

BITS Goa to continue online classes till Jan

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Panaji: Given the spike in Covid cases, BITS Pilani K K Birla Goa Campus, Zuarinagar, has for now decided to continue conducting its current semester online. It is also considering the possibility of continuing this up to January 2021, maybe even beyond if the need arises. The institute commenced the first semester for the academic year 2020-21 online on August 17.

Director G Raghurama said that the institute had been using Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) even before the pandemic and so it was easy for teachers and students to make the shift entirely to the online mode in a very short time. Classes for all courses

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- ▶ To accommodate remote learning, BITS Goa has introduced many small quizzes in a course rather than one or two exams
- ▶ Both Moodle and Google Classroom have an option to offer quizzes
- ▶ The objective questions can be auto-graded, saving time

were held live using Google Classroom and Google Meet.

By mid-March, students across programmes were asked to vacate hostels. Most students continue to be off-campus, barring a few PhD students who need to access laboratories to conduct critical experimental studies as part of their research.

▶ BITS ensured, P 2

BITS ensured pandemic did not stall final year graduation

Rakesh Mundy

AT THE FINGERTIPS

Working of online classes at BITS Pilani Goa campus

➤ The Moodle Learning Management System or LMS was made more robust so it could be accessed on the internet from anywhere 24x7

➤ Primarily Moodle and Google Classroom being used for teaching

➤ While Moodle is hosted on the campus server, Google Classroom is hosted on the Cloud

➤ Moodle allows students to form groups among themselves and Google Classroom allows unlimited storage and accommodates up to one thousand participants in a course

➤ Some of BITS Goa campus classes are large, with more than 600 students, which have been successfully catered to during the pandemic

➤ Both the softwares are seamlessly integrated with campus authentication system, making them secure against unauthorised drop-ins

➤ Both come with mobile apps so the students can attend the lectures even on the go

➤ There is an option to record lectures and chat messages so a student can refer to them later

➤ The Institute also allows faculty members to use any other similar platforms, with prior information to the administration. For instance, a few classes are held using the 'Canvas' platform and its associated tools



➤ For the AV conferencing, primarily Google Meet and Microsoft Teams are being used

► From P 1

The director said that whenever students have to return on campus, it is the remaining PhD students who are likely to be allowed first, possibly around December 2020. On the other hand, students of BE, MSc and ME programmes will not be back on campus till December end, he said.

“As of now, we are evaluating the possibility of getting them back to campus by January. If the situation improves, the campus may reopen for physical classes by January 2021. However, looking at the current spike in Covid cases across the country, we are preparing ourselves to look

at the possibility of online classes continuing for some more months after January,” said Raghurama.

He said that a final decision in this regard is expected to be taken around October or November.

Raghurama said that one of the challenges in conducting off-campus classes has been managing courses with laboratory components. To overcome this challenge, a combination of simulations, virtual laboratories, video demonstration and assignments are used to conduct the experimental sessions.

The institute ensured that students who were in the final year did not face undue

delay in their graduation during the pandemic.

“Faculty members first focused on students who were graduating and conducted their final evaluations in May. The online evaluations held were in the form of viva, take home assignments and presentations. Since most of them were either doing a thesis or undergoing internship in industries, they were already being assessed on a continuous basis,” said Raghurama.

He said that as BITS places emphasis on continuous learning and evaluation, the weightage for the ‘final component’ was in any case less than 30% or so, even before the pandemic.