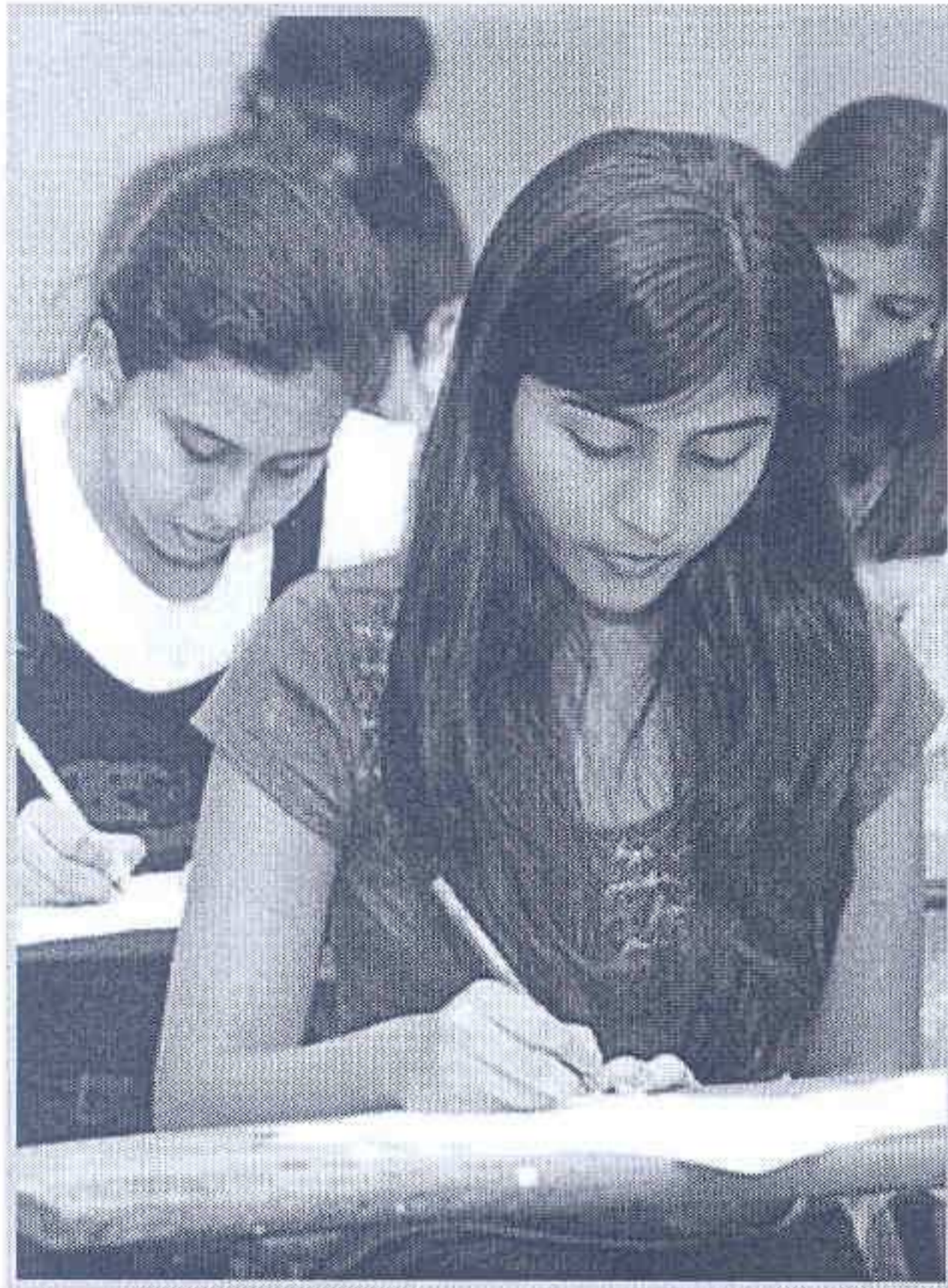


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Once exams are done, VTU vows to declare results in eight days

By Sridhar Vivan, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | May 31, 2014, 02.00 AM IST



Answer scripts to be digitised, strict deadlines for examiners and scrapping of subject-specific centres to ensure students get marks before colleges reopen

Almost every academic year in recent history, the careers of engineering students have been in limbo with the Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) taking its own sweet time to declare final semester results. The delay often spanned months, resulting in students missing out on lucrative job opportunities or higher education seats.

This year though, in an announcement that appears to be as dazzling as the civic agency's once much-vaunted magic boxes scheme, VTU promises to deliver results in eight days (with an error margin of two days). But unlike the magic boxes initiative, VTU insists that their broad three-point plan has been meticulously laid and is designed to succeed.

Final semester exams are scheduled to end on June 12 this year and VTU insists that the results will be out by June 20. There are about four lakh students writing even semester exams and around 25 lakh papers are to be evaluated.

It would be a 'national record' of sorts if results are declared within eight days. But H G Shekarappa, VTU registrar (evaluation), claimed that the varsity has tweaked the system and closed off loopholes to ensure results would be out by the promised date.

Shekarappa revealed that the digital evaluation process has been streamlined. Strict instructions have been sent to all evaluation centres to scan answer scripts on the same day exams are taken. "If an exam is scheduled for Friday, then by Friday evening answer papers have to be scanned and sent digitally to evaluators for valuation," Shekarappa said.

"Examiners have been given a deadline to complete marking of answer scripts by the evening of the next day (Saturday in the example) and send a report to the registrar's (evaluation) office in Belgaum. By doing this, I will be kept in the loop. I would know exactly how many answer scripts have been evaluated on each day. If there is a problem, then I can immediately sort it out."

The new digital process is a huge step up from the earlier manual process. Earlier, it would take a week — sometimes longer — for the marking process proper to begin. Prior to that, papers have to be bundled, coded, decoded and sent to examiners.

VTU has also increased the number of evaluation centres. It has done away with the subject-specific evaluation centre system. For example, previously all Civil Engineering papers were evaluated at Gulbarga while Electronics in Bangalore. But now, all subjects would be evaluated at all centres. The problem with the subject-specific centre model, claims Shekarappa, was that faculty members, especially women faculty, were reluctant to travel to Gulbarga. It resulted in a high number of absentees.

"Examiners used to come up with trivial reasons to skip evaluation work," Shekarappa said. "Sometimes scores of examiners would fall sick on the same day." To get around the problem, the varsity has decided to set up 10 evaluation centres. "Examiners will be allowed to choose a centre that is within 100 km radius of their work place. Unlike in the earlier system, all subjects will be marked at all centres." Shekarappa said about 1,500 examiners will be put on the job each day.

In the third bold step, VTU has planned to change the way practical exams and theory papers are marked. "Earlier, practical exams were marked first. This used to take up a lot of time. Now we have decided to simultaneously evaluate both theory and practicals. This year, students will know their results even before college reopens."

Students are thrilled with the announcement, but still have a prayer on their lips. "I have heard from my seniors that results used to be delayed for months," said Amogh Tripathi, a final year student. "If results are announced in eight to 10 days, then students can apply for revaluation and even get revaluation results before they apply elsewhere. We just hope that this promise turns out to be true."