

CIHTS Successfully Conducted the Examination in the Blended Mode

Neither the teaching nor the mode and method of examination remained the same since the outbreak of COVID-19, the global pandemic. Across the globe, Universities and Research Institutes of higher education have adopted various ways for teaching and assessment. Following the guidelines issued by UGC and the Government of India, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi successfully conducted the examination in a blended mode. Since the morbid pandemic hindered the teaching routine, the faculty members of CIHTS immediately adapted to the 'new normal.' They conducted online classes from March 30th to June 30th, 2020. Different online platforms like google classroom, Edmodo etc. were used for learning and teaching. Substituting the loss caused to the students, the Institute took the unprecedented decision of reducing the question papers up to 30 percent for the final year students. The time limit for examination was also reduced by 1 hour proportionately.

All the students, excluding the final year, opted for online examination via different online platforms like google classroom, Edmodo, google meet, etc. Whereas the students of the final semester of the last year in the Institute opted for offline examination on the campus. The examination was held following all the guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. Students coming from home were kept in isolation in the Institute guest-houses for almost one month. All the students were kept under Sowa-Rigpa department of the Institute for medical observation and were regularly reviewed by the honourable Vice-Chancellor of the Institute.



Before the commencement of the examination, separate large and airy halls were earmarked maintaining ample distance among the examinees. Two separate examination halls were arranged for the students who came from outside and a larger hall for those who had stayed

on campus throughout the lockdown for the final exams. The regular sanitization of the fixture, furniture and building was conducted during the examination. The automatic contactless hand sanitizer dispensers were installed at the entrance of every hall and the body temperature of all was regularly monitored. All the examinees had prompt access to the hygienic washrooms and separate drinking water facilities near the examination halls. Wearing of masks and maintenance of proper individual distancing was strictly followed not only by the examinees but also by the invigilators and the staff. The Vice-Chancellor of the Institute Professor Geshe Ngawang Samten supervised and ensured the proper implementation of all the COVID-19 related guidelines by paying a regular visit to the examination halls. On completion of exams, he congratulated the teachers and employees of the concerned departments for successful conduction of examination during the tough times.

The assessment of the answer sheets was also conducted diligently, keeping in view all the regulations of the time of the pandemic. Moreover, a new evaluation structure was issued by the Institute, given to the precarious situation. The students were asked to submit fresh assignments ranging from 1000 to 1800 words carrying 20 percent of the weightage. The equal amount of weightage was also given to the viva-voce, which was also conducted in a blended manner. Both the current semester assignments and class presentation carried 10 percent of the weightage each, whereas 40 percent of the emphasis was given to the marks obtained in previous odd semester. A six-month grace period was granted to the research scholars who were to submit their theses by 30th June 2020, but failed to do so because of the pandemic. The blended mode was chosen for conducting the iconic kanthasth examination of the institute.

