

for each course in the first year of study and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;

- (ii) For Under Graduate Level Programmes- First three semesters e-learning material in four quadrants for each course and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;
- (iii) For Post Graduate Diploma Programmes- First year e-learning material in four quadrants for each course in the first year of study and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution:

Provided that for remaining year/semester, the learning material for programmes shall be ready prior to beginning of next year/semester and same shall be intimated to the Commission.

Annexure VIII

LEARNER SUPPORT CENTRES

I. General:

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of Education consists of three levels of functioning which are located at the Head Quarters (HQ) of the Higher Educational Institutions, Regional Centres and Study Centres (SCs) or Learner Support Centres (LSCs) established within the territorial jurisdiction of the Higher Educational Institution as defined in the following Part. The management of the processes of Admissions, Evaluation, and Declaration of Results etc. are the main responsibilities of the Head-Quarters of the Higher Educational Institution and are discharged from the main campus. Under the direct management and control of the Higher Educational Institution, Regional Centres which are the second level of functioning, perform a dynamic operational link between the Head-Quarter and the Learner Support Centres (LSCs) which are the third level of Open and Distance Learning system and are important main contact points for access by the learners, responsive and facilitating information centres, arranging contact sessions and other operations like processing of assignments etc. The Learner Support Centres (LSCs) will also be established and managed directly by the Higher Educational Institution and not through any franchise or outsourced arrangement:

Provided that a Private University established under the State Act shall be eligible to offer programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode through its Head Quarters only and duly recognized off-campus centres. A Private University shall not offer programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode through any Learner Support Centre.

II. Definition and Establishment of Learner Support Centre or Study Centre

1. 'Learner Support Centre (LSC) means a Centre established and recognised by the Higher Education Institution for advising, counselling, providing interface between the teachers and the learners, rendering academic and any other related services and assistance, required *inter alia* by the learners of Open and Distance Learning Mode:

Provided that a Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode shall ensure that all Study Centres or Learner Support Centres are established only in a College or Institute affiliated to a recognised university (other than a Private University) or a Government recognized Higher Educational Institution offering conventional mode programmes of equivalent level in the same broad areas under the relevant faculty such as faculty of sciences or social science or humanities or commerce or management etc. and having all the necessary infrastructure and availability of appropriate number of qualified faculty not below the rank of qualified Assistant Professors of recognised Colleges or Institutes offering a similar programme for engaging theory contact sessions and supervising practical sessions in laboratory or field:

Provided further that a Higher Educational Institution shall establish a Special Learner Support Centre for imparting instruction to persons referred to in the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995,

the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999 including the employees of Defence or Security Forces and jail inmates interested to study through the Open and Distance Learning mode:

Provided also that, in case of exigency or non-availability or non-willingness of an Institution/College as specified above for a specialized programme or a special component of a programme, the HEI shall activate Work Centre/Programme Centre at the Government aided/affiliated/recognized Research and Extension Institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras, State Training Institutes/Industrial Training Institutes; Government Organizations/ Departments; Accredited Laboratory; Government Licensed Industry; and approved Vocational Institutes having infrastructure, facilities and human resource as specified by the Statutory bodies for a programme or a few courses of a programme.

2. Any Study Centre or Learner Support Centre shall be established by the Higher Educational Institution after processing through the appropriate statutory bodies of the Higher Educational Institution. While processing such approvals it is mandatory to provide evidence of the preparedness for establishing Study Centres/Learner Support Centres, providing learner support services, availability of the academic, other staff and qualified academic counsellors.
3. The Higher Educational Institution shall have a Standard Operating Procedure for the smooth functioning of the Study Centre or Learner Support Centre which shall include all aspects of functions of the Study Centre or Learner Support Centre, monitoring mechanism of different services provided by the Centre, and it shall be mandatory for the Study Centre or Learner Support Centre to maintain the learner data related to conduct of counselling sessions, evaluation of assignments and effective and online grievance redressal system, which should be monitored at the level of regional centre and Head Quarters.
4. The list of Study Centres or Learner Support Centres with details such as: Name with address of the institution where the centre is located, name of the coordinator with contact details, working hours and schedules for counselling sessions, infrastructure and other facilities available in the Study Centre or Learner Support Centre shall be displayed on the web portal of the Open and Distance Learning institution and the same information shall be made available in the printed prospectus for the information of the learners and other stakeholders.
5. A Higher Educational Institution shall submit an undertaking to the Commission to the effect that the academic and instructional facilities at its Study Centres or Learner Support Centres meet all the conditions of these regulations and guidelines issued from time to time, and are commensurate with the number of academic programmes and learners' strength thereto- Provided that the Higher Educational Institution shall not carry out any of its activities related to the Open and Distance Learning mode at places other than Study Centres or Learner Support Centres under a different name such as Information Centre, Facilitation Centre, Nodal Centre, Knowledge Partner, Partner Institution, Multimedia Centres and similar such names:

Provided that, no Study Centre or Learner Support Centre shall be established beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the Higher Educational Institution or under any franchisee or outsourcing agreement, as described in these regulations:

Provided further that a Study Centre or Learner Support Centre shall not admit a learner to any programme in Open and Distance Learning mode for or on behalf of any other Higher Educational Institution.

III. Norms for Empanelment of Academic Counsellors and Counselling Sessions

1. **Eligibility conditions for appointment of academic counsellors:** The academic staff in the Study Centre or Learner Support Centre shall fulfil the minimum qualifications as laid down in the University Grants Commission (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in the Universities and Colleges and other Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2018. In addition,

such academic staff should have familiarity with the Characteristics of Open and Distance Learning mode learners and their needs, difference between Open and Distance Learning and conventional face-to-face education, awareness about instructional design, familiarity with the learner centered approach in blended mode of learning, ability to use different delivery media including online and computer mediated communication and Information and Communication Technology enabled learning.

2. **Norms for Personal Contact Programmes:** Credit Based System has been followed by Open and Distance Learning single mode Higher Educational Institutions during the last more than two decades and it has got standardized for programme delivery especially by the Open Universities. Such credits depend on the total number of hours that a learner is required to cover for all activities like participation in Personal Contact Programmes, Working on Assignments, Library Consultation etc., in completing a course. In this direction, the guidelines of University Grants Commission on Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is mandatory for all Higher Educational Institutions delivering education through conventional mode. Accordingly, for Post Graduate programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode, 16 credits per semester are assigned for a total of four semesters, on an indicative basis for explaining the concept, however shall be governed by the number of credits as defined by the Commission from time to time. In Open and Distance Learning mode Programme delivery, the component of contact with teachers is comparatively much lower than the conventional or face to face mode which is complemented by self-learning on the part of the learner.

The following table is provided for norms for counselling sessions in theory and practical courses for Open and Distance Learning mode programme delivery.

Table: ODL programmes - Contact Sessions for Theory and Practical Courses; on an indicative basis

Four Courses, each of 04 Credits, with a total of 16 Credits per semester			
Number of Assignments	10-12 credits for theory and 6-4 Credits for practical courses		Counselling for theory only Courses:
	Contact sessions- practical	Contact sessions-theory	Four courses of 4 credits each
Four per semester	60 hours of guided experiments with support of internal supervisor per 2 credits	30-36 hours	12 hours per course

Note (1): Contact session up to the extent of twenty per cent., or as defined by the Commission from time to time, could be arranged by providing Massive Open Online Courses and other online programme delivery systems.

Note (2): Practical sessions to the extent of twenty per cent., or as defined by the Commission from time to time, could be provided through virtual lab mode.

IV. Deployment of work force and other support at study or Learner Support Centres

1. The Study Centres or Learner Support Centres shall be headed by a Coordinator, not below the rank of an Assistant Professor and shall be augmented with academic and non-academic staff depending on the number of learner, assigned for adequate support to the learners. There shall not be any restrictions in the capacity of intake in Open and Distance Learning programme at the Learning Support Centre or Study Centre and Main campus. The capacity of intake per programme should be commensurate with the available qualified faculty in relevant area, well equipped laboratory, library, online connectivity and Information and Communication Technology facilities, and appropriate infrastructure, along with the following:

- (i) Number of qualified counsellor to number of students shall be 1:100 per theory course;
- (ii) Number of qualified supervisors per practical course of 2 credits: 1 or more;
- (iii) Availability of laboratory: The laboratory should be in a recognised Higher Educational Institution offering a similar programme in conventional mode for a period of not less than 3 years.

V. Monitoring of functioning of the Learner Support Centres or Study Centres

The Higher Education Institution shall have dynamic Information and Communication Technology based interactive communication system between Head Quarters, Regional Centres and Study Centres.

- (i) Log in email ID shall be generated for every learner so that learners can have a two-way communication, interact with various functionaries of the Institution and provide constructive feedback for improvement in Open and Distance Learning programme delivery;
- (ii) Head Quarters, Regional Centres and Study Centre or Learner Support Centres shall maintain a web portal giving all relevant and updated information about the Open and Distance Learning programmes being delivered. The content of these shall be updated at least on a weekly basis;
- (iii) Regional Centres, as applicable shall collect a holistic report about all aspects of the functioning and quality of programme delivery of Study Centres or Learner Support Centres periodically especially during the Admissions, Examinations, and Counselling Sessions etc., and share a consolidated report with the Head Quarters on a weekly basis;
- (iv) These reports alongwith responses by learners shall be periodically
- (v) analysed for the quality audit of a programme and its delivery besides the quality of performance of the Study Centres or Learner Support Centres;
- (vi) Any remedial action shall be jointly ensured by the Head Quarters, Regional Centres and Study Centres or Learner Support Centres promptly;
- (vii) Regular visits, at least twice a year by the academic staff of the Higher Educational Institution for on the spot monitoring and interaction with functionaries of the Regional Centres and Study Centres or Learner Support Centres, the learners and the counsellors; and
- (viii) Ensuring access of “SWAYAM” and other repositories of Massive Open Online Courses by the learners at Study Centres or Learner Support Centres.

VI. Closure of Non-performing Study Centre or Learner Support Centre:

In case a Study Centre or Learner Support Centre fails to adhere to the prescribed norms or guidelines, the Higher Educational Institution shall initiate action for closure of the centre by following due procedures, so that interests of learners are taken care by some alternative arrangement.

Annexure IX

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR OFFERING ONLINE PROGRAMMES
THROUGH NON-SWAYAM LEARNING PLATFORM**

I. Provisions:

Learning Platform, other than SWAYAM, used for delivery of online programmes shall be assessed by a Technical Expert Committee duly constituted by the Commission and the learning platform shall broadly have the following provisions: