

The Approach and Practice of Liberal Arts at ASU

Objectives

The basic objective of Liberal Arts approach is to create an environment where young men and women can engage themselves with fundamental issues and ideas to further push their understanding of the human existence. This extends particularly towards academics where traditionally students have been forced to lock themselves into a single field without the opportunity to experiment and try different things. The idea is to promote trans disciplinary and the highest level of integration amongst disciplines for ensuring free flowing knowledge and an understanding of subject matter taught in any course in any field.

Context

ASU's liberal arts approach is a unique practice aimed at opening up a wide-range of opportunities for the students in seeking jobs in diverse fields. The study of liberal arts harnesses full human potential and develops students into well-rounded human resources. It doesn't bind a student into constraints in his/her learning trajectory and provides flexibility in learning beyond the core discipline. The liberal arts at ASU has helped develop broad skill competencies in students, afforded flexibility of choices, and provided the learning experiences to excel in their respective areas of passion. Liberal arts have helped ASU in preparing students to provide leadership in social and economic justice, equality, plural society, national-integration and perseveration of cultural heritage to shape the future of our country. It helps in developing a student as global manager, leader and citizen of the world by pursuing and finding solutions for vital

environmental, economic and societal concerns.

Practice

The practice is to develop and continuously review and revise the most determining set of courses which squarely deliver on the objective of the liberal arts. At present, there are 11 knowledge and skill categories offering multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary credit-based liberal art courses under the specified categories which are delivered to all students irrespective of discipline during various semesters. These are well-designed syllabi in line with the best practices in the Ivy League Universities of the United States of America and cover various areas, such as culture and civilization, humanities, social sciences, creative arts, evolution of technology, philosophy and reasoning, statistics and probability sciences. In another dimension of physical well-being, it covers athletics and physical education. While designing these courses, relevance of outcomes of developing broad competencies in the niche area of liberal arts have been at the centre of various considerations. These courses bear credits and are mandatory for the students since these relate to developing life-long transferable skills and broad competencies essential to take up jobs or to become an entrepreneur, and that makes them distinctive from the choice-based electives and value-added courses.

The liberal art courses under the stated categories significantly focus on how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative, innovative, how to undertake meaningful research, invent and discover, how to adapt to various cultural and related challenging conditions and communicate effectively. The curriculum includes basic arts, crafts, humanities, languages, literature, culture, and

values, in addition to science and mathematics, and to develop broad skill capabilities in learners, build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment across the globe.

The liberal-art courses are delivered by the experts, resources from the industry and persons of relevant credentials. Master classes are delivered by the master-trainers in the respective fields. Multi-disciplinary field projects and library projects are undertaken by groups formed from multiple streams. Language labs are used for conducting various foreign language classes.

The hall-mark of the course delivery is that teachers market the courses amongst students. The practice is called the “**Course Shopping**”. In a pre-planned listed week, all teachers and experts make a ditch effort to draw maximum students to their course. The teachers demonstrate their course-benefits and the placement avenues of the course, and show-case their teaching skills. Hence some courses are a big hit with the students.

Evidence of Success

The courses have been well received by the students and the employers. They found the courses extremely empowering in the workplace environment. The employers have been finding the students as most befitting resources, and a single most compelling reason for them to hire. “**Students’ Speak**” video is attached as **Annexure (link)**.

File Description	Document
Students’ Speak Video Annexure	https://drive.google.com/file/d/16jMH367JuTeL5Sl5RIe3HymQXtsU2GSV/view?usp=share link

It is also relevant to mention that the students' results in the courses of the liberal arts have been extraordinarily encouraging. A table showing the results in the liberal arts courses is **attached**:

Pass Percentage of students taking liberal arts courses in the year 2021-22:

S.No.	Semester	No. of Students appeared in Liberal Arts courses	No. of Students passed in Liberal Arts courses	Pass percentage (%)
1.	Fall2021	494	408	82.59
2.	Spring2022	450	366	81.33
Average percentage (%) AY 2021-22				81.96

The Campus placements of students even in the rural locational setting of the University has been at par with the top league Universities of India, pegged at over 73% considering all final year students. It squarely reflects on the evidence of the success of liberal arts courses heavily weighed in favour of multiple and diverse skills gained by students in the areas where the future jobs lie.

File Description	Document
Table of placements and higher studies of the past 5 years	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s9FEqVDVN8Bganp7v828-AoJ1uwFGgoQ/view?usp=share_link

Problems Encountered and Resources required

It has been a challenge to deliver liberal arts courses to students of certain programs which are directly and strictly controlled by the Regulatory bodies. They don't permit an addition/deletion to their laid-down curriculum. For example, pharmacy doesn't permit tinkering with their program. In such an eventuality, the liberal arts courses are delivered only as value-added courses beyond the curriculum. It has been experienced that

some students don't wish to undertake anything beyond their domain subjects and require inspiration and reasoning. To resolve the above, specific mentoring is undertaken for the fence-sitters.

The problems are also faced in engaging experts from the field. Experts are required to travel from the NCR, Delhi industry and other fields of study located in other cities. The significant reliance for experts is placed on ASU faculty who are trained in delivering these courses and who keep updating their skills by attending MOOC courses etc.

Why other institutes should replicate the practice?

1. The practice is unique and followed across top league Universities abroad.
2. The practice is in sync with the spirit of NEP 2020 and holds a compelling merit
3. The areas and the courses under each category are quite exclusive and linked to furtherance of attainment of core and elective courses.
4. The courses are inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary in sync with the best practices by the regulatory bodies.
5. These provide transferrable life skills and build multiple and diverse competencies essentially required for jobs across domains.
6. In an endeavour to deliver these courses, faculty builds competencies which stand in good stead for the faculty and the organization.
7. The practice widens the horizons for attainment of professional knowledge and skill-sets during the programme-course.
8. The outcomes of the liberal-arts courses in delivering the specific attributes essential to the graduates, is substantial.