

Recommendations of the Committee on the Non-graded Component on

“Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility (PE&SR)”

May 16, 2013

1.0 Background

It has been observed over the years that most students coming to IIT are from a protected background, with inadequate exposure to the society around coupled with intensive periods of preparation for the JEE. Even IIT environment is largely insulated from the society. In contrast, the engineering profession, for which the students are being trained, is deeply connected with the society. Thus, there is a need to enable the students to look beyond themselves as engineers as well as otherwise through inputs which can sensitize them to humanistic social values. In this backdrop, the concept paper for the revised UG curriculum, approved by the senate on March 13, 2012, specifically recognizes the need to provide co-curricular inputs for the following:

- To make the students appreciate the importance of ethics in professional life
- To expose them to different professional ethical dilemmas one may face
- To introduce them to larger ethical aspects of technology development

To achieve the same, the approved concept paper identifies a non-graded core component on “Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility” (hitherto referred as PE&SR), which would require every UG student to engage in activities related to this component to complete 2 credits, preferably in the first three years of their stay in IITD. Currently, enrollment for NSS or NCC or NSO is mandatory for all the UG students. Many of the UG students enroll for NSS, which has a requirement for students to do certain hours of service related activity. That may or may not help in inculcating a value of social responsibility since the service component is not accompanied by any analysis and introspection. The PE&SR related activities are envisaged to bridge that gap and sensitize the students towards the need for ethical and socially responsible behaviour.

To work out a framework for implementation of this component, the UG Curriculum Implementation Committee (UCIC) constituted a sub-committee. The recommendations of the sub-committee are presented in this document.

2.0 Scope of PE&SR:

The sub-committee identified the need for sensitization of students and helping them to inculcate the value of “Concern for Others” through analysis and introspection and hence internalize the need for ethical and socially responsible behaviour, understanding its role for a harmonious society while also appreciating its impact on their own self. Specifically, the sub-committee identified the issues to be addressed in each of the two sub-components of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility as follows:

Professional Ethics

- issues in ethical behaviour in student life and beyond: cheating, plagiarism, corruption, cyber crime
- role of ethics in team work; As member and leader (earning faith; giving credits; respecting others’ opinion)
- ethics in the area of technology & society - “Responsible” research & technology development
- social and environmental risk awareness/ assessment
- understanding reasons behind engineering disasters and failure

Social Responsibility

In this component there is a need for sensitization of students to

- Sustainability & Civic Responsibility (resource utilization and its impact on physical environment, habitat & heritage, engaging with the community within and outside the campus).
- Gender Issues
- The need for respecting diversity in background, culture, profession, economic level, etc.

In addition, the sub-committee identified the need for providing the following inputs to build “**Foundation and Skills for Lifelong Learning**”:

- Understanding one’s own goals of life; its impact on one’s relationship with the society & environment;
- Time and stress management

3.0 General Framework for Implementation

The PE&SR related activities can be partly in structured and partly in unstructured format and can be divided into three elements covering the various aspects identified above:

- (i) Orientational inputs to sensitize the students towards need for ethical behaviour
- (ii) Practical engagement with communities/NGOs outside IITD involving technical or non-technical work.
- (iii) In-house activities including workshops on engineering/professional ethics and events in association with various student bodies.

Elements (i) and (ii) and part of (iii) will constitute the structured part, while most of (iii) will be unstructured.

4.0 Administrative and Infrastructural Requirements

- o Need to have a properly staffed office to coordinate this activity.
- o Proposal by the PE&SR sub-committee that NRCVEE can coordinate the same as a nodal centre with involvement of interested faculty from all departments and centres in various activities of PE&SR.