

Centre for Higher Education Quality Upgradation and Excellence

The Centre for Higher Education Quality Upgradation and Excellence (CHEQUE) Project is a strategic initiative by CRISP aimed at strengthening the overall quality and performance of higher education institutions across India. Through a focus on academic mentoring, institutional engagement, and capacity building, the project supports colleges and universities in their pursuit of excellence and accreditation. CHEQUE is designed to enhance student retention and graduation rates, promote the integration of educational technology (EdTech), and boost graduate employability by aligning programs with industry needs. In addition, the project encourages institutions to improve their extension activities and community engagement, contributing to a more socially responsive education system.

Strategy and Approach

As part of its strategic implementation, the CHEQUE Project engages experienced Academic Mentors (AMs) to support higher education institutions in quality improvement. These retired academicians, appointed for their expertise in academics and administration, are each assigned 10–15 colleges. They work closely with institutional teams to implement quality enhancement initiatives focused on teaching, student outcomes, and institutional performance.



Figure 1: Pictures from CHEQUE Activities

Key Highlights and Activities

Wider Institutional Participation Initiated:

Expressions of Interest and formal commitments (MoUs and acceptance letters) have been received from **7 universities** across **Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh**, signalling strong institutional readiness and engagement.

Deployment of Expert Mentorship Network:

A total of **14 Academic Mentors** have been carefully selected and appointed in coordination with **Vice Chancellors**, ensuring alignment with institutional contexts and strategic priorities.

Capacity Building for Mentors Completed:

An intensive **orientation programme** was held at **MCRHRDI from 2nd–4th April 2025**, equipping AMs with a shared understanding of the project objectives and actionable strategies for institutional support.

Institutional Coverage Established:

142 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been identified under the 7 universities. Each AM has been allocated a cohort of **10+ HEIs**, enabling focused mentorship and implementation of quality initiatives.

Data-Driven Planning Underway:

Preliminary baseline data collection is in progress through campus visits by AMs, laying the groundwork for **evidence-based planning and tailored intervention strategies**.

Challenges

The progression of planned activities has encountered **delays due to ongoing final examinations and the upcoming summer vacation period**. These academic calendar constraints are temporarily affecting the **availability of institutional stakeholders** and may disrupt routine administrative functioning. Project timelines are being adjusted accordingly to ensure sustained engagement and effective execution.

Learnings and Way Forward

Retired academicians have **provided valuable mentorship, leveraging their extensive knowledge of academic and administrative processes** to offer insightful guidance. Their expertise has proven crucial in addressing specific quality goals, such as accreditation, student retention, and employability. Strategic mentoring aligned with these goals has allowed institutions to stay focused on continuous improvement.

The next step involves finalizing the **preliminary baseline assessment template for HEIs participating under the CHEQUE Project**, ensuring consistency in data collection. This will help create a solid foundation for further quality improvement initiatives.

In addition, all **Academic Mentors are expected to complete their first round of visits** to the institutions by May 31st, 2025, initiating on-the-ground mentorship and establishing a strong baseline for progress.