

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION**NOTIFICATION**

New Delhi, the 4th September, 2020

No. F. 1-1/2020(DEB-I).—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 26 read with clause (j) of section 12 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (3 of 1956) and in supersession of the University Grants Commission (Open and Distance Learning) Regulations, 2017 and University Grants Commission (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations, 2018 except as respect of things done or omitted to be done before such supersession, the University Grants Commission with the previous approval of the Central Government hereby makes the following regulations, namely:-

PART I**PRELIMINARY**

- 1. Short title, application and commencement.**— (1) These regulations may be called the University Grants Commission (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020.
- (2) These regulations lay down the minimum standards of instruction for the grant of degrees at the undergraduate and post graduate levels and grant of post graduate diploma, through Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode and shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other regulations, Notifications, Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Commission.
- (3) These regulations shall apply to a University referred to under clause (f) of section 2 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (3 of 1956), an Institution Deemed to be University under section 3 of the said Act:

Provided that the University Grants Commission may, by order, exempt a Higher Educational Institution or Higher Educational Institutions from the application of these regulations.

- (4) They shall come into force on the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.
- 2. Definitions.**— In these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires,-
 - (a) “Academic Council or Senate” means the body empowered to take decisions regarding all academic matters in a Higher Educational Institution including the decision permitting to offer Open and Distance Learning Programmes and/or Online Programmes in compliance to these regulations;
 - (b) “Academic session” means duration of twelve months beginning either in January to February or in the month of July to August, as the case may be, of every calendar year;
 - (c) “Act” means the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (3 of 1956);
 - (d) “Centre for Internal Quality Assurance” (CIQA) means a Centre established by a Higher Educational Institution for ensuring the quality of programmes being offered in Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode, as specified in **Annexure-I**;
 - (e) “Commission” means the University Grants Commission established under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (3 of 1956);
 - (f) “Conventional mode” means a mode of providing learning opportunities through face to face interaction between the teacher and learner in regular class room environment but does not exclude supplementary instructions if any for the learner through use of online;
 - (g) “Credit” means the Unit award gained by a learner with study efforts of minimum number of hours required to acquire the prescribed level of learning in respect of that Unit;

Explanation.- For the purpose of this clause, A study effort for one credit shall mean time required by a learner to understand the contents equivalent to 15 hours of classroom teaching or 30 hours including self-learning time required to acquire the prescribed level of learning in respect of that Unit;

- (h) “degree” means a degree specified under sub-section (3) of section 22 of the Act;
- (i) “Dual Mode University” means a Higher Educational Institution offering programmes under conventional mode and also under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode;
- (j) “e-Learning Material” means and includes contents in the form of structured course material, as a part of one or more courses in the Online Programme, in digital format delivered through Learning Management System, which is *inter alia* self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study, but does not include text-books or guide-books; as defined in these regulations;
- (k) “Examination Centre” means a place where examinations are conducted, *inter alia*, for assessment of the learners pursuing programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode and is having the requisite infrastructure relevant to respective mode of education including adequate manpower for smooth conduct of examinations and adhering to such minimum standards as specified in these regulations;
- (l) “Franchising” for the purpose of these regulations, means and includes the practice of allowing, formally or informally, any person or institution or organisation, other than the Higher Educational Institution recognised under these regulations for offering programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode, to offer such programmes of study or any related activity on behalf of or in the name of the recognised Higher Educational Institution, and the terms ‘franchise’ and ‘franchisee’ shall be construed accordingly;
- (m) “Higher Education” means such education imparted by conventional mode or through open and distance learning mode or through online mode conducting regular classes or through Open and Distance Learning mode or through Online mode, beyond twelve years of schooling leading to the award of a Degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level or Certificate or Diploma or Postgraduate Diploma;
- (n) “Higher Educational Institution” means a university under clause (f) of section 2 and an Institution Deemed to be a University under section 3, of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, which is offering programmes through conventional mode and/or through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or through Online mode, in the field of higher education or research therein;
- (o) “Information and Communication Technology” means the diverse set of tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, manage information and be deployed for realising the goals of interactive teaching-learning, enhancing access, ensuring knowledge cum information sharing, building capacities and management of the educational system and resources;
- (p) “Integrated Programme” shall have the same meaning as defined in UGC Notification on Specification of Degree, 2014;
- (q) “Learning Management System” means a system to keep track of delivery of e-Learning Programmes, learner’s engagement, assessment, results, reporting and other related details in one centralised location;
- (r) “Learner Support Centre” means a centre established or recognised by the Higher Educational Institution for advising, counselling, providing interface between the teachers and the learners, rendering any academic and any other related service and assistance required, *inter alia*, by the learners of Open and Distance Learning mode;

- (s) “Learner Support Services” means and includes such services as are provided by a Higher Educational Institution in order to facilitate the acquisition of teaching-learning experiences by the learner to the level prescribed by or on behalf of the Commission in respect of a programme of study under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode;
- (t) “MOOCs” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under sub-regulation 3.6 of regulation 3 of UGC (Credit Framework for Online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016;
- (u) “Online Mode” means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using internet, e-Learning Materials and full-fledged programme delivery through the internet using technology assisted mechanism and resources;
- (v) “Open and Distance Learning Mode” means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using a variety of media, including print, electronic, online and occasional interactive face-to-face meetings with the learners or Learner Support Services to deliver teaching-learning experiences, including practical or work experiences;
- (w) “Open University” means a Higher Educational Institution which imparts education only through Open and Distance learning mode and/or Online mode using variety of media including print, electronic, online, information and communication technology educational aids including Open Educational Resources (OERs) or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) etc. and is not having any provision for offering higher education in conventional mode in its Act or Memorandum of Association or other statutory documents governing the Higher Educational Institution;
- (x) “Post Graduate Diploma” means a programme with minimum duration of two years, minimum entry level qualification as graduation, minimum 80 credits and nomenclature as recognised by the Commission and regulatory authority or statutory council, as applicable;
- (y) “Proctored Examination” means the examination conducted under the supervision of approved person or technology enabled proctoring which ensures the identity of the test taker and the integrity of the test taking environment, either in pen-paper mode or in computer based testing mode or in full-fledged Online mode; as permissible in Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode under these regulations;
- (z) “Prohibited programmes” means such programmes which shall not be permitted to be offered in Open and Distance Learning Mode and Online Mode in Higher Education, as detailed under:
- (a) The programmes in the disciplines (including their allied domains) of Engineering, Medical, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and other Para-Medical disciplines, Pharmacy, Nursing, Dental, Architecture, Law, Agriculture, Horticulture, Hotel Management, Catering Technology, Culinary Sciences, Aircraft Maintenance, Visual Arts and Sports;
 - (b) The research based programmes such as M.Phil and Ph.D;
 - (c) Such other Programmes not permitted to be offered through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode by any concerned statutory or regulatory body or council:

Provided that, if the concerned statutory or regulatory body or council permits any of the prohibited programmes, as mentioned above, under its domain, in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, the same may be considered by the Commission, and the decision so taken shall be notified by an Order.

- (za) “Prospectus” includes any publication, whether in print or e-form, issued for providing fair and transparent information, relating to a Higher Educational Institution and its programmes, to the general public (including to those seeking admission in such Higher Educational Institution) by the management of such Higher Educational Institution or any authority or person authorised by such Higher Educational Institution to do so;
- (zb) “Regional Centre” means a Centre established or maintained by the Higher Educational Institution for the purpose of coordinating and supervising the work of the Learner Support Centres in the region as per its territorial jurisdiction and for performing such other functions as may be conferred on such Centre by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;
- (zc) “Self-Learning e-Module” for Online mode means a modular unit of course material in e-learning form which is *inter alia* self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study and includes contents in the form of a combination of the following e-Learning content, namely:-
- (a) e-Text Materials;
- (b) Video Lectures;
- (c) Audio-Visual interactive material;
- (d) Virtual Classroom sessions;
- (e) Audio Pod casts;
- (f) Virtual Simulation; and
- (g) Self-Assessment Quizzes or Tests;
- (zd) “Self-Learning Material” for Open and Distance Learning mode means and includes contents in the form of course material, whether print or in e-form, which is *inter alia* self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study, but does not include text-books or guide-books;
- (ze) “SWAYAM” (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) means the learning management system as specified in the UGC (Credit Framework for online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016.

PART II

RECOGNITION PROCESS FOR OFFERING PROGRAMMES UNDER OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) MODE AND ONLINE MODE

3. Institutional Level Eligibility Criteria.—

(A) **Open and Distance Learning Mode:** Any Higher Educational Institution, may apply for offering programmes through the Open and Distance Learning mode, which fulfils the following conditions, namely:-

- (i) shall be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council with minimum score of 3.01 on a 4-point scale;

or

having rank in top-100 in University category of National Institutional Ranking Framework, at least once in two preceding cycles (at the time of application):

Provided that the NAAC and NIRF Ranking requirements shall be valid for academic session 2020-2021 (session beginning July, 2020 and January, 2021) only and shall be reviewed subsequently by the Commission for the academic session 2021-2022 (session beginning July 2021) and onwards:

Provided further that in view of unprecedented circumstances due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Higher Educational Institutions recognised by the University Grants Commission to offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode till the academic session 2019-2020 to enable them to reach the prescribed quality National Assessment and Accreditation Council benchmark and had submitted an undertaking to the effect that they will attain a National Assessment and Accreditation Council score of 3.26 on a 4-point scale before the end of academic session July 2019 - June 2020, and have also submitted an application to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council till 29 February 2020, shall continue to offer programmes, already recognised for the academic session 2019-2020, in Open and Distance Learning mode for a period of one year, academic session 2020-2021, starting from July 2020. Thereafter these Higher Educational Institutions shall be required to attain the eligibility mentioned at sub-clause (i) above:

Provided also that the NAAC condition mentioned above shall not be applicable to the Open Universities already recognised by the Commission for offering Open and Distance Learning Programmes for the academic year 2019-2020. These Open Universities shall be required to submit an affidavit that they shall obtain NAAC accreditation prior to the completion of the current recognition period, as specified in the Commission order already issued, failing which the Commission shall not accord further recognition to the programmes of such Open Universities under Open and Distance Learning mode:

Provided also that Open Universities not recognised by the Commission under UGC (Open and Distance Learning) Regulations, 2017 shall be required to obtain National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation within one year of their becoming eligible for accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), failing which the Commission shall not accord further recognition to the programmes of such Open Universities under Open and Distance Learning mode:

Provided also that an Institution Deemed to be a University under section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 shall offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode in accordance with the extant Deemed to be University Regulations and also in compliance to the provisions of these regulations;

(B) Online Mode

- (a) Higher Educational Institutions having NAAC score 3.26 and above or having rank in Top-100 in University category of National Institutional Ranking Framework, at least twice in three preceding cycles (at the time of application), shall be permitted to start full-fledged Online programmes without prior approval of the UGC, provided it satisfies all the conditions mentioned in these regulations:

Provided that the Higher Educational Institutions can start maximum of three (03) Under Graduate (UG) programmes and ten (10) Post Graduate (PG) programmes with the approval of its statutory authorities and in strict compliance with the provisions of these regulations:

Provided further that the NAAC and NIRF Ranking requirements shall be valid for academic session 2020-2021 (session beginning July, 2020 and January, 2021) only and shall be reviewed subsequently by the Commission for the academic session 2021-2022 (session beginning July 2021) and onwards:

Provided also that Higher Educational Institutions shall be required to submit application and desired information, and comply to all the provisions of the regulations and shall be required to submit an affidavit to the UGC:

Provided also, that in case, the Higher Educational Institutions want to start more than the defined number of programmes, then they shall seek prior permission from the Commission.

- (b) Any Higher Educational Institution, may apply for offering programmes through the Online mode, which fulfils the following conditions, namely:-
- (i) shall be in existence for at least three years; and

- (ii) shall be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council with minimum score of 3.01 on a 4-point scale;

or

shall be in the top-100 in University category in the National Institutional Ranking Framework for at least once in last two preceding cycles (at the time of application):

Provided that the NAAC and NIRF Ranking requirements shall be valid for academic session 2020-2021 (session beginning July, 2020 and January, 2021) only and shall be reviewed subsequently by the Commission for the academic session 2021-2022 (session beginning July 2021) and onwards:

Provided further that the condition mentioned at item (ii) of sub-clause (b) shall not be applicable to the Open Universities already recognised by the Commission for offering Open and Distance Learning programmes or Online programmes for the academic year 2019-2020. These Open Universities shall be required to submit an affidavit that they shall obtain National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation prior to the completion of the current recognition period, as specified in the Commission order already issued, failing which the Commission shall not accord further recognition to the programmes of such Open Universities under Online mode:

Provided also that a Higher Educational Institution having National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) valid score equal or more than 3.26 or having rank in Top-100 in University category of National Institutional Ranking Framework at least twice in three preceding cycles shall be permitted to enroll International Learners also:

Provided also that an Institution Deemed to be a University under section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 shall offer programmes in Online mode in accordance with the extant Deemed to be University Regulations and also in compliance to the provisions of these regulations.

4. Requirements for Submission of Proposals.—

(A) **Common Provisions for Open and Distance Learning Mode and Online Mode:** Every Higher Educational Institution eligible as per regulation 3 and intending to offer a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode from the academic session shall make an application to the Commission in the format mentioned in sub-regulation (1) of regulation 5 with documentary evidence for grant of recognition on fulfillment of the following conditions, namely:

- (i) the Higher Educational Institution has complied with the Institutional eligibility criteria as per regulation 3 of these regulations;
- (ii) the Higher Educational Institution has the approval of the statutory bodies under its Act for offering the programme in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode, as the case may be;
- (iii) the list of proposed programmes to be offered in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode, as applicable, the expected enrolment of learners, the learning outcome of each programmes and other requirements as notified by the Commission from time to time;
- (iv) for the programmes falling under the ambit of a statutory or regulatory authority or regulatory council, the Higher Educational Institution has the approval or recommendations of the respective statutory or regulatory authority or regulatory council for offering the programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode, as applicable;

Explanation: Programmes as mentioned at clause (iv) shall be considered only when these are recommended by the respective statutory or regulatory authority or regulatory council to offer in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode, as applicable. Also, statutory or regulatory authority or regulatory council shall either maintain the minimum standards for the programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode as stipulated in these regulations or set higher standards while making recommendations to the Commission.

- (v) the entry level qualifications, curriculum, teaching-learning scheme, pattern of question papers for end semester examination or term end examination, pass or fail criteria in Dual Mode University are the same for conventional programme and the proposed Open and Distance Learning programme or Online programme, as applicable, and in case of Open University, these parameters are same for Open and Distance Learning programme and proposed Online programme;
- (vi) weightages to continuous assessment and end semester examinations or term end examinations for the proposed Open and Distance Learning programmes or Online programmes, as applicable, is in conformity with regulation 15;
- (vii) submission of the fee as notified by Commission;
- (viii) a copy of such application is displayed on the website of the Higher Educational Institution by way of self-disclosure;
- (ix) submission of affidavit in the format notified by Commission;
- (x) preparedness status, as decided by the Commission from time to time for various stages of recognition process for the following, namely:-
 - (a) establishing Centre for Internal Quality Assurance as specified in **Annexure-I**;
 - (b) for establishing Learner Support Centres (Open and Distance Learning programmes) as specified in **Annexure-VIII**;
 - (c) providing systems for Learner Support Services as specified in **Part IV**;
 - (d) availability of Director, academic and other staff, qualified Counsellors/ Co-ordinators/ Mentors, (for ODL and Online modes, as applicable) meeting such standards of competence as specified in **Annexure-IV**;
 - (e) administrative arrangements, infrastructure and technology support for effective delivery of programmes in Open and Distance Learning and Online mode as specified in **Annexure- IV**.

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

(B) Provisions for Open and Distance Learning Mode:

- (i) The Higher Educational Institution shall adhere to the policy of territorial jurisdiction as specified in **Annexure-III**;
- (ii) A Higher Educational Institution shall be eligible to offer only those degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and post graduate diploma programmes, which it has already been offering in conventional mode of classroom teaching and from which at least one batch has passed out:

Provided that this sub-clause shall not be applicable to Open Universities:

Provided further that Science based programmes, which require hands-on experience, experimental setup, shall be offered only by the Higher Educational Institutions having NAAC score of 3.26 and above or by the Open universities or by the Higher Educational Institutions having rank in top-100 in University

category of National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), at least twice in three preceding cycles:

Provided also that the Science based programmes shall be offered from the Head Quarters and/or only from such Learner Support Centres which are offering same programme under conventional mode atleast for seven years.

- (iii) The application is accompanied with evidence of having prepared the self-learning materials required as decided by the Commission, for the proposed programmes of study, duly approved by the statutory bodies of the Higher Educational Institutions empowered to decide on academic matters.
- (iv) The application is accompanied with evidence of availability/ preparedness, as decided by the Commission from time to time, of Open and Distance Learning resources, adequate for effective delivery of all the proposed programme(s) of study considering the expected enrolment of learners.

(C) Provisions for Online Mode:

- (i) Territorial Jurisdiction shall not be applicable to the Higher Educational Institutions for offering recognised Online programmes under these regulations.
- (ii) A Higher Educational Institution, shall be eligible to offer only those degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and post graduate diploma programmes, which it has already been offering in conventional mode of classroom teaching or in Open and Distance Learning mode and from which at least one batch has passed out:
Provided that any programme requiring practical or laboratory course as a curricular requirement, shall be prohibited through Online mode, except in cases where practical component is limited to programming and coding including software tools.
- (iii) The application is accompanied with demonstrated capability of Higher Educational Institution for development and production of Online Programmes for the proposed programmes of study, duly approved by the statutory bodies of the Higher Educational Institution empowered to decide on academic matters.
- (iv) The application is accompanied with evidence of Higher Educational Institution having access to SWAYAM or other learning platform for the proposed programmes of study, duly approved by the statutory bodies of the Higher Educational Institution empowered to decide on academic matters, for-
 - (a) learner authentication - integrated with Aadhaar or other government recognised identity for Indian learners and Passport for foreign learners;
 - (b) learner registration - through a web application with supporting documents;
 - (c) payment gateway – using Digital Payment system;
 - (d) learning management System - which tracks the delivery of Programme, learner's engagement, assessment, results, and reporting supported by analytical tools that can help the teachers to extract and use the relevant reports.
- (v) The application is accompanied with the evidence of ability to conduct proctored examinations with all the security arrangements ensuring transparency and credibility of the examinations.
- (vi) The application is accompanied with evidence to ensure that the Higher Educational Institutions offering Online Programmes is not having any franchise arrangement with a private service provider and the ownership of offering Online programmes including all the required components of Online education and compliance to all the provisions of the regulations shall be that of Higher Educational Institutions only.
- (vii) The application is accompanied with evidence of availability/ preparedness, the administrative arrangements for supportive services for effective delivery of all the proposed programme(s) of study considering the expected enrolment of learners.

- 5. Programmes Recognition Process.**— (1) A Higher Educational Institution intending to offer a programme through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode for academic session and for subsequent years, shall make an online application, as invited by the Commission in the format notified by Commission and upload the same on the specified portal along with scanned copy of all the documents specified therein, at least three months prior to commencement of the academic session of the programme intended to be offered by such Higher Educational Institution:

Provided that the programmes of the Higher Educational Institutions recognised by the Commission under UGC (Open and Distance Learning) Regulations, 2017 and UGC (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations, 2018 shall remain valid programmes for the period as mentioned in the Commission Orders. These Higher Educational Institutions shall submit an affidavit to the Commission that they shall comply to provisions of these regulations prior to the beginning of next academic session from the notification of these regulations. However, after the expiry of the recognition period as specified in the already notified Commission Orders, the Higher Educational Institution for the said programmes shall be required to apply afresh as per the sub-regulation (1) of regulation 4.

- (2) The Commission shall process the application received under sub-regulation (1) of regulations 5 in the following manner, namely:-
- (i) any deficiency or defect in the application shall be communicated by the Commission to the Higher Educational Institution and the Higher Educational Institution shall be required to remove or rectify such deficiencies or defects with the necessary documents or information, if any, within fifteen days;
 - (ii) where the Higher Educational Institution has made an application for offering programme(s) in Open and Distance Learning mode and/ or Online mode, the Commission may cause an inspection, in respect of such programme(s), of the Higher Educational Institution at its discretion through an Expert Committee;
 - (iii) the Commission shall examine the application with the help of an Expert Committee constituted by Chairman of the Commission and the recommendations of the Committee shall be placed before the Commission for its consideration.
- (3) After processing the application in the manner laid down under sub-regulation (2) of regulation 5 for offering programme(s) through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, the Commission shall-
- (i) if it is satisfied that such Higher Educational Institution fulfils the conditions laid down and the quality parameters specified under these regulations, pass an order granting recognition to such Higher Educational Institution for a period of five years in respect of such programmes either in Open and Distance Learning mode or in Online mode or in both modes, as it may specify in the order, and subject to such conditions as it may specify:

Provided that while passing an order, where the Commission does not grant recognition in respect of one or more programmes, the Commission shall specify the grounds of such refusal in the order.
 - (ii) If the Commission is of the opinion that such Higher Educational Institutions does not fulfill the requirements laid down in clause (i) in respect of any of the programme intended to be offered by the Higher Educational Institution either in Open and Distance Learning mode or in Online mode or in both modes, it shall pass an order refusing recognition to such Higher Educational Institution for reasons to be recorded in writing.
- (4) Every order granting or refusing recognition to a Higher Educational Institution for programme(s) in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode under sub-regulation (3) of regulation 5 shall be communicated in writing for appropriate action to such Higher Educational Institution and to the concerned State Government and the Central Government.

- (5) Every Higher Educational Institution, in respect of which recognition for programme(s) has not been granted by the Commission, shall discontinue the programme(s) in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode with immediate effect:
- Provided that the learners already enrolled in the currently recognised programmes shall be allowed to complete the Programmes in the laid down manner.
- (6) Every Higher Educational Institution which is accorded recognition by the Commission under these regulations shall offer programme(s) in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode from the academic session as mentioned in the Commission Order.
- (7) No Higher Educational Institution shall offer any Open and Distance Learning Programme and/or Online Programme and admit learners thereto unless it has been granted recognition by the Commission and admission shall not be made in anticipation of the recognition.
- 6. Appeal.—** (1) Any Higher Educational Institution aggrieved by an order made under sub-regulation (3) of regulation 5 and withdrawal of recognition under sub-regulation (1) of regulation 7 may prefer an appeal to the Commission within a period of thirty days from the date of issue of communication;
- (2) No appeal shall be accepted after the expiry of the prescribed period under sub-regulation (1).
- (3) Every appeal made under these regulations shall be accompanied by a copy of the order appealed against along with a fee of Rs. 10,000/- per programme.
- (4) The procedure for disposing off an appeal shall be as under:
- (i) The Commission shall examine the appeal with the help of a Standing Appellate Committee constituted by Chairman of the Commission.
 - (ii) The Committee will examine the appeals of the Higher Educational Institutions received against the Commission decision for rejection of programme and make recommendation whether to confirm or reverse the Commission decision on rejection of programmes.
- (5) The Commission may confirm or reverse the order appealed against.
- (6) The decision of the Commission shall be final and binding on the Higher Educational Institutions.
- 7. Withdrawal of recognition.—** (1) Where the Commission is, on its own or on any representation received from any person, or any information received from any authority or a statutory body, or on the basis of any enquiry or inspection conducted by it, satisfied that a Higher Educational Institution has contravened any of the provisions of these regulations or guidelines and orders made or issued there under, or has submitted or produced any information and documentary evidence which is found to be false at any stage or any condition subject to which recognition under clause (i) of sub-regulation (3) of regulation 5 has been granted, it may withdraw recognition of such Higher Educational Institution in respect of such programme(s) as it may specify, for reasons to be recorded in writing:

Provided that no such order against the Higher Educational Institution shall be passed unless a reasonable opportunity of making representation against the proposed order has been given to such Higher Educational Institution:

Provided further that the order withdrawing or refusing recognition passed by the Commission shall come into force with immediate effect.

- (2) If a Higher Educational Institution offers any programme in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode after the coming into force of the order withdrawing recognition under sub-regulation (1) or fails to obtain recognition under these regulations for offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode or Online mode for academic session and subsequent academic sessions, the degree obtained pursuant to such programme or after undertaking a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode in such Higher Educational Institutions, shall not be treated as a valid qualification:

Provided that the programmes of the Higher Educational Institutions recognised by the Commission under UGC (Open and Distance Learning) Regulations, 2017 and UGC (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations, 2018 shall remain valid programmes for the period as mentioned in the Commission Orders.

- (3) In the event of any Higher Educational Institution found offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode without recognition of the Commission or in violation to any of the provisions of these regulations and guidelines or orders made there under, the Commission may-
- (i) issue Show-Cause Notice;
 - (ii) withdraw the recognition of a programme or some programmes or all the programmes for an academic session or withdraw the recognition, maximum up to next five academic sessions not only for such Open and Distance Learning programmes and/or Online programmes but also for other programmes offered by the institutions in regular and conventional mode;
 - (iii) if, in spite of above, the Higher Educational Institution is found continuing the violations, a First Information Report may be lodged against the officials or management of the errant Higher Educational Institution to take action as per law;
 - (iv) withhold or debar from receiving University Grants Commission grants;
 - (v) refer the matter to the Central or State Government, as applicable for withdrawal of Higher Educational Institution status;
 - (vi) take action as per the provisions of the Act or Rules or Regulations as applicable to the Higher Educational Institution;
 - (vii) put in the public domain a list of such defaulters Higher Educational Institutions;
 - (viii) in case of a non-recognized Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, punitive action mentioned at clauses (i), (iii), (v) and (vii) shall be exercised by the Commission keeping in view future of the learners.

PART III

MAINTENANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURAL, ACADEMIC AND OTHER QUALITY STANDARDS BY HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- 8. Systems Management, Structure and Processes.**— (1) An Open University shall have designated Schools of Studies for design and development of programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and, which shall be headed by a regular functionary on full time dedicated basis not below the rank of an Associate Professor and shall have appropriate and adequate academic, technical, administrative staff and infrastructural resources as specified in **Annexure-IV**. The Open University shall also have appropriate departments such as operational department for admissions, learner support and examinations.
- (2) An Open University shall have a designated Centre for Online Education (COE) for operationalising the programmes designed and developed by the Schools of Studies for Online Learning mode and, which shall be headed by Director, a regular functionary on full time dedicated basis not below the rank of an Associate Professor and shall have appropriate and adequate academic, technical, administrative staff and infrastructural resources as specified in **Annexure-IV**.
- (3) A Higher Educational Institution other than an Open University shall have a designated Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) for operationalising the programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, which shall be headed by Director, a regular functionary on fulltime dedicated basis not below the rank of an Associate Professor and shall have appropriate and adequate academic, technical, administrative staff and infrastructural resources as specified in **Annexure-IV**.

- (4) A Higher Educational Institution shall plan, implement, coordinate and monitor operationalisation and quality assurance of the programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode and shall ensure adherence to the regulations and guidelines of the Commission and other regulatory authorities.
- 9. Self-regulation through disclosures, declarations and reports.—** A Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall display on its website a joint declaration by authorised signatories, Registrar and Director of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, authenticating that the following documents have been uploaded on the Higher Educational Institution's website, namely:-
- (a) the establishing Act and Statutes there under or the Memorandum of Association, as the case may be or both of the Higher Educational Institution, empowering it to offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode;
 - (b) copies of the letters of recognition from Commission and other relevant statutory or regulatory authorities;
 - (c) programme details including brochures or programme guides inter alia information such as name of the programme, duration, eligibility for enrolment, programme fee, programme structure;
 - (d) programme-wise information on syllabus, suggested readings, contact points for counselling/mentoring, programme structure with credit points, programme-wise faculty details, list of supporting staff, list of Learner Support Centres with addresses and contact details (for Open and Distance Learning mode), their working hours and counselling (for Open and Distance Learning mode)/mentoring (for Online mode) Schedule;
 - (e) important schedules or date-sheets for admissions, registration, re-registration, counselling/mentoring, assignments and feedback thereon, examinations, result declarations etc.;
 - (f) detailed strategy plan related to Online programme delivery, if any including learning materials offered through Online and learner assessment system and quality assurance practices of Online learning programmes;
 - (g) the feedback mechanism on design, development, delivery and continuous evaluation of learner-performance which shall form an integral part of the transactional design of the Open and Distance Learning mode programmes and/or Online programmes and shall be an input for maintaining the quality of the programmes and bridging the gaps, if any;
 - (h) information regarding all the programmes recognised by the Commission;
 - (i) data of year-wise and programme-wise learner enrolment details in respect of degrees and/or post graduate diplomas awarded;
 - (j) complete information about 'Self Learning Material' including name of the faculty who prepared it, when was it prepared and last updated for Open and Distance Learning Programmes; Similarly information about 'E-Learning Materials' in 4 quadrants in case of Online programmes;
 - (k) a compilation of questions and answers under the head 'Frequently Asked Questions' with the facility of online interaction with learners providing hyperlink support for Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes;
 - (l) list of the 'Learner Support Centres' along with the number of learners who shall appear at any examination centre and details of the Information and Communication Technology facilities available for conduct of examination in a fair and transparent manner, for Open and Distance Learning programmes;
 - (m) list of the 'Examination Centres' alongwith the number of learners in each centre, for Open and Distance Learning programmes;

- (n) details of proctored examination in case of Online programmes for all the exams;
- (o) details of proctored examination in case of end semester examination or term end examination of Open and Distance Learning programmes;
- (p) academic Calendar mentioning period of the admission process along with the academic session, dates of continuous and end semester examinations or term end examinations, etc;
- (q) reports of the third party academic audit to be undertaken every five years and internal academic audit every year by Centre for Internal Quality Assurance.

10. Quality Assurance.— (1) A Higher Educational Institution recognised for offering programme(s) in Open and Distance learning mode and/or Online mode shall, take the following steps, namely:-

- (i) establish a Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, common for programmes in the Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode as per **Annexure I**;
- (ii) follow the Quality Assurance Guidelines on learning materials in multiple media, curriculum and pedagogy, as specified by the Commission in **Annexure VI** and shall post its quality assurance mechanism on the website;
- (iii) take adequate measures for training and capacity building of its teaching and administrative staff and counsellors/co-ordinators/mentors at regular intervals;
- (iv) ensure that the quality of programmes of study offered through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode are maintained at par with standards as defined for the conventional mode of teaching, in conformity with the provisions as stipulated under section 22 of UGC Act, 1956 and UGC notification on specification of degrees, 2014 as notified by the Commission;
- (v) exhibit the copies of the approval letters duly obtained or received from the concerned statutory or regulatory authority or council to offer programmes under its domain on the Higher Educational Institution's website as well as against the name of the each programmes in the brochure or bulletin of the respective Higher Educational Institution and inform the same to the University Grants Commission from time to time in the matter:

Provided that in case of violation of these regulations, the provisions specified under sub-regulation (3) of regulation 7 shall apply;

- (vi) ensure that the academic and instructional facilities at its Learner Support Centres for Open and Distance Learning mode, and information resources for online delivery of programmes meet the guidelines laid by the Commission from time to time, and are commensurate with the number of programmes and enrolments thereto.

- (2) Every Higher Educational Institution recognised to offer programme in Open and Distance Learning Mode and/or Online mode shall adhere to all the provisions regarding mandatory disclosure of information as stipulated under regulation 9.

11. Teachers and Academic Staff working in Higher Educational Institutions.— (1) Teacher and equivalent academic staff in the Schools of Studies or Centre of Distance and Online Education or Centre for Online Learning and Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning only) shall be appointed as per the minimum qualifications 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 and there shall be positions for Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor in the Schools of Studies or Centre for Online Education for an Open University or in the Centre of Distance and Online Education for a dual mode University on permanent and/or full time dedicated basis, for performing academic functions.

- (2) Every teacher, beside his or her academic responsibilities shall participate in teaching,

curriculum and course material development, undertake examination or test or evaluation or invigilation work, general assistance to learners in removing their academic difficulties, and participate in extracurricular and institutional support activities as required.

- (3) The workload of a teacher shall take into account teaching, research and extension activities, preparation of lessons, evaluation of assignments, term papers etc. shall be in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Commission:

Provided that the time spent on extension work where it forms an integral part of the course specified shall count towards the teaching load.

- (4) The number of full-time dedicated teachers exclusively for Open and Distance Learning Mode and/or Online mode and other administrative and technical staff shall be appointed as stipulated under Annexure-IV of these regulations.
- (5) The details of the faculty in the Schools of Studies or Centre for Online Education or Centre of Distance and Online Education of the Higher Educational Institution and in the Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning Mode only) shall be declared on the website of the Higher Educational Institution and be linked to Aadhaar details or other Government identifiers.
- 12. Use of e-resources for Open and Distance Learning mode.—** (1) A Higher Educational Institution offering programme(s) in Open and Distance Learning mode shall take such measures as are necessary to blend Information Communication Technologies (ICT) including those developed by National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology, for enhancing effectiveness of teaching – learning process, and administrative functioning and for maintenance of updated information at all times in respect of status of admissions, registration, for managing teaching-learning activities through online support for interactive learning with learner feedback, to facilitate the use of Open Educational Resources (OER), Massive Open Online Courses and for continuous as well as comprehensive evaluation, certification, and other aspects of learner support.
- (2) A Higher Educational Institution may allow up to forty per cent. of the total courses being offered in a particular programme in a semester through the Online Learning courses/ Massive Open Online Courses.

13. Programme Launching Process for Higher Educational Institution.—

(A) Common Provisions for Open and Distance Learning Mode and Online Mode:

- (1) The proposed programmes shall be designed for conventional learners, as well as for working professionals and other individuals aspiring to acquire knowledge and associated academic credentials through Open and Distance Learning Mode and/or Online mode.
- (2) Minimum and Maximum Duration of Programme:
- (i) The minimum duration for completion and award of degrees at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode shall be in accordance with the UGC notification of specification of degrees, 2014;
- (ii) The minimum duration for completion and award of post graduate diploma shall be two years;
- (iii) The maximum duration for completion and award of degree at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels or post graduate diploma in Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode shall be double the minimum duration of the respective programmes as per items (i) and (ii).
- (3) Before offering any programme, the Higher Educational Institution shall prepare a Programme Project Report as per **Annexure-V** for each programme which shall include the following, namely:-
- (i) information on relevance of programme to the Institution's mission and goals, objectives of the programme, nature of prospective target group of learners, and

- appropriateness of Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode for acquiring specific competencies or skills;
- (ii) instructional design which shall include duration of programme(s), faculty and support staff requirements, instructional delivery mechanisms, identification of media – print, audio or video, online, computer aided, and learner support service systems;
 - (iii) procedure for admissions, curriculum transaction and evaluation;
 - (iv) details of laboratory support required for the programme(s), if any;
 - (v) library Resources;
 - (vi) cost estimate of the programme and the provisions there for, indicating the amount assigned for programme development, delivery and maintenance;
 - (vii) quality assurance mechanism and expected programme outcomes;
 - (viii) curriculum and detailed syllabi of the programme(s); and
 - (ix) guidelines on launching programme(s) design, development and any such matters as specified by the Commission and other regulatory bodies which shall be followed by the Higher Educational Institutions.
- (4) A Higher Educational Institution other than an Open Universities shall offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode with total credits and minimum duration for the programmes kept same as that of corresponding programmes in conventional mode.
- (5) An Open University shall offer programmes in Open and Distance mode with total credits and minimum duration for programmes kept same as that of corresponding programmes in conventional mode by the Central and/or State Universities and for offering programmes in Online mode, total credits and minimum duration for programme shall be the same as that of corresponding programme in Open and Distance Learning mode.
- (6) The Programme Project Report shall be approved by the appropriate authorities of the Higher Educational Institution, which shall put in place a monitoring mechanism to ensure its proper implementation.
- (B) Provisions for Open and Distance Learning mode:** A Higher Educational Institution offering programme in Open and Distance Learning mode shall, in order to facilitate the pace of learning and multiple choice for learners, prepare Self Learning Material as per **Annexure-VI** and **Annexure-VII** taking into consideration the following, namely:-
- (i) Self Learning Material has clearly stated objectives, intended learning outcomes, study guidance and advice for the learners as to how to optimally use the material and suggestive related reference material to enhance the learning experience, and linkage within the text with other media (for digital SLM) is maintained for easy referencing and progress;
 - (ii) At least 60 per cent. of Self Learning Materials shall be developed by the in-house faculty of the Higher Educational Institution and the remaining per cent. of the materials can be sourced from available resources such as other Higher Educational Institutions, Open Educational Resources (OER), and SWAYAM, duly approved by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;
 - (iii) Self Learning Materials developed and offered by it is self-explanatory, self-contained, illustrative, easily comprehensible, and in manageable modules such as units and blocks;
 - (iv) Self Learning Materials provides adequate mechanism for the learners to provide feedback on their understanding of the subject;

- (v) Self Learning material is revised periodically from the perspective of improving quality and learner support:

Provided that a Higher Educational Institution shall prepare the Self Learning Material only after approval of the Programme Project Report:

Provided further that no programme in Open and Distance Learning mode shall be launched by a Higher Educational Institution unless it has prepared the Self Learning Material taking into consideration the above factors.

- (C) **Provisions for Online mode.**— (1) A Higher Educational Institution offering programme in Online mode shall prepare the E-Learning Materials as per **Annexure-VI** and **Annexure-VII**, taking into the consideration the following, namely:-

- (i) The Online Learning shall have the four quadrant approach; as per UGC (Credit Framework for online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016;
- (ii) At least 60 per cent. of e-Learning Material shall be developed by the in-house faculty of the Higher Educational Institution and remaining per cent. of the material can be sourced from available e-resources such as Open Educational Resources (OER), SWAYAM or other source, duly approved by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;
- (iii) A Higher Educational Institution shall have demonstrated capability, for developing and production of Online programmes with the technology for production including in-house or duly out-sourced production facilities for converting the courses of a Programme into Online Programmes, defined as under—
 - (a) learning videos with recording or dubbing or editing facilities for graphics or animation creation;
 - (b) e-content for reading and improving comprehension of learners;
 - (c) tests and assignments that test the understanding;
 - (d) discussion forum that clarifies the doubts of the learners.
- (iv) The Online programmes' delivery shall be through the SWAYAM portal or any other learning platform duly approved by the Commission on the recommendation of the Technical Expert Committee broadly complying to the features mentioning at **Annexure-IX**.
- (v) The Programme offered under Online mode shall conform to the condition that apart from the Programme delivery, other components such as Counselling Process, Online Application Processing and fee payment shall also be provided through Online mode.

- (2) The Higher Educational Institution may evolve the curricular aspects, assessment criteria etc. for the award of Degree at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and/or Post Graduate Diploma adopting the following requirements, namely:-

- (i) the course content for each course shall be clearly defined, each having modular e-content, delivery online in a structured format, with clearly spelt out learning outcomes which learners are expected to attain at the end of the module;
- (ii) programmes (including courses in a programme) architecture shall permit the online teacher or instructor to add multi-media enriched and interactive content, activities and assessments to extend learning opportunities and shall be easy to navigate;
- (iii) availability of assessment mechanism - each course in the Online Programme shall have a precise assessment mechanism for the identified learning outcomes at each level for both continuous formative and summative assessments;
- (iv) identified technological interface and interoperability - the Online Programme shall be able to utilise a variety of technology tools, shall have a user friendly interface

and meet accessibility standards for interoperability and access for learners with special needs.

- (3) Learners' Requirements for Enrolment to Online Programmes - Learners to be enrolled for the Online Programmes shall be acquainted with the requisite information or literacy skills for which there shall be a helpline for technical assistance throughout the semester/course of study.
- (4) Learner's Authentication Requirements –
 - (i) the Higher Educational Institutions shall exercise proper learner's authentication practice to ensure the academic integrity and all the Indian learners, at the time of enrolment, synchronous /asynchronous participations and all assessments for examinations, shall be required to provide the Aadhaar number or other government recognised identifier, as applicable and verify their information for authentication for which necessary infrastructure or support shall be provided to them by the Higher Educational Institutions;
 - (ii) all the International learners shall authenticate their credentials through Passports only. These learners shall pursue Online programmes from their country of residence.
- (5) Active Engagement of the Learners - Active engagement in Online or virtual class shall be monitored via participation in asynchronous or synchronous discussions, assignment activity and Programme involvement and the analytics of Learning Management System shall be used for ensuring the learner's participation at least for two hours every fortnight.
- (6) Technical Know-how or Skills Requirements - The Higher Educational Institutions shall have defined criteria or guidelines for the technical know-how and skill requirements of the Online Programme Coordinators, Course Coordinators, Course Mentors and other staff and ascertain that all the resources are competent to deliver online education effectively from the learner learning perspective and continuous upgradation of skills shall be essential for embracing newer methodologies and Information and communication technology tools for enhancing the development and delivery of the Online Programmes in the long run.
- (7) Learners' Support Services and E-Learning Materials – Higher Educational Institutions shall provide adequate support for advising, counselling, mentoring and guidance so as to ensure the best possible learning experience for the learners and there shall be clear guidelines on academic integrity and netiquette (internet etiquette) expectations regarding lesson activities, group discussions, chats and plagiarism.
- (8) A Higher Educational Institution shall provide the details of all International learners enrolled immediately after the beginning of the academic session to the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission.

PART IV

ADMISSIONS, EXAMINATIONS AND LEARNER SUPPORT

- 14. Admission and fees.**— (1) On being granted recognition under clause (i) of sub-regulation (3) of regulation 5, a Higher Educational Institution shall admit learners to its recognised programmes only from the academic session specified in the Commission order:

Provided that the intake capacity under Open and Distance Learning mode for a programme under science discipline to be offered by a Dual Mode University shall be three times of the approved intake in conventional mode and in case of Open University, it shall be commensurate with the capacity of the Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning only) to provide lab facilities to the admitted learners:

Provided further that enrolment of learners to the Higher Educational Institution, for any reason whatsoever, in anticipation of grant of recognition for offering a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, shall render the enrolment invalid:

Provided also that if the Higher Educational Institution is found violating any of the provisions of these regulations, punitive action shall be taken by the Commission in accordance with the sub-regulation (3) of regulation 7.

- (2) In order to provide opportunities for Higher Education to a larger segment of the population and to promote the educational wellbeing of the community in general, the fee structure shall be devised by the Higher Educational Institutions in such a manner that it is affordable to all the stake holders including students from the deprived sections of society and the Higher Educational Institutions shall comply with the following:-

- (i) A Higher Educational Institution shall, for admission in respect of any programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, accept payment towards admission fee and other fees and charges-
- (a) as may be fixed by it and declared by it in the prospectus for admission, and on the website of the Higher Educational Institutions;
- (b) with a proper receipt in writing issued for such payment to the concerned learner admitted in such Higher Educational Institutions;
- (c) only by way of online transfer, bank draft or pay order directly in favour of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (ii) It shall be mandatory for the Higher Educational Institution to upload the details of all kind of payment or fee paid by the learners on the website of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (iii) The fee waiver and/or scholarship schemes for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Persons with Disabilities category of learners and students from deprived section of society shall be in accordance with the instructions or orders issued by Central Government or State Government:

Provided that a Higher Educational Institution shall not engage in commercialisation of education in any manner whatsoever, and shall provide for equity and access to all deserving learners.

- (iv) Admission of learners to a Higher Educational Institution for a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall be offered in a transparent manner and made directly by the Head Quarters of the Higher Educational Institution which shall be solely responsible for final approval relating to admissions or registration of learners:

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

- (v) Every Higher Educational Institution shall-
- (a) record Aadhaar details or other Government identifier(s) of Indian learner and Passport for an International Learner;
- (b) maintain the records of the entire process of selection of candidates, and preserve such records for a minimum period of five years;
- (c) exhibit such records as permissible under law on its website; and
- (d) be liable to produce such record, whenever called upon to do so by any statutory authority of the Government under any law for the time being in force.
- (vi) Every Higher Educational Institution shall publish, prior to the date of commencement of admission to any of its programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, a prospectus (print and in e-form) containing the following for the purposes of informing those persons intending to seek admission to such Higher Educational Institutions and the general public, namely:-

- (a) each component of the fee, deposits and other charges payable by the learners admitted to such Higher Educational Institutions for pursuing a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, and the other terms and conditions of such payment;
- (b) the percentage of tuition fee and other charges refundable to a learner admitted in such Higher Educational Institutions in case such learner withdraws from such Higher Educational Institutions before or after completion of programme of study and the time within, and the manner in, which such refund shall be made to the learner;
- (c) the number of seats approved in respect of each programme of Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, which shall be in consonance with the resources;
- (d) the conditions of eligibility including the minimum age of a learner in a particular programme of study, where so specified by the Higher Educational Institution;
- (e) the minimum educational qualifications required for admission in programme(s) specified by the Commission or relevant statutory authority or councils, or by the Higher Educational Institution, where no such qualifying standards have been specified by any statutory authority;
- (f) the process of admission and selection of eligible candidates applying for such admission, including all relevant information in regard to the details of test or examination for selecting such candidates for admission to each programme of study and the amount of fee to be paid for the admission test;
- (g) details of the teaching faculty, including therein the educational qualifications and teaching experience of every member of its teaching faculty and also indicating therein whether such member is employed on regular or contractual basis or any other;
- (h) pay and other emoluments payable for each category of teachers and other employees;
- (i) information in regard to physical and academic infrastructure and other facilities, including that of each of the learner support centres (for ODL programmes) and in particular the facilities accessible by learners on being admitted to the Higher Educational Institution;
- (j) broad outline of the syllabus specified by the appropriate statutory body or by higher educational institution, as the case may be, for every programme of study;
- (k) activity planner including all the academic activities to be carried out by the higher educational institution during the academic sessions:

Provided that the Higher Educational Institution shall publish information referred to in sub-clauses (a) to (k) on its website, and the attention of the prospective learners and the general public shall be drawn to such publication on its website and Higher Educational Institution admission prospectus and the admission process shall necessarily be over within the time period mentioned in the Commission Order.

- (vii) No Higher Educational Institution shall, directly or indirectly, demand or charge or accept, capitation fee or demand any donation, by way of consideration for admission to any seat or seats in a programme of study conducted by it;
- (viii) No person shall, directly or indirectly, offer or pay capitation fee or give any donation, by way of consideration either in cash or kind or otherwise, for obtaining admission to any seat or seats in a programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode offered by a Higher Education Institution;

- (ix) No Higher Educational Institution, who has in its possession or custody, any document in the form of certificates of degree, diploma or any other award or other document deposited with it by a person for the purpose of seeking admission in such Higher Educational Institution, shall refuse to return such degree, certificate award or other document with a view to induce or compel such person to pay any fee or fees in respect of any programme of study which such person does not intend to pursue or avail any facility in such Higher Educational Institution;
- (x) In case a learner, after having admitted to a Higher Educational Institution, for pursuing any programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode subsequently withdraws from such Higher Educational Institution, no Higher Educational Institution in that case shall refuse to refund such percentage of fee deposited by such learner and within such time as notified by the Commission and mentioned in the prospectus of such Higher Educational Institution;
- (xi) No Higher Educational Institution shall, issue or publish-
 - (a) any advertisement for inducing learners for taking admission in the Higher Educational Institution, claiming to be recognised by the appropriate statutory authority or by the Commission where it is not so recognised;
 - (b) any information, through advertisement or otherwise in respect of its infrastructure or its academic facilities or of its faculty or standard of instruction or academic or research performance, which the Higher Educational Institution, or person authorised to issue such advertisement on behalf of the Higher Educational Institution knows to be false or not based on facts or to be misleading.

15. Evaluation.—

(A) Common Provisions for Open and Distance Learning Mode and Online Mode:

- (1) The Higher Educational Institution shall adopt the guidelines issued by the Commission for the conduct of proctored examinations.
- (2) A Higher Educational Institution offering Open and Distance Learning Programmes and/or Online programmes shall have a mechanism well in place for evaluation of learners enrolled through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode and their certification.
- (3) The evaluation shall include two types of assessments; (i) continuous or formative assessment; and (ii) summative assessment in the form of end semester examination or term end examination:

Provided that no end semester examination or term end examination shall be held in a subject unless:

- (i) the Higher Educational Institution is satisfied that at least 75 per cent. of the programme of study stipulated for the semester or year has been actually conducted;
- (ii) For Open and Distance Learning mode: the learner has minimum attendance of 75 per cent. in the programme specific Personal Contact Programme (excluding counselling) and lab component of each of the programmes; and detailed attendance records have been maintained by Learner Support Centre/Regional Centre/ Higher Educational Institution;
- (iii) For Online mode: the learner has minimum participation of 75 per cent. in all the activities of Online programme prior to end semester examination or term end examination:

Provided further that the curricular aspects, assessment criteria and credit framework for the award of Degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and/or Post Graduate Diploma programmes through Open and Distance Learning mode and through Online mode shall be evolved by adopting same standards as being followed in conventional mode by the dual mode Higher Educational Institutions and in Open Distance Learning mode by the Open Universities:

Provided also that the weightage for different components of assessments for both Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode shall be as under:

- (i) continuous or formative assessment (in semester): Maximum 30 per cent.
- (ii) summative assessment (end semester examination or term end examination): Minimum 70 per cent.

The Higher Educational Institution shall notify all assessment tools to be used for formative and summative assessments.

- (4) Marks or grades obtained in continuous assessment and end semester examinations or term end examinations shall be shown separately in the grade card.
 - (5) A Higher Educational Institution offering a Programme in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall adopt a rigorous process in development of question papers, question banks, assignments and their moderation, conduct of examination, evaluation of answer scripts by qualified teachers, and result declaration, and shall so frame the question papers as to ensure that no part of the syllabus is left out of study by a learner.
 - (6) The examination of the programmes in Open and Distance learning mode and/or Online mode shall be managed by the examination or evaluation Unit of the Higher Educational Institution and shall be conducted in the examination centre as given under these regulations.
 - (7) The 'Examination Centre' shall be established as per **Annexure-I** and **Annexure-II** with due approval of the statutory authority of the Higher Educational Institution, subject to the following:-
 - (i) The Examination Centre shall have proper monitoring mechanisms for Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) recording of the entire examination procedure and biometric system and in case of non-availability of the Closed-Circuit Television facilities, the Higher Educational Institution shall ensure that proper videography be conducted and video recordings are submitted by particular in charge of examination centre to the concerned Higher Educational Institution.
 - (ii) The Higher Educational Institution shall retain all such Closed- Circuit Television recordings in archives for a minimum period of five years.
 - (iii) There shall be an observer for each of the Examination Centre appointed by the Higher Educational Institution and it shall be mandatory to have observer report submitted to the Higher Educational Institution.
- (B) Provisions for Open and Distance Learning Mode:** (1) All end semester examinations or term end examinations for programmes offered through Open and Distance Learning mode shall be conducted through proctored examination (pen-paper or online or computer based testing) within Territorial Jurisdiction, in the examination centre as mentioned in these regulations. The Exams shall be under the direct control and responsibility of the Open and Distance Learning mode Institution.
- (2) All Government Institutions like Kendriya Vidyalaya(s), Navodaya Vidyalaya(s), Sainik School(s), State Government Schools, etc. can also be identified as examination centre(s) under direct overall supervision of a Higher Educational Institution offering education under the Open and Distance Learning mode including approved affiliated colleges under the University system in the Country and no Examination Centres shall be allotted to private organisations or unapproved Higher Educational Institutions.
 - (3) The Learner Support Centres, as defined in the regulations and within the territorial jurisdiction, can also be used as examination centres provided they fulfill the criteria of an examination centre as defined in these regulations.
 - (4) The attendance of examinees shall be authenticated through biometric system as per Aadhaar details or other Government identifiers of Indian learners.

- (C) **Provisions for Online Learning mode:** (1) An Higher Educational Institution offering programme through Online mode shall conduct examinations either using technology enabled online test with all the security arrangements ensuring transparency and credibility of the examinations, or through the Proctored Examination and in conformity with any other norms for such examination as may be laid down by the Commission;
- (2) As restriction of territorial jurisdiction is not applicable for Online learning, such Higher Educational Institutions which are recognised to enroll international learners shall endeavour to conduct proctored examinations for such learners;
- (3) The attendance of examinees shall be authenticated through biometric system as per Aadhaar details or other Government identifiers of Indian learners and Passports for International learners.
- 16. Certification.—** (1) Each award of Degree at undergraduate and postgraduate level and post graduate diploma for both Open and Distance Learning and Online mode shall be assigned a unique identification number and shall have photograph and Aadhaar number or other government recognised identifier or Passport number, as applicable, along with other relevant details of the learner along with the Programme name. Each award shall also be uploaded on the National Academic Depository.
- (2) It shall be mandatory for Higher Educational Institution to mention the following on the backside of each of the degrees/certificates and mark sheets issued by the Higher Educational Institution to the learners (for each semester certificate and at the end of the programme):
- (i) Mode of delivery;
 - (ii) Date of admission;
 - (iii) Date of completion;
 - (iv) Name and address of all Learner Support Centres (only for Open and Distance Learning);
 - (v) Name and address of all Examination Centres.
- 17. Learner Support Centre for Open and Distance Learning.—** (1) A Higher Educational Institution offering programme in Open and Distance Learning mode shall, ensure that a Learner Support Centre is established as per **Annexure-VIII** only in a college or institution affiliated to a University or in a Government recognised Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in the same broad areas having the necessary infrastructure and human resources for offering the programme:
- Provided that a Learner Support Centre defined under these regulations shall not be the Learner Support Centre for more than two Higher Educational Institutions at a time to offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode:
- Provided further that a Learner Support Centre of a State University should be in the same state in which the State University has been established:
- Provided also that a Higher Educational Institution may 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 and other persons in difficult circumstances, including jail inmates:
- Provided also that a Learner Support Centre shall not be set up under a franchisee agreement in any case.
- (2) A Learner Support Centre shall be the contact point or centre managed by the Higher Educational Institution for providing academic as well as administrative support to its learners and shall perform such other functions as specified in **Annexure-VIII**.
- (3) The Learner Support Centre shall be headed by a Coordinator who shall be a regular teacher

not below the rank of a qualified Assistant Professor of the concerned College or Higher Educational Institution and assisted by the counsellors as decided by the Higher Educational Institution.

- (4) The Higher Educational Institution shall have a Standard Operating Procedure for the smooth functioning of the Learner Support Centre which shall include functions of the Learner Support Centres and its different functionaries, monitoring mechanism of different services provided by the Centre, and it shall be mandatory for the Learner Support Centre to maintain the learner data related to conduct of counselling sessions, evaluation of assignments and grievance redressal.

18. Learner Support Services.— (1) A Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall have guidelines for learner support services which is made available to all the Co-ordinators/ Counsellors/ Mentors and is accessible to the learners.

- (2) The learner support services to be provided by the Higher Educational Institution shall include broadly the following, namely:-

- (i) pre-admission counselling for prospective learners to provide information to facilitate them in taking an informed decision on joining a specific programme;
- (ii) support for admission related matters;
- (iii) details of study material and information shall also be available on the website of the Higher Educational Institution;
- (iv) arrangement to ensure the delivery of self learning material to learners for ODL programmes as defined in **Annexure-VI** and **Annexure-VII** within a fortnight from the date of admission and in addition, the Higher Educational Institution may provide additional learning resources through on-line mode, Compact Disks etc.;
- (v) a full-time dedicated help desk well versed with the learner information data base providing single window services for all learner related queries.

- (3) The University Grants Commission (Grievance Redressal) Regulations, 2012, shall be adopted and operationalised by the Higher Educational Institution, and the Higher Educational Institution shall institute a system of Grievance Redressal, in accordance with the guidelines specified in **Annexure-X**.

- (4) The Higher Educational Institution shall provide facilities for online guidance and counselling facilities to the learners.

- (5) The Higher Educational Institution shall create online discussion forum for learners.

Part V

ASSESSMENT, ACCREDITATION, AUDIT, INSPECTION AND MONITORING

- 19. Assessment, Accreditation and Audit.—** (1) A Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall comply with University Grants Commission (Mandatory Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012 and in any case shall apply for assessment and accreditation under those regulations for assessment and accreditation of the programmes offered by it in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode:

Provided that Open Universities shall obtain accreditation as stipulated under regulation 3.

- (2) A Higher Educational Institution recognised under these regulations for imparting programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall get all its programmes assessed through the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance once in a year in the format prescribed by the Commission and the report on quality assurance shall, before the end of the academic year, be prominently placed on its website and a copy furnished to the Commission.

- (3) A Higher Educational Institution recognised under these regulations for imparting programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall undergo third party academic audit every five years and internal academic audit by Centre for Internal Quality Assurance every year as specified in **Annexure-I**.
- 20. Powers to inspect and monitoring.**— (1) The Commission shall periodically review the performance of the Higher Educational Institution and for the purpose may direct the Higher Educational Institution to provide such information as it may require from the viewpoint of ensuring adherence of the regulations by the Higher Educational Institution, and the Higher Educational Institution shall be under obligation to provide such information in such time period as may be specified.
- (2) Where the Commission, either *suo motu* or on the basis of information received by it, considers it necessary, for reasons to be recorded in writing, may cause an inquiry through inspection or otherwise by such body of experts or as it may deem fit, to satisfy itself that all the mandatory requirements under these regulations are being complied with by the Higher Educational Institution imparting programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode and take appropriate action to get compliance enforced against the erring Higher Educational Institution.

PART VI

MISCELLANEOUS

- 21. Authority.**— (1) The Commission may authorise the officials of the Commission to perform various functions for implementing these regulations.
- (2) For the purpose of these regulations, the Commission may delegate its power to the Chairman of the Commission, as it may specify in writing.
- (3) For the purposes of regulation 7, the Commission may delegate its power to hear and decide appeal to such person or persons, including officials of the Commission, as it may specify in writing.
- 22. Equivalence of qualification acquired through Conventional or Open and Distance Learning and Online modes.**— Degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate level in conformity with UGC notification on Specification of Degrees, 2014 and post graduate diplomas awarded through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode by Higher Educational Institutions, recognised by the Commission under these regulations, shall be treated as equivalent to the corresponding awards of the Degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate level and post graduate diplomas offered through conventional mode.
- 23. Learner centric provisions.**— (1) **Learner's mobility:** A learner enrolled for a programme under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode in a Higher Educational Institution recognised by the Commission under these regulations shall be eligible for mobility from one mode of learning to another mode of learning within the Higher Educational Institution as per the provisions stipulated under its Act and with the approval of statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution;
- Provided that in case a programme is under the domain of regulatory authority/statutory council, Higher Educational Institution shall take permission from the concerned regulatory authority/statutory council for mobility of learners under such programmes.
- (2) **Admission taken during recognition period:** Admission taken in a recognized programme under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode during the recognition period stands recognised till the completion of programme, even if the Higher Educational Institution does not have recognition for further years, provided the programme is offered as per the UGC norms of territorial jurisdiction and in conformity with the extant guidelines and/or UGC regulations and regulations of respective regulatory bodies.
- (3) **Learner's enrolment (for Open and Distance Learning mode):** A Learner residing in any part of the Country may enroll in any programme being offered by a Higher

Educational Institution recognised by the Commission for offering programme under Open and Distance Learning mode provided that the Higher Educational Institution shall conduct all activities such as admissions, contact programmes, examinations etc. for learner strictly within the territorial jurisdiction of the Higher Educational Institution as specified in these regulations.

- (4) **Learner's enrolment (for Online mode):** A Learner residing within or outside India may enroll in any programme being offered by a Higher Educational Institution recognized by the Commission for offering programme under Online mode.
- 24. Offering of Certificate and Diploma level Programmes.—** A Higher Educational Institution recognised for offering programmes at Under Graduate Degree or Post Graduate Degree or Post Graduate diploma levels in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode may offer Certificate or Diploma programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode in the domains other than prohibited programmes as per clause (z) of regulation 2 subject to the condition that before the actual start of such programmes, all the Certificate or Diploma programmes are duly approved by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institutions and the regulatory authority/council, as applicable, and the delivery mechanism conforms to the quality standards of the Open and Distance Learning education and/or Online education. The Higher Educational Institution shall be solely responsible for any legal issues arising out of non-compliance of such requirements:
- Provided that, if the concerned regulatory authority/council permits any of the prohibited programmes, as mentioned above, under its domain, in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, the same may be offered by the Higher Educational Institutions after the approval of its statutory authorities and Regulatory Authorities or Councils, as applicable and after conforming to the quality standards of Open and Distance Learning and Online mode of education.
- 25. Integrated programme through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or online mode.—** Any proposal received from a Higher Educational Institutions for offering an integrated programme through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or online mode shall be considered by the Commission only if it is in compliance to the UGC notification on Specification of Degrees, 2014.
- 26. Non-consideration of programmes proposed by the Higher Educational Institutions through affiliated colleges only.—** The Higher Educational Institutions shall be eligible to apply for only such programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode which are being offered by its constituent Colleges or Departments or Centre for distance and online education. The Programmes which are being offered only through affiliated Colleges shall not be considered for recognition.
- 27. Interpretation.—** If any question arises relating to interpretation of these regulations, the decision of the Commission shall be final and binding.

Annexure I

CENTRE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (CIQA)

I. Establishment of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance:

The Centre for Internal Quality Assurance shall be established in all Higher Educational Institutions offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode. It shall be headed by a full-time Director, being a senior academician not below the rank of an Associate Professor, preferably from the field of Open and Distance Learning and/or online education, who shall be supported by adequate number of academic and other staff.

II. Objective:

The objective of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance is to develop and put in place a comprehensive and dynamic internal quality assurance system to ensure that programmes of higher

education in the Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode being implemented by the Higher Educational Institution are of acceptable quality and further improved on continuous basis.

III. Functions:

The functions of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance would, *inter alia*, include the following, namely:-

- (i) To maintain quality in the services provided to the learners.
- (ii) To undertake self-evaluative and reflective exercises for continual quality improvement in all the systems and processes of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (iii) To contribute in the identification of the key areas in which Higher Educational Institution should maintain quality.
- (iv) To devise mechanism to ensure that the quality of Open and Distance Learning programmes and Online programmes matches with the quality of relevant programmes in conventional mode.
- (v) To devise mechanisms for interaction with and obtaining feedback from all stakeholders namely, learners, teachers, staff, parents, society, employers, and Government for quality improvement.
- (vi) To suggest measures to the authorities of Higher Educational Institution for qualitative improvement.
- (vii) To facilitate the implementation of its recommendations through periodic reviews.
- (viii) To organise workshops/ seminars/ symposium on quality related themes, ensure participation of all stakeholders, and disseminate the reports of such activities among all the stakeholders in Higher Educational Institution.
- (ix) To develop and collate best practices in all areas leading to quality enhancement in services to the learners and disseminate the same all concerned in Higher Educational Institution.
- (x) To collect, collate and disseminate accurate, complete and reliable statistics about the quality of the programme(s).
- (xi) To ensure that Programme Project Report for each programme is according to the norms and guidelines prescribed by the Commission and wherever necessary by the appropriate regulatory authority having control over the programme;
- (xii) To put in place a mechanism to ensure the proper implementation of Programme Project Reports.
- (xiii) To maintain a record of Annual Plans and Annual Reports of Higher Educational Institution, review them periodically and generate actionable reports.
- (xiv) To provide inputs to the Higher Educational Institution for restructuring of programmes in order to make them relevant to the job market.
- (xv) To facilitate system based research on ways of creating learner centric environment and to bring about qualitative change in the entire system.
- (xvi) To act as a nodal coordinating unit for seeking assessment and accreditation from a designated body for accreditation such as NAAC etc.
- (xvii) To adopt measures to ensure internalisation and institutionalisation of quality enhancement practices through periodic accreditation and audit.
- (xviii) To coordinate between Higher Educational Institution and the Commission for various quality related initiatives or guidelines.
- (xix) To obtain information from other Higher Educational Institutions on various quality benchmarks or parameters and best practices.

- (xx) To record activities undertaken on quality assurance in the form of an annual report of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance.
- (xxi) It will be mandatory for Centre for Internal Quality Assurance to submit Annual Reports to the Statutory Authorities or Bodies of the Higher Educational Institution about its activities at the end of each academic session. A copy of report in the format as specified by the Commission, duly approved by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution shall be submitted annually to the Commission.

IV. Centre for Internal Quality Assurance Committee:

- (1) Centre for Internal Quality Assurance Committee shall have the following composition, namely:-
 - (a) Vice Chancellor of the University – Chairperson;
 - (b) Three senior teachers of Higher Educational Institution - Members;
 - (c) Head of three Departments or School of Studies offering recognized programmes in Open and Distance Learning and Online mode - Members;
 - (d) Two external experts of Open and Distance Learning and/or Online education - Members;
 - (e) Officials from the Administration and Finance departments of the Higher Educational Institution – Members;
 - (f) Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance – Member Secretary.
- (2) The members at clauses (b) to (e) shall be nominated by the Vice- Chancellor of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (3) The membership of such nominated members shall be for a period of two years. The Committee of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance shall meet at least once in a semester. The quorum for the meeting shall be two-third of the total number of members with mandatory presence of one external expert. The agenda, minutes and Action Taken Reports are to be documented with official signatures and maintained electronically in a retrievable format.
- (4) Centre for Internal Quality Assurance Committee shall perform the following functions, namely:-
 - (i) To oversee the functioning of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance and approve the reports generated by Centre for Internal Quality Assurance on the effectiveness of quality assurance systems and processes.
 - (ii) To facilitate adoption of instructional design requirements as per the philosophy of the Open and Distance Learning and/or Online learning decided by the statutory bodies of the HEI for its different academic programmes.
 - (iii) To promote automation of learner support services of the Higher Educational Institution.
 - (iv) To coordinate with external subject experts or agencies or organisations, the activities pertaining to validation and annual review of its in-house processes.
 - (v) To coordinate with third party auditing bodies for quality audit of programme(s).
 - (vi) To oversee the preparation of Self-Appraisal Report to be submitted to the Assessment and Accreditation agencies on behalf of Higher Educational Institution.
 - (vii) To promote collaboration and association for quality enhancement of Open and Distance Learning and Online modes of education and research therein.
 - (viii) To facilitate industry-institution linkage for providing exposure to the learners and enhancing their employability.

V. Quality Monitoring Mechanism

- (1) The guidelines on quality monitoring mechanism shall be adopted by the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance for conducting institutional quality audits, to promote quality assurance and enhance as well as spread best-in-class practices of quality assurance.
- (2) Quality monitoring shall be addressed under the following broad areas, namely:-
 - (i) **Governance, Leadership and Management:** This relates to the policies and practices of Higher Educational Institution in the matter of planning, human resources, recruitment, training, performance appraisal, financial management and the overall role of leadership, with a focus on the following key aspects:
 - (a) **Organisation Structure and Governance:** The Higher Educational Institution shall fill all sanctioned/required positions as prescribed by the Commission and establish a credible governance system.
 - (b) **Management:** The leadership and management of the Institution shall strive to assess and review the organisational culture to achieve its vision, mission and goals.
 - (c) **Strategic Planning:** The Higher Educational Institution shall undertake strategic planning of its activities and implement the same by aligning those with academic and administrative aspects to improve the overall quality.
 - (d) **Operational Plan, Goals and Policies:** The Higher Educational Institution shall have well defined goals which are realistic and measurable, well defined policies that are in sync with its strategic plan and are realistic and achievable, clearly stated guidelines for the implementation of its policies and plans, and transparent and accountable system for its policies and planning that are well communicated to its stakeholders.
 - (ii) **Articulation of Higher Educational Institution Objectives:** The Higher Educational Institution shall articulate a clear vision, mission, ethos and broad strategy consistent with the goals for offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning and Online mode.
 - (iii) **Programme Development and Approval Processes:** This area of concern relates to programme development and approval mechanism for the programme(s) to be launched, covering the following key aspects, namely:-
 - (a) **Curriculum Planning, Design and Development:** The curriculum planning, design and development of academic programmes is a major academic activity of the Higher Educational Institution. Therefore, it shall have processes, systems and structures in place to carry out these responsibilities.
 - (b) **Curriculum Implementation:** The Higher Educational Institution shall have specific implementation plans for identifying the time to be spent on specific components of the implementation phase. It is the basis for the effectiveness of the programme(s) and their usefulness as a whole.
 - (c) **Academic Flexibility:** The Higher Educational Institution shall adopt proper strategies for imparting academic flexibility, which refers to freedom in the use of the time-frame of courses, vertical mobility, and inter-disciplinary options facilitated by curricular transactions for learners.
 - (d) **Learning Resource:** The Higher Educational Institution shall ensure quality learning resources in the form of Self Learning Materials (SLMs) for Open and Distance Learning mode and e-learning material for Online mode of education as defined in these regulations. While deciding on the instructional packages, the Higher Educational Institution shall take into consideration various factors – the media and technology utilised matches the course content in order to enhance and expand learning, and to match to the learners' needs; that these are accessible, practical and equitable, and cost effective to the learners.

- (e) **Feedback System:** The process of revision and re-design of curricula shall be based on feedback from all stakeholders in terms of its relevance and appropriateness in catering to the needs of the society, economy and environment.
- (iv) **Programme Monitoring and Review:** The Higher Educational Institution shall plan and execute programme monitoring and review system to conduct periodic internal reviews and maintain the quality of academic programmes. For such reviews, the Institution shall also consider the attainments of learning outcomes that are assessed through the various tools for direct and indirect assessment.
- (v) **Infrastructure Resources:** The Higher Educational Institution shall have a system to elicit data on the adequacy and optimal use of the facilities - physical facilities, library (or e-library), Information and Communication Technology infrastructure, etc. - available in a Higher Educational Institution to maintain the quality of academic programmes and ensure qualitative support to each of the stakeholders.
- (vi) **Learning Environment and Learner Support:** The learner support services including academic counselling and library services shall be a major pre-occupation of Higher Educational Institution for its Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode learners. Additionally, Higher Educational Institution shall establish Information and Communication Technology facilities as component of the learning environment which is focused around the pedagogical use of modern educational practices to support blended learning. Learner Support Services shall be provided through the campus-wide portal and e-Learning platform. The Higher Educational Institution shall take a more sophisticated approach to the use of Information and Communication Technology and expertise in e-learning. The approach shall provide a seamless learner-centred environment.
- (vii) **Assessment and Evaluation:** All the stated Learning Outcomes of a Programme must be part of its evaluation protocol. The Higher Educational Institution shall execute the evaluation through varied assessment tools including multiple choice questions, projects, reports, case-studies, presentations, and term-end examinations, to suit the different learning outcomes expected of the course elements. The Higher Educational Institution shall have proper assessment and moderation system for assessing the learning outcomes of learners.
- (viii) **Teaching Quality and Staff Development:** The Higher Educational Institutions shall have a well established structure for promoting quality counselling, capacity building workshops, programmes, interactive teaching-learning and provide staff development programmes and activities to encourage academic staff to improve teaching and learning on continuous basis.
- (3) **Process of Quality Audit**
- (i) **Academic Planning:** The Higher Educational Institutions shall have robust and appropriate academic planning procedures to ensure that the programmes offered by it are relevant to national economy, reflects the Institution's strategic direction and offers a high quality 'value-added' learner experience. The Institution shall have adequate and appropriate teaching and other support staff along with infrastructure and technology support to ensure that the curriculum remains up to date and the institutional goals are achieved.
- (ii) **Validation:** The Higher Educational Institution shall have a mechanism in place for validation to ensure that its programmes are academically viable, that academic standards have been appropriately defined and that these offer learners the best opportunity to learn.
- (iii) **Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement Plans:** Quality deliverance of the Open and Distance Learning programmes and Online programmes and the outcomes attainment and continual quality improvements shall be ensured by the Higher Educational Institution, shall be broadly as follows, namely:-

- (a) **Reports from Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning programmes):** Report of academic activities and other related activities containing details of all the activities related to academic planning, counselling, learner support, etc. shall be collected periodically from Learner Support Centres. The Higher Educational Institution shall adopt the technological solutions for easy receipt of these reports.
- (b) **Reports from Examination Centres:** Report of conduct of examinations in both Open and Distance Learning Mode and Online mode, alongwith report of observers/proctors for all examinations shall be collected periodically from Examination Centres. The Higher Educational Institution shall adopt the technological solutions for easy receipt of these reports.
- (c) **External Auditor or other External Agencies report:** The Higher Educational Institution shall consider the comments made by External auditors, experts and third party of quality audit and implement as appropriate.
- (d) **Systematic Consideration of Performance Data at Programme, Faculty and Higher Educational Institution levels:** For effective evaluation and audit, the Higher Educational Institution shall ensure easy access to performance monitoring information such as course pass rates, learner entry profiles and progression and achievement reports, which should be available through web-based application and be used for report making by the Higher Educational institution.
- (e) **Reporting and Analytics by the Higher Educational Institution:** The Higher Educational Institution shall generate the required reports out of such web-based applications and analyze learner and academic analytics for deciding the improvements to be executed for better performance.
- (f) **Periodic Review:** The Higher Educational Institution needs to have an effective system for collecting feedback from the stakeholders regularly to improve its programmes. The Higher Educational Institution needs to conduct self-assessments regularly and use the results to improve its systems, processes etc. and finally quality of programmes.

Annexure II

CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION AND MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EXAMINATION CENTRES

I. Conduct of End Semester or Term End Examination:

1. All processes of assessment of learners in different components of Examination shall be directly handled by the concerned Institution and no part of the assessment shall be outsourced.
2. For ensuring transparency and credibility, the full time faculty of the Open and Distance Learning and/or Online mode Higher Educational Institutions or qualified faculty from University Grants Commission recognised Higher Educational Institutions only should be associated to function as invigilators, examination superintendents, as observers etc.

A. For Open and Distance Learning programmes:

1. All Examinations for Open and Distance Learning mode programmes shall be conducted within the Institution where the Study Centres or Learner Support Centres is located under the direct control and responsibility of the Open and Distance Learning mode Institution. Also, all Government Institutions like Kendriya Vidyalaya(s), Navodaya Vidyalaya(s), Sainik School(s), State Government Schools, etc. can also be identified as examination centre(s) under direct overall supervision of a Higher Educational Institution offering education under the Open and Distance Learning mode including approved affiliated colleges under the University system in the country and no Examination Centres shall be

allotted to any private organisations or unapproved Higher Educational Institutions.

2. In case the types of Institutions mentioned at (i) above are not sufficient to meet the requirement in a city/town, the HEI may locate the Examination Centre(s) at Krishi Vigyan Kendras, State Training Institutes/Industrial Training Institutes, Government Organisations/Departments, Accredited Laboratory with the prior approval of its statutory bodies.

B. For Online Programmes

1. A Higher Educational Institution offering programme through Online mode shall conduct examinations either using Computer based test or pen and paper test in a proctored environment in designated test centre with all the security arrangements ensuring transparency and credibility of the examinations. It can also conduct online examination through technology mediated proctoring.
2. The attendance of examinees shall be authenticated through biometric system as per Aadhaar details or other Government identifiers for Indian learners and Passports for International learners.

II. Minimum Standards to be Maintained at Examination Centres

A. For Open and Distance Learning Programmes

1. The examination centre must be centrally located in the city, with good connectivity from railway station or bus stand, for the convenience of the students.
2. The number of examination centres in a city or State must be proportionate to the student enrolment from the region.
3. Building and grounds of the examination centre must be clean and in good condition.
4. The examination centre must have an examination hall with adequate seating capacity and basic amenities.
5. Fire extinguishers must be in working order, locations well marked and easily accessible. Emergency exits must be clearly identified and clear of obstructions.
6. The Examination Centre shall have adequate and comfortable seating capacity and amenities including adequate lighting, ventilation and clean drinking water facilities.
7. Safety and security of the examination centre must be ensured.
8. Restrooms must be located in the same building as the examination centre, and restrooms must be clean, supplied with necessary items, and in working order.
9. Provision of drinking water must be made for learners.
10. The Examination Centre shall have proper monitoring mechanisms for Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) recording of the entire examination procedure and biometric system and in case of non-availability of the Closed-Circuit Television facilities, the Higher Educational Institution shall ensure that proper videography be conducted and video recordings are submitted by in-charge of examination centre to the concerned Higher Educational Institution.
11. Adequate parking must be available near the examination centre.
12. Facilities for Persons with Disabilities should be available.

B. For Online Programmes:

13. In addition to facilities mentioned in clause A of paragraph II, Online Examination shall have the following facilities, namely:-
 - (i) **Requirements at Test Centres:**
 - (a) Provide adequate test room(s)/space for given number of examinees;
 - (b) Examinees must be seated with separation distance that restricts view of others work;

- (c) Examination Centres must have backup plans in case of power or application failure;
- (d) The online examination application must be tested before commencement of the examination;
- (e) The check-in area should be located near the entrance to the testing room, in an area separate from other activities;
- (f) The building, testing rooms and rest rooms must be accessible to people with disabilities, including wheel chair access;
- (g) Each test room shall have proctoring facility either through human proctors or through technology mediated proctoring.

(ii) **Requirement of proctors:**

Each test centre requires one or more proctors in each room, whose responsibilities include the following, namely:-

- (a) Monitor the testing room to maintain security;
- (b) Interact with the testing workstations to start or pause tests;
- (c) Report any irregularities;
- (d) Other activities to ensure credibility and transparency of the examination.

(iii) **Security arrangements in the testing centre:**

- (a) Only authorised staff and if any external examiner(s) shall have access before exam time;
- (b) Only authorised staff and examinee shall have access during exams;
- (c) Authorised staff and external examiners to have only the level of access as required and mandated;
- (d) OS, Browser and the Software must be kept up-to-date and patched in a timely fashion;
- (e) The testing application shall be able to track and report all access attempts;
- (f) Each examination room shall have CCTV facility;
- (g) Centralised audio/video monitoring of all exam centers shall be ensured;
- (h) A separate examination application server or machine in each exam centre must be ensured which will be connected to a central server through virtual private network connectivity for secure delivery of question papers in encrypted form at a designated time prior to the exam;
- (i) Examination applications server must reside on a local area network in the same subnet to allow communication between test delivery applications without blocking any ports;
- (j) Audit Logging: the online examination system must provide a detailed audit logging facility recording activities like Login, Logout, Exam Access, Question Navigation, Answer Responses, etc. Using techniques like geo-tagging which will make it possible to track the exact location of the user during online exam activity.
- (k) IP based Authentication and Authorization: the access and operation of the examination program must be restricted or limited to a certain specified number of IP addresses specially in the case of admin login to ensure complete safety for the examination.
- (l) Examination Centre has to be connected to the internet via a good internet connection with a minimum download speed of 4 Megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speed of 1 Megabits per second (Mbps) for online question paper delivery and uploading of scanned answer scripts.

- (m) There should be a separate device for Local Area Network (switch) and internet connectivity (router) instead of using an integrated device.
 - (n) Staffs have to verify the student's original ID proof issued by Govt. of India with the ID proof for authentication.
 - (o) External devices (i.e. mobile, pen drive, tab, laptop, smart watch etc.) or reading materials should not be permitted in exam centres.
 - (p) The online exam Platform will be accessible *via* user id and password which is unique for each student for each session and exam.
 - (q) After examination data shall be transferred in encrypted format through an encrypted virtual private network connection from examination application server to central server.
- (iv) **Remote Proctoring:**

Following security measures to be ensured for conducting online examination through remote proctoring:

- (a) Secure browser: there must be custom application pre-installed on the machine for the examination preventing opening of any other windows or application. This application must prevent Screen Capturing, Recording and Remote Login or taking output to a remote screen through Video Graphic Array (VGA), Universal Serial Bus (USB) or High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) ports features.
- (b) Remote Proctoring: remote proctoring shall involve image capturing in intervals or video streaming of the candidate through webcam or screen capturing of the current access screen of the candidate.
- (c) Data Encryption: Online examination system's data needs to be encrypted to prevent any kind of misuse. Question Bank and exam data must be stored in a highly secure and encrypted manner. The entire communication between server and client/student machine during the examination needs to be encrypted with a secure mode of communication.

Annexure III

TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION AND REGULATING PROVISIONS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

I. Central Government and State Government University:

1. A University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act shall offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and operate all other related activities as per the territorial jurisdiction allotted to it under its Act.
2. A University established or incorporated by or under a State Act shall offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and operate all other related activities only within the territorial jurisdiction allotted to it under its Act and in no case beyond the territory of the state of its location.
3. A Central Government or State Government University can offer recognised programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode in accordance with the provisions of its respective Act and after the recognition of the University Grants Commission.
4. A Central Government or State Government University can offer recognised programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode through its own Schools/Departments/Centre and its constituent colleges.
5. No university can offer its programmes or other related activities through franchising arrangement for the purpose of conducting courses through Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode.

6. Territorial Jurisdiction shall not be applicable to these category of Higher Educational Institutions recognised for offering programmes through Online mode under these regulations.

II. Private Universities:

1. Private Universities established or incorporated by or under a State Act shall offer programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and operate all other related activities only within the territorial jurisdiction allotted to it under its Act and in no case beyond the territory of the state of its location.
2. Private Universities shall be governed by UGC (Establishment and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities) Regulations, 2003.
3. Private Universities shall be eligible to offer programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode through its Head Quarters only and duly recognised off-campus centres.
4. Private Universities shall not offer programmes under Open and Distance Learning mode through any Learner Support Centre.
5. A Private University established under the State Act shall be a unitary University.
6. Private Universities cannot affiliate any college or institution for conducting programmes leading to award of its diplomas, degrees or other qualifications.
7. No university can offer its programmes or other related activities through franchising arrangement for the purpose of conducting courses through Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode.
8. Territorial Jurisdiction shall not be applicable to this category of Higher Educational Institutions recognised for offering programmes through the Online mode under these regulations.

III. Institutions Deemed to be Universities:

1. Institutions Deemed to be University shall be governed by UGC (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2019.
2. Institutions Deemed to be University shall operate only within its Head Quarters or from those off campuses which are approved by the Government of India through notification published in the Official Gazette.
3. Institutions Deemed to be Universities shall be a unitary in nature and cannot affiliate any college or institution for conducting programmes leading to award of its diplomas, degrees or other qualifications.
4. No university can offer its programmes or other related activities through franchising arrangement for the purpose of conducting courses through Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode.
5. Territorial Jurisdiction shall not be applicable to this category of Higher Educational Institutions recognised for offering programmes through Online mode under these regulations.

Annexure IV

HUMAN RESOURCE AND INFRASTRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

I. Open Universities

A. Staffing Norms at Head Quarters:

1. The following positions are on full time and dedicated basis, excluding the designated positions in the Open Universities as per their respective Act(s):-
 - (i) Head for each school at the Professor level.

- (ii) Academic staff strength per programme under a school. Minimum three faculty members are required at Associate Professor/Assistant Professor level:

Provided that in case of Under Graduate and Post Graduate programmes in same discipline, instead of 6 faculty members, 5 faculty members shall be required.

- (iii) Administrative staff strength at Head Quarters or Main Campus (up to 10,000 students):
- (a) Deputy Registrar - 1;
 - (b) Assistant Registrar - 1;
 - (c) Section Officer - 1;
 - (d) Assistants - 3;
 - (e) Computer Operator - 2;
 - (f) Multi Tasking Staff – 2.
2. In case of the enrolment higher than 10,000 in Open and Distance Learning Programmes, Open University may increase the number of positions appropriately.

B. Centre for Online Education (COE):

1. The Open University intending to offer the recognised programmes under Online mode shall have a Centre for Online Education for effective coordination among its Departments or Schools of Studies for offering the Online Programme, comprising Admission or Registration Unit, Examination Unit and Technology Support Unit. The Centre for Online Learning shall maintain and administer the Centralised Data Base of all the recognised programmes.
- (i) The Centre for Online Education shall have:
- (a) Director: Permanent, full-time Professor (preferably having professional experience in Open and Distance Learning and/or Online Learning);
 - (b) Deputy Director (e-Learning and Technical): An employee having the Qualifications and Experience as specified for Associate Professor under 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 shall be an e-learning expert with experience in technical coordination for modules development and Learning Management System (LMS). The Deputy Director can be appointed on full-time or contractual basis;
 - (c) Assistant Director: Having qualifications and experience as specified for Assistant Professor under 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, initially one, who shall coordinate with Departments or Schools of Studies offering Online Programmes. The Assistant Director can be appointed on full-time or contractual basis.
- (ii) The Departments or Schools of Studies shall be the academic home of the recognised Online programmes on offer.
- (iii) The involvement of permanent and/or full time dedicated faculty of Schools of Studies/Departments in the Online programme(s) shall be in the following capacities, excluding the designated positions in the Open Universities as per their respective Act(s):
- (a) Programme Coordinator (One per Programme): A full-time Faculty at the level of Professor or Associate Professor or Assistant Professor in the subject area of the concerned Programme shall be the Programme Coordinator for an Online

- Programme. The Programme Coordinator shall be responsible for overall coordination of the development, delivery and assessments of the learners in an Online Programme;
- (b) Course Coordinator (One per Course): An Online Programme may have more than one Course. In such a case, one full-time dedicated Faculty at the level of Professor or Associate Professor or Assistant Professor in the subject area of the concerned Course shall be Course Coordinator for each of the Courses of an Online Programme. The Course Coordinator shall coordinate the development, delivery and assessments of the learners in the Course;
- (c) Course Mentor (One per batch of 250 learners): Course Mentor shall assist the Programme/Course Coordinator in providing academic support to learners and also in managing virtual teacher-learner interaction groups. Course Mentor shall have the relevant qualifications and experience as specified for Assistant Professor under 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;
- (d) Examiners: The Higher Educational Institution shall appoint examiners for the assessment of the online learners in a Course from among the qualified faculty from within the Institution or from other Institutions and they shall be paid appropriate honorarium as per norms of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (iv) Requirement of Technical Support for Online Programmes:
- (a) Technical Team for Development of e-Content as Self-Learning e- Modules:
- (A) Technical Manager (Production)—minimum one
- (B) Technical Associate (Audio-Video recording and editing)— minimum one
- (C) Technical Assistant (Audio-Video recording)— minimum one
- (D) Technical Assistant (Audio-Video editing)—minimum one
- (E) The technical support required for development of e-content may be outsourced to the centres across the nation having requisite facilities.
- (F) These numbers are for the initial stage of e-content, for self learning e-modules development and delivery.
- (b) For Delivery of Online Programmes:
- (A) Technical Manager (LMS and Data Management)-minimum one (per Centre)
- (B) Technical Assistant (LMS and Data Management) – minimum two
- (c) For Admission and Examination for Online mode:
- (A) Technical Manager (Admission, Examination and Result) -minimum one (per Centre)
- (B) Technical Assistant (Admission, Examination and Result) - minimum two
- (C) These activities may be carried out by the Admission/Registration and Examination Units of the Open Universities having requisite resources for their ODL Programmes under the overall supervision of Centre for Online Education for Online Programmes.

II. Dual Mode Higher Educational Institutions

1. The dual mode Higher Education Institution intending to offer Programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall have a Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) for effective coordination among its Departments or Schools of Studies.
2. The Centre shall maintain and administer, in collaboration with the technology support Unit

of Higher Educational Institution, the Centralised Data Base of all the Open and Distance Learning and/or Online Programmes.

3. The provisions as detailed in clause (1) of sub-paragraph (B) of paragraph I above shall be applicable to Dual mode HEIs for Online Programmes.

III. Staffing Norms at Head Quarters:

1. As mentioned in Clause (1) of sub-paragraph (B) of paragraph I above, in case of Online Programmes.
2. Academic staff strength - At least two faculty members (full-time dedicated) per Open and Distance Learning Programme at Professor/Associate Professor/Assistant Professor level:
Provided that in case of Under Graduate and Post Graduate programmes in same discipline, instead of 4 faculty members, 3 faculty members shall be required.
3. Administrative staff strength at Head Quarters or Main Campus (**up to 5,000 students**):
 - (a) Deputy Registrar - 1;
 - (b) Assistant Registrar - 1;
 - (c) Section Officer - 1;
 - (d) Assistants - 2;
 - (e) Computer operators - 2;
 - (f) Multi Tasking Staff - 2.
4. In case of the enrolment higher than 5,000 the number of positions in the Centre for Distance and Online Learning may be increased by the HEI appropriately.

IV. Physical Infrastructure:

1. Total Built-up area for Open and Distance Learning activity - Minimum 15000 sq. ft. (carpet area):

Table

S. No.	Built-up Area Type	Percentage (%)	Built-up Area (Carpet Area, in sq ft)
1.	Academic	50 per cent.	7500
2.	Administrative	10 per cent.	1500
3.	Academic support such as Library, Reading room, Computer Centre, Informational and Communication technology Labs, Video and Audio Labs etc.	30 per cent.	4500
4.	Amenities or other support facilities	10 per cent.	1500
Total			15000

Note: Built up area for toilets shall be separate.

2. Minimum requirement of Physical Infrastructure will be as per University Grants Commission (Fitness of Open Universities for Grants) Rules, 1988 and as amended from time to time, except for the existing Open Universities for the purpose of these regulations.

V. Academic Counselor in a Learner Support Centre:

1. Should be a post graduate from a recognised University.
2. Familiarity with basic research on the characteristics of Distance learners, their needs and difference from conventional face-to-face education.
3. Application of basic principles of instructional design.
4. Thorough knowledge of subject matter and common misconceptions related to the course(s).
5. Deep understanding of the necessity of learner-centered environment in online and blended learning mode.
6. Ability to design constructivist learning environment.
7. Practical applications of learning theories, self-paced instruction, and computer-mediated communication and learning.
8. Ability to foster a sense of community among learners.
9. Adaptability and flexibility with the capabilities and limitations of the delivery media.
10. Familiarity with the delivery medium to provide basic troubleshooting.
11. Ability to multitask.
12. Time management (e.g. respond to learners in timely manner, extensive and advance preparation and planning).
13. Professional characteristics (e.g. motivated to teach, self-confident, articulate, good writer).

Annexure V**GUIDELINES ON PROGRAMME PROJECT REPORT (PPR)****I. Overview**

1. A Programme Project Report (PPR) of a Higher Educational Institution is a document prepared to introduce a new programme, which includes details of - (a) programme objectives and outcomes; (b) nature of target group of learners; (c) appropriateness of the programme with quality assurance for acquiring specific skills; (d) programme content designing and developing; (e) cost estimates for development of the programme; and (f) admission, delivery and evaluation norms.
2. The Programme Project Report is a self-disclosure by the Institution about launching the programme in the Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode. The Institution has to define specific aims and objectives for each of the academic programmes which will give the direction to launch a programme and will allow to focus on results. At the end, these aims and objectives will help to demonstrate what has been achieved. The programme shall be planned with clear deliverables and knowledge experiences to be gained.

II. Contents of Programme Project Report (PPR): Programme Project Report is required to be prepared before introducing any new programme duly approved by its highest academic authority. The Programme Project Report shall contain the following contents, namely:-

- (i) **Programme's mission and objectives:** The Higher Educational Institution shall define the mission statement and objectives for the programme to be launched, which shall reflect the strategic direction and the academic goals of the Higher Educational Institution. Those shall be aligned with industrial or learners' demand, and shall be defined in such a manner that they are appropriate to be achieved.
- (ii) **Relevance of the program with HEI's Mission and Goals:** The Higher Educational Institution shall plan for such a programme to be offered through the Open and

Distance Learning Mode and/or Online Mode that is relevant to the Higher Educational Institution's mission and goals. Therefore, it is very much important that the programme to be offered through Open and Distance Learning Mode and/or Online Mode should be aligned with Higher Educational Institution's mission and goal and will prove as major contributing factor in its achievement.

- (iii) **Nature of prospective target group of learners:** The Higher Educational Institution shall identify the target group of learners. It is required to understand their learning needs and on its basis the curriculum should be aimed. The Higher Educational Institution should also consider diverse class of learners including a class having of low level of disposable income, rural dwellers, women, unskilled men, minorities etc.
- (iv) **Appropriateness of programme to be conducted in Open and Distance Learning and/or Online mode to acquire specific skills and competence:** The Higher Educational Institution shall clearly identify the learning out comes for the programme which shall cover the specific skills and competence to be acquired by the learner. The programme should be aimed appropriately to those learning outcomes. The learning outcomes shall include the development of knowledge and understanding appropriate to the area of study and these should also reflect academic, professional and occupational standards of that field. The learning outcomes should incorporate generic transferable skills and competencies.
- (v) **Instructional Design:** Instructional Design includes Curriculum design, detailed syllabi, duration of the programme, faculty and support staff requirement, instructional delivery mechanisms, identification of media— print, audio or video, online, computer aided, and student support service systems. The Higher Educational Institution shall define the instructional design for each of the academic programmes to be offered through the Open and Distance Learning Mode and/or Online Mode and shall map the credit hours for each course or module of the programme.
- (vi) **Procedure for admissions, curriculum transaction and evaluation:** The Higher Educational Institution shall define the admission policy for the programme with minimum eligibility and fee structure. The information related to financial assistance, if any, should be included in the policy. The Higher Educational Institution shall notify the policy of programme delivery along with the details of methods and web-based tools to be adopted. The Higher Educational Institution shall notify the activity planner including all the academic activities to be carried out by the Higher Educational Institution during the academic session. Further, the Higher Educational Institution shall also notify policy for evaluation of learner progress along with methods and tools.
- (vii) **Requirement of the laboratory support and Library Resources:** There may be programmes having practical component in syllabus. The Higher Educational Institution shall give clear guidelines about the laboratory support to the learners to perform the practical prescribed in the programme. There shall be provision of a practical book for the learners.
- (viii) **Cost estimate of the programme and the provisions:** The cost estimate shall indicate the amount assigned for programme development, delivery and maintenance.
- (ix) **Quality assurance mechanism and expected programme outcomes:** The Higher Educational Institution shall define the review mechanism for programme and continuously enhance the standards of curriculum, instructional design relevant to professional requirements of the area of study. There should be course benchmark statements. The Higher Educational Institution shall also devise the mechanism for monitoring effectiveness of the programme being offered in Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode.

Annexure VI

**QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES OF LEARNING MATERIAL IN
MULTIPLE MEDIA AND CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY**

A. For Open and Distance Learning mode**I. Learning Materials (Print Media): Quality Standard**

1. Learning Materials through print-media is termed as Self Learning Materials (SLM), being developed with the approach of self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating and self-evaluating.
2. The Self Learning Material shall be self-contained providing complete course description comprising overview of units alongwith objectives, activities, assignments and additional resources.
3. There shall be description of credit value of each module or unit in the course.
4. The course material shall provide an environment for practice, at the learner's own pace and in his/her own time.
5. There shall be clear guidelines on academic integrity and netiquette (internet etiquette) expectations regarding activities, discussions and plagiarism.
6. The course shall be designed to teach concepts and skills that the learner will retain throughout the study.
7. There shall be multiple learning paths for engaging the learner in active learning.
8. The content shall provide opportunities for learners to engage in higher- order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasingly complex ways.
9. The following is an indicative list of quality standards for printed learning materials:
 - (i) The Self Learning Material shall be structured on the Learning Outcome based Curriculum Framework (LOCF).
 - (ii) The Self Learning Material shall be designed with the approach of two-way communication between the learner and content. The content of Self Learning Material shall be presented in an interactive, conversational format with dialogue and personal system of writing method which will create the nature of interactivity in Self Learning Materials
 - (iii) The Self Learning Material shall involve the learner actively through various experience-based activities and assignments.
 - (iv) The learner should get clear information about the structure of the programme and course.
 - (v) There shall be detailed concept/learning map in Self Learning Material for the learner so that he or she will be self-directed for completion of his or her studies with clearly stated learning outcomes.
 - (vi) The Self Learning Material shall encourage learner to apply new knowledge and skills.
 - (vii) The content of a course should be divided into a few Blocks on major related themes, each block containing a few Units on a major theme for effective learning.
 - (viii) Units in the Self Learning Material shall be developed in defined formats with the following features, namely:-
 - (a) Consistent layout and format;
 - (b) Inclusion of overview of content;
 - (c) A unit structure, Introduction, and expected learning outcomes and reference to prior learning at the beginning of the unit and Summary at its end;

- (d) Presentation of content in appropriate sequence in sections and sub-sections synchronized with learning objectives and outcome, containing plenty of examples including national or international case studies, wherever relevant;
- (e) Explanation of icons, symbols, formula etc. used in content;
- (f) Explanation on technical, new, difficult terms or word in a glossary/ keyword section;
- (g) Inclusion of adequate suggested reading (both print and online).

II. Audio–Video Material: Quality Standards

1. The following is an indicative list of quality standards for audio-video materials:

- (i) The audio-video material shall supplement and complement the Self Learning Material and based on the curriculum structure.
- (ii) There shall be adequate consideration of learners' prior knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- (iii) Level and style of presentation and language shall be simple and appropriate to aid in self-learning.
- (iv) There shall be clear information on types of support material and study activities to be used by the learner.
- (v) It shall be clear and unambiguous, also preferably free from pedagogic jargon.
- (vi) The aim, objective and target audience for the audio or video material shall be clearly defined.
- (vii) It shall conform to the learning outcomes.
- (viii) There shall be clear guidelines with regard to the use of the audio or video material vis-a-vis other content of the course.
- (ix) Audio or video material shall be developed in forms and formats that will be easily accessible by the learners and compatible with web- based delivery.
- (x) Audi or video material shall provide continuity and coherence within and between audio or video based study sessions.
- (xi) The content need to be interactive with appropriate use of graphics, animations simulation etc. to keep the learners engaged.

III. Online and Computer based Material: Quality Standards

1. The following is an indicative list of quality standards for Online and Computer based materials:

- (i) The digital content should not be merely scanned files of the Self Learning Material. If content is scanned it should be made available in accessible format such as Word Processing, Portable Document Format or E-Pub format.
- (ii) The file size should not be very heavy so that the learners are easily able to access and download the content.
- (iii) The course content in digital format shall be easy to navigate and searchable through metadata.
- (iv) The digital content needs to be Unicode compliant so that font issues are not faced by the learners specially in the case of Indian languages.
- (v) Digital content should be accessible to all with special attention to the needs of the learners with disabilities.
- (vi) The digital content shall be available across platforms and devices.

- (vii) Since the learners may not have access to unlimited Internet data plan, it is advisable that the audio-video material is made available through streaming server instead of file uploaded as such on the server.
- (viii) The compression of the digital files needs to be optimised so that the quality is not compromised and content is easily accessible.
- (ix) For digital content the appropriate required players need to be easily available or made available.

IV. Curriculum and Pedagogy: Quality Standards

1. The following is an indicative list of quality standards for curriculum and pedagogy:

- (i) The curriculum objectives shall be consistent with the mission of the Higher Educational Institution.
- (ii) There shall be involvement of all the stakeholders in the process of framing the curriculum objective.
- (iii) While designing the curriculum, the Higher Education Institution shall take into consideration the University Grants Commission Model Curriculum and the Learning Outcome- based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) and incorporate local or regional needs.
- (iv) There shall be rationale for the appropriateness of the curriculum to the stage of learning.
- (v) There shall be linkages of the curriculum to previous and subsequent stages of learning.
- (vi) There shall be such learning experiences which allow a diversity of methods (like learning from practice, opportunities for distributed and concentrated practice, learning with peers, learning in formal situations inside and outside the department, personal study, specific teacher inputs etc).
- (vii) The structure of curriculum shall be defined.
- (viii) There shall be a complete strategy on teaching and learning methods.
- (ix) The instructional methods or pedagogy and the media mix should be clearly spelt out.
- (x) A comprehensive methodology for assessment and evaluation should be clearly stated.
- (xi) The content shall be reliable and justify the learning outcome(s).
- (xii) There shall be clear definition of intended outcomes of learning, benchmarked to identifiable stages of learning.
- (xiii) There shall be the use of reference points and expertise from outside the Higher Educational Institution, if required, in programme design and in the processes of programme development and approval.
- (xiv) There shall be relevance of curriculum to national competency requirement.
- (xv) There shall be description of credit value of each module or unit in the course.

B. For Online mode

E-Learning Materials Quality Standard:

1. The online courses should comply with the following Quality standards, namely:-

- (i) The courses should follow the following four quadrant approach, as per the SWAYAM Guidelines:-
 - (a) Quadrant-I is e-Tutorial; which shall contain: Video and Audio Content in an organized form, Animation, Simulations, video demonstrations, Virtual Labs, etc, along with the transcription of the video.

- (b) Quadrant-II is e-Content; which shall contain; self-instructional material (digital Self Learning Material), e-Books, illustrations, case studies, presentations etc, and also contain Web Resources such as further references, Related Links, Open source Content on Internet, Video, Case Studies, books including e-books, research papers and journals, Anecdotal information, Historical development of the subject, Articles, etc.
- (c) Quadrant-III is the Discussion forum for raising of doubts and clarifying the same on real time basis by the Course Coordinator or his team.
- (d) Quadrant-IV is Assessment, which shall contain; Problems and Solutions, which could be in the form of Multiple Choice Questions, Fill in the blanks, Matching Questions, Short Answer Questions, Long Answer Questions, Quizzes, Assignments and solutions, Discussion forum topics and setting up the FAQs, Clarifications on general misconceptions.
- (ii) The courses shall be rich in innovative presentation techniques to ensure that learner attention is retained.
- (iii) It shall be the responsibility of the Course Coordinator to ensure that none of the graphics, animations, images, sound clips, video clips used are plagiarized or cited without formal permissions from owners.
- (iv) A four-credit course shall typically have 20 hours of video content and 20 hours of reading material.
- (v) For Quadrant III for every 250 learners registered for a programme one Mentor can be appointed per course to facilitate the Course Coordinator. The Mentor shall be the subject matter expert adept in handling technology. The Course Coordinators and Mentors shall need to participate actively in the Discussion Forum. Apart from discussion forum other interactive platforms like web conferencing may also be considered.

Table 1: Norms for offering Degree programmes through Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode, based on credit system

S. No.	Level of the Programme	Duration of the programme	Credits
1.	Bachelor's Degree, Bachelor's Degree (Honours)	As per UGC Notification on Specification of Degree, 2014	As per UGC guidelines
2.	Master's Degree	As per UGC Notification on Specification of Degree, 2014	As per UGC guidelines
3.	Post Graduate Diploma	2 years	80

Table 2: Norms for delivery of courses through open and distance mode

S. No.	Credit Value of the course	Size of SLMs Range (in terms of units, to be divided into blocks)	No. of Assignments	Practical Sessions	No. of Counselling Sessions Theory (10 percent of total study Hours)	Study hours of Learner
1.	2 Credits	6-10 units	1	60 hours	6 hours	60 hours
2.	4 credits	14-20 units	2	120 hours	12 hours	120 hours
3.	6 credits	20-28 units	3	180 hours	18 hours	180 hours
4.	8 credits	30-34 units	4	240 hours	24 hours	240 hours

Table 3: Norms for Delivery of Courses in Online Mode

S. No.	Credit value of the course	No. of Weeks	No. of Interactive Sessions		Hours of Study Material		Self-Study hours including Assessment etc.	Total Hours of Study (based on 30 hours per credit)
			Synchronous Online Counselling/ Webinars/ Interactive Live Lectures (1 hour per week)	Discussion Forum/ asynchronous Mentoring (2 hours per week)	e-Tutorial in hours	e-Content hours		
1.	2 credits	6 weeks	6 hours	12 hours	10	10	22	60
2.	4 credits	12 weeks	12 hours	24 hours	20	20	44	120
3.	6 credits	14 weeks	14 hours	28 hours	30	30	66	180
4.	8 Credits	16 weeks	16 hours	32 hours	40	40	88	240

Annexure VII**GUIDELINES ON SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL AND E-LEARNING MATERIAL****I. Preparation of Learning Material****A. For Open and Distance Learning mode**

1. Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) should be self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating and self-evaluating. It should be engaging and actively involve the learners. During the planning of the Self Learning Material, the following points should be considered very carefully:
 - (i) backgrounds of learner and learning needs;
 - (ii) learning experiences; and
 - (iii) support and preparation in adapting to flexible learning.
2. The following major points should be considered by teachers while developing the printed learning materials or e-learning materials:
 - (i) learning objectives
 - (ii) assessment of prior knowledge
 - (iii) learning activities
 - (iv) feedback of learning activities
 - (v) examples and illustrations
 - (vi) self-assessment questions/In-text questions
 - (vii) summary/key points
 - (viii) study guide
3. The learning material should lay emphasis on real-world tasks, learner's choice of tasks or situations, case studies, collaborative learning tasks, opportunities for observing others, self-evaluation.
4. **Planning for development of learning material:** Due to the absence of interaction with the teachers in the Open and Distance Learning mode, the learner has to take the decision(s) at any point during the learning path. This may create disagreement between learner's perception and the objective of the learning materials. Therefore, it is required to consider the following key points during planning for the development of learning material:
 - (i) **Learner Profile:** It is required to consider literacy level (including level of language proficiency), age group, information communication technology skills, aim of study, personal background and home situation, prior knowledge, prior skills, learning situations, etc.

- (ii) **Background:** In Open and Distance Learning system, learner studies at her/his own pace unlike in the face-to-face mode. A substantial number of the learners are working professionals and they get time to study at their homes. If we add certain references which they cannot access at home, then it will create an obstacle in their learning. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the accessibility of course resources and references at the place of learning.
 - (iii) **Learning Objectives and Outcome:** It is required to define the learning objectives and outcomes prior to initiating the process developing the learning materials. The learning objectives can be of terminal, intermediate or enabling nature. These learning objectives can be set at course, unit, or module level.
5. **Group of Learning Material:** Considering the principles of Open and Distance Learning mode of education, the programmes shall be accompanied with learning material or resources which shall comprise of self-learning material or e-learning material, e-books, practical book, student's handbook, question bank, assignment book, Audio Video material, programme guide, project manual, etc.

B. For Online mode

1. The E-Learning Material shall have the four quadrant approach; as per UGC (Credit Framework for online learning courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016 taking into consideration the following, namely:-
 - (i) Quadrant-I is e-Tutorial; which shall contain: Video and Audio Content in an organised form, Animation, Simulations, Video Demonstrations, Virtual Labs, etc, along with the transcription of the video.
 - (ii) Quadrant-II is e-Content; which shall contain; self instructional material, e-Books, illustrations, case studies, presentations etc, and also contain Web Resources such as further references, Related Links, Open source Content on Internet, Video, Case Studies, books including e-books, research papers and journals, Anecdotal information, Historical development of the subject, Articles, etc.
 - (iii) Quadrant-III is the Discussion forum for raising of doubts and clarifying them on a near real time basis by the Course Coordinator or his team.
 - (iv) Quadrant-IV is Assessment, which shall contain; Problems and Solutions, which could be in the form of Multiple Choice Questions, Fill in the blanks, Matching Questions, Short Answer Questions, Long Answer Questions, Quizzes, Assignments and solutions, Discussion forum topics and setting up the FAQs, Clarifications on general misconceptions.

II. Preparedness of Learning Material

- A. **For Open and Distance Learning mode:** The preparedness level of Self Learning Material (SLM) at the time of submission of the proposal shall have the following, namely:-
 - (i) Under Graduate Programmes (3 years duration): Self Learning Material should be ready in all respect for first two years and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution.
 - (ii) Post Graduate Programmes (2 years duration): Self Learning Material should be ready in all respect for first year and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution.
 - (iii) For Post Graduate Diploma Programmes (2 years duration): Self Learning Material should be ready in all respect for first year and its approval by the statutory authorities of the Higher Educational Institution.
- B. **For Online mode:** The availability of E-Learning Material at the time of submission of the proposal shall be as per the following:
 - (i) For Post Graduate Level 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;

- (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 3years.

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:

1. **User and Course management**

- (i) **User Management:** Role Based authentication, User Registration, User Profiling along with personalised dashboard. User's activities analytics. Learning Management System should have Application Programming Interface Integration facility to integrate with external Application/tools.
 - (ii) **Course Content Management:** Learning Management System must support all types of files (PDFs, docs, MP3s, MP4s etc.) and e-Learning formats, and data collection capabilities.
 - (iii) **Capability for Personalized Learning Experience:** The platform should allow to create personalised learning paths along with criteria that are necessary to be met before they move on to the next content.
2. **Collaboration and Communication:** The platform shall be able to foster communication and peer-to-peer interaction among learners with features such as online chats, discussion forums, user groups, built-in messenger etc.
 3. **Assignment and Quiz management:** Self-assessment creation (assignment, quiz), announcement. It shall support all types of Questions (Multiple Choice Questions, True and False, Matching, subjective short and long questions etc.).
 4. **Accessibility across Devices and Mobile Learning:** Learning Management System shall allow its learners to access courses on different devices, i.e. Personal Computers, Laptop, tab or smart phones.
 5. **Security and Privacy:** As Learning Management System holds personal records of learners' it is important to ensure that the Learning Management System has privacy controls, protected logins, and utilizes secure server locations to keep users' data safe.

II. **Parameters for Assessment of Online Platform:**

The assessment of a non-SWAYAM platform by the technical Expert Committee shall be broadly based on the following parameters, alongwith any other criteria as notified by the Commission from time to time:

1. User friendliness

Indicative terms of reference:

- (i) Ease of use/proper navigation/attractive presentations in User Interface.
- (ii) Availability of Interfaces/delivery mechanisms—web, mobile desktop, instant messaging, video conferencing, audio graphic systems etc.
- (iii) Availability of proper internet connection in case of web-based interfaces.
- (iv) Representation of content-text/graphical, exercises, tutorials, Examples, case studies etc.

2. Content Storage and Management provisions

Indicative terms of reference:

- (i) Production of contents;
- (ii) Video-Audio Storage mechanism (name of cloud service provider; streaming services used);
- (iii) Ease of access to content;
- (iv) Reliability and availability of content at all times.

3. Synchronous Interaction provisions (video/audio conferencing, live chat etc.)

4. Asynchronous Interaction provisions (Discussion Forum, Blogs, Wikis etc.)

5. Learner engagement provisions (interactive content, activity management, group projects).

6. Peer group interaction provisions (social media integration, group activity, breakout rooms etc.).
7. Learning Communities/Research forums.
Indicative terms of reference:
 - (i) Collaboration of internal/external communities;
 - (ii) Collaboration methodology.
8. Adaptive learning provisions (skill gap analysis, personalised content).
9. Provision for grouping the learners with different mentors
 - (i) One mentor to be assigned for 250 learners as per the regulations
10. Dashboard options for all the stakeholders.
11. Proctored examination methodology.
Examination support- formative and summative Indicative terms of reference:
 - (i) Online question bank management, paper setting, valuations
 - (ii) Online student registrations and exam scheduling
 - (iii) Online generation of grades based on continuous evaluation
 - (iv) Learner authentication
12. Examination support- Multiple choice and Long/ Short answers
13. Provisions for Online assignment creation, submission and grading
14. Availability of tool to keep students informed about activities, performance etc.
15. Plagiarism check provisions.
16. Methodology for online payment gateway
17. Flexibility.
Indicative terms of reference:
 - (i) Browsers supported,
 - (ii) Main site having responsive design.
18. Support for the standard four quadrant approach, which is followed by SWAYAM.
19. Provision of online award of certificates/degrees.
20. Proposed methodology to train the faculty to effectively Design Develop and Deliver Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).
21. Security features from transparency and credibility perspective.
Indicative terms of reference: (i) at all levels including IP tracking of the learner.
22. Scalability
Indicative terms of reference:
 - (i) Maximum users;
 - (ii) Number of users able to log in simultaneously.
23. Proposed methodology to ensure that the faculty engages with the student, motivates them and assesses them.
24. Provision for an appropriate organizational setup in the HEI for maintaining and running the platform.
25. Proposed methodology to ensure the quality of courses.

GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

I. Scope of Grievance Redress System for Learner

The Higher Educational Institutions, offering programmes through the Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall have a Grievance Redress System and Procedure which shall be published on the portal of Higher Educational Institution and it shall be the responsibility of the concerned Higher Educational Institution to update the same as and when required. Each of the Higher Educational Institutions shall provide an online facility for submitting grievances and track their status. The Higher Educational Institution shall also be responsible for monitoring, assessing and reviewing the effectiveness of its Grievance Redressal Procedures.

II. Guidelines and Standards for the Grievance Redress System

The Higher Educational Institution shall have a policy on Grievance Redress System based on following guidelines and standards, namely:

- (i) the policy shall be unbiased and understandable;
- (ii) there shall be time line for each stage of the process;
- (iii) the policy shall be published on Higher Educational Institutions portal so that the learners may read and refer to;
- (iv) the policy shall be made available to learners with disability in appropriate format and the provision shall be made accordingly in the policy document;
- (v) the authority or authorities involved in the grievance redressal process shall treat and investigate the facts impartially;
- (vi) the Higher Educational Institutions shall address the grievances in a timely manner so as to lessen interruption in learning process of the learner;
- (vii) the Higher Educational Institution shall have a proper communication and escalation mechanism which shall be operated and maintained through the online software application;
- (viii) the Higher Educational Institution shall maintain the confidentiality of the complainant as far as possible;
- (ix) the Higher Educational Institution shall ensure that officer(s) deputed for the learner support at the Higher Educational Institution, the Regional Centres and Learner Support Centre(s) (for Open and Distance Learning programmes) are able to provide guidance on submitting grievances in the portal;
- (x) there shall be a provision to withdraw a complaint without prejudice at any time during the procedure; and
- (xi) the learner shall be kept informed of the status in relation to his or her queries or grievance on priority.

III. Rights and responsibilities of learner

The rights and responsibilities of a learner shall be as under:

- (i) The learner has right to complain regarding any aspect related to his or her learning path including programme quality, learning resources, learner support and guidance, teaching, learning and assessment.
- (ii) The learner is entitled to approach the respective Learner Support Centres (for ODL programmes) for submitting his or her complaint. The learners of online mode may submit their complaint directly to the Higher Educational Institution. The complaint can be submitted individually or collectively by a group of learners.
- (iii) The learner shall submit a formal complaint in a manner prescribed by the Higher Educational Institution regarding expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided or the lack of a service or the quality of a service. Such expression shall be correlated with what the learners were entitled to receive.

IV. Responsibilities of the Higher Educational Institution

The responsibilities of the Higher Educational Institution shall be as under:

- (i) A Higher Educational Institution shall work with the principles of openness and collaboration.
- (ii) A Higher Educational Institution shall continuously improve the services it offers. As and when a grievance is received, the Higher Educational Institution shall investigate it thoroughly and make the necessary improvement(s) in its services.
- (iii) A Higher Educational Institution shall encourage Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning programmes) to make initial attempts to address and resolve complaints as close as possible to the point of origin, and with the minimum of formality.
- (iv) A Higher Educational Institution shall also monitor the Grievance Redressal process through its Learner Support Centres (for Open and Distance Learning programmes).
- (v) A Higher Educational Institution is responsible for privacy and confidentiality unless disclosure is necessary to proceed in the matter.
- (vi) The grievance shall be accompanied with the reasons for dissatisfaction and expected remedy. The learner shall also give the reference of Online Grievance Registration Number generated at the time of submitting the complaint at the Learner Support Centre.
- (vii) The Head of concerned School/Department/Centre of the Higher Educational Institution shall investigate the complaint(s) or refer the matter(s) to a more appropriate person, body or committee or departments, as appropriate.
- (viii) It shall be the responsibility of the Head of School/Department/Centre of the Higher Educational Institution to monitor the progress and to timely resolve the matter.
- (ix) The Head of concerned School/Department/Centre of the Higher Educational Institution shall respond in writing (letters or email etc.) through offline or online mode giving reasons for a decision and action taken there to.

V. Complaint Handling Mechanism

The Online “Complaint Handling Mechanism” facilitates learners to submit online complaints through the interactive web portal and track their resolution status. The Higher Educational Institutions shall take action as under:

- (i) The Higher Educational Institutions recognised to offer programmes through the Open and Distance Learning mode and/or Online mode shall follow guidelines related to the Complaint Handling Mechanism notified by the Commission.
- (ii) The Higher Educational Institutions shall upload all information issued by the Commission regarding the Complaint Handling Mechanism on their website.
- (iii) The Higher Educational Institutions shall inform learners enrolled in Open and Distance Learning programmes and/or Online programmes about the Complaint Handling Mechanism.
- (iv) The Higher Educational Institutions shall provide a link with title ‘Complaint Handling Mechanism’ on homepage of Higher Educational Institution website for creating awareness amongst the stakeholders.
- (v) The Higher Educational Institutions shall comply with all instructions as issued by the Commission regarding timely and judicious resolution of all complaints raised by the learners.

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