cells and Career Counselling Cells have either not been established in sample universities/ colleges or were not functioning up to full potential where they existed. Further, students of colleges situated in rural areas remained deprived of the benefits of job fairs.

There was lack of maintenance of key data related to performance of these entities and of the students who benefitted from them. The functioning of Alumni Associations revealed that they were unable to make any significant impact in either mentoring of students or in providing them employment.

The performance of students in competitive exams remained poor. The State Government did not take steps for providing continued coaching to students of these HEIs for competitive examinations. Only one scheme of Civil Services Examination coaching was started, which also could also not produce desired result in the absence of proper planning and monitoring and was discontinued after two years. There was no long term vision on the part of the State to provide a continuous support mechanism for students and improving results. There was also no mechanism to track the students who compete and qualify in such examinations at a later period, after completion of their higher education.

Recommendations:

- Considering that employability and student progression to higher studies is a crucial outcome for students, HEIs may put in place a system of collecting and maintaining related data of employment of students in respect of each of the institutions.

- In order to facilitate graduating students in getting employment, HEIs may constitute a well-functioning placement cell and career-counselling cell and take steps to organise more job fairs.