

POLICY ON SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL [SLM]



Tamil Nadu Open University

[A State Open University established by Government of Tamil Nadu, Recognized by UGC-DEB,
Member in Asian Association of Open Universities and Member Association of Commonwealth Universities]

No- 577, Anna Salai, Saidapet ,Chennai -600015



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Policy on Self-Learning Material [SLM]

**Centre for
Internal Quality Assurance [CIQA]**



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Prof. K.Parthasarathy
Vice-Chancellor

FOREWORD

The emerging systems and trends in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) are flexible, widely accessible and have immense capability to cater to large masses of learners. In such a system it is being well realized and understood that for effectiveness and success of ODL system, well trained faculty, media professionals and distance educators are all required to work together as a cohesive team.

In this system it is now being seen as a compulsion for training, retraining and education for life-long learning. This has become possible because of the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and their application in the education system.

The ODL has been growing at a very fast rate and needs massive human resource training to handle and take it to the front effectively. The Self-Learning Material (SLM) either in print form or in non-print form is to be developed effectively for the efficient functioning of the ODL system.

This Policy Document on the preparation of SLM will be of great use for maintaining the uniformity for all the books developed by Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU). This document will also set the quality standards for the SLM of TNOU.

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Chapter	Title	Page No.
	Foreword	i
1	Introduction	1
2	Self-Learning Material and its Characteristics	2
3	Terms Used in SLM Preparation	5
4	Learning Activeness and its Relevance to SLM Preparation	8
5	Standards for Preparation of SLM	12
6	Credit System and Preparation of SLM	15
7	Guidelines for Quality Assurance of SLM	18
8	Revision of Self-Learning Material	22

Contents



Chapter-I
Introduction

Introduction

The Centre for Internal Quality Assurance [CIQA] is established at Tamil Nadu Open University to develop and put in place a comprehensive and dynamic internal quality assurance system to provide high quality programmes of higher education in the Open and Distance Learning mode.

As one of the main activities of CIQA is to oversee the development of Study Learning Materials (SLM), prepare a Programme Project Report (PPR) for each programme according to the norms and guidelines prescribed by the University Grants Commission [UGC], the Centre has developed the policy document for the preparation and revision of SLM of Tamil Nadu Open University.

This policy document is meant for those who are working or intend to work in distance education system and want to learn how to develop self-learning materials for distance learners, and how to revising SLM periodically.

TNOU's intention is to utilize the expertise of experienced faculty in face-to-face teaching effectively for the new assignment of writing for distance learners. The broad objective of this document is to help course writer acquire reasonable skills and confidence to write and revise SLM.

It is a fact that the success and effectiveness of distance education systems largely depends on the study materials. Thus, in developing Self-Learning Study Materials, the Course Writers have a crucial role to play. Writing for Open and Distance Learning is a more challenging task and quite different from that of face-to-face teaching or writing for a Book or a Journal.

Self Learning Material depends on exploring various means and ways of communication to suit it to the needs of learners. The format, we discuss in this document, is opt to accommodate best practices for further improvements.

Revision of self-learning materials is as important as the development of the materials for the first time because of two reasons. One is every distance teaching course needs to be updated from time to time to incorporate the developments in the field of study or discipline.

The other reason is to review the effectiveness of the courses in the light of the feedback that we get from the students, tutors, academic counsellors and experts in order to make the course more relevant, learner friendly and academically rich.



Chapter-II

Self-Learning Material and its Characteristics

Self-Learning Material and its Characteristics

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is designed for both on site and distance learners to learn on their own. SLM includes all the materials prepared to stimulate independent study/learning. The learners in distance education have less contact with either the institution or the tutor, and depend heavily on these specially prepared learning materials – largely pre-planned, pre-produced and pre-packed.

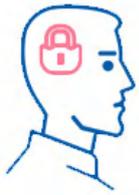
The Characteristics of SLM

Self-Learning Material (SLM) differs from a Chapter of a Textbook or an Article of a Journal. The chapters of a textbook usually present information in a very compact form. They are closer to reference materials than to learning materials. They are organized in terms of the subject matter rather than to aid learning. Similarly an article in a journal is a means of communicating with equals in the profession. On the other hand, SLM is an instrument for learning. The main characteristics of SLM are discussed as follows:



Self-explanatory

The content should be presented in a style so that a learner can go through the material without much external support. The content should be self-explanatory and conceptually clear. For this, the content is analyzed logically before it is presented. This order maintains the continuity and the consistency of the content. Thus, the SLM promotes self-learning on the part of the learner.



Self-contained

Efforts should be made to make the material self-sufficient so that a learner does not hunt for the additional sources, or even a teacher. Not that distance learners should not seek external support, or meet a teacher, but many of them are not in a position to receive support due to their geographical, physical and psychological isolation. Considering this factor, to the possible extent material should be self-sufficient so that he/she would not be at a disadvantage to those learners who are having accessibility to additional sources and teachers. For this the scope of the content of the study unit should be visualized in detail. While avoiding the non-essentials only the essential details need to be presented so that the unit can cover all information required by the learners and keep away all that is not necessary. Hence, identification of adequate content is always a challenge to a distance teacher/course writer.



Self-directed

The study material should aim at providing necessary guidance, hints and suggestions to the learners at each stage of learning. The self-directed material is presented in the form of easy explanations, sequential development, illustrations and learning activities. The material performs the role of a teacher who can guide, instruct, moderate and regulate the learning process in classroom situations. Thus, the course material should direct the entire process of learning. Some teachers in conventional classroom situations also do not feel and do the activities like guiding, instructing, moderating and regulating the learning process. The reasons may be many such as time constraints, teacher style and lack of interest in these aspects. However in the context of distance learners, the course writers have to take care of these components and direct the learning process in the course material, so that learners can direct their learning process in the absence of a teacher.



Self-motivating

In distance education systems, the learners remain off the campus for most of their study-time. The study materials like a live-teacher should be highly encouraging for the learners. The materials should arouse curiosity, resolve problems, relate knowledge to familiar situations and make the entire learning meaningful for them. It is not easy to create these situations, without an extra effort from the course writer. The sense of reinforcement should be strengthened at every stage of learning and retention.



Self-evaluating

As the learners remain separated from the Open and Distance Learning institutions and the teachers, the study materials should make provisions for feedback as well. To ensure optimum learning, the learners should know whether they are on the right track. Self-evaluation in the form of self-check questions, activities and exercises provides the learners with the much needed feedback about their progress, reinforces learning, and motivates them for learning. The Course Writer should develop a built in evaluation system by giving an appropriate number of self-check exercises, learning activities and check your progress questions. Course writers have to prepare possible or model answers to the questions, exercises and activities placed in the unit/lesson so that learner can cross check his/her own answers and assess their progress of learning. Such indication of progress in his/her learning further motivates to do better.



Self-learning

Self-learning material is based on the principles of self-learning. So a unit, besides information, provides the learners study guide – directions, hints and references to facilitate their independent learning. To make the content comprehensible, it is supported by simple explanations, examples, illustrations, activities and so on.

Therefore, Self-Learning Material is the self explanatory, self-contained and self-directed material to make learning easy and interesting. It's content is comprehensive and supported by simple explanations, examples and illustrations.



Chapter-III

The Terms Used in SLM Preparation

The Terms Used in SLM Preparation

There are quite a few terms which are frequently used in distance education. The course writer should be familiar with all the important terms relevant to the process of writing self-learning materials as given below.

Programme

Programme means the curriculum or combination of courses in a particular field of study. For example, B.A. Programme in Economics, Diploma Programme in Management, Post-Graduate Diploma Programme in Computer Applications, M.A. Programme in English etc.

Course

The Programme is divided into courses. In conventional education, when talk of a course, usually refer to a subject and level such as post-graduate chemistry, primary level mathematics, under-graduate biology and so on. In distance education the term 'course' includes more than this. It is used to describe the teaching materials and other components of the study. A typical distance education course will, for example, consist of a booklet of printed material, audio and video components, counselling/contact sessions, assignments, library work, laboratory work, project work, etc. Thus, each course consists of a printed booklet divided into blocks, a few audios, a few videos, some assignments and whatever else may go with it. Going back to the expression programme, the point to remember is that a **programme** consists of a few courses. For example, an undergraduate programme may consist of a course in physics, a course in chemistry, a course in mathematics and a course in a language. Programme is, thus, a super-ordinate term and course a subordinate one.

Block

A course is divided into 'blocks'. The block appears in the SLM and consists of around 60-80 printed pages. Generally each block presents one unified theme. The printed course materials is sent to the learners consisting of blocks as a learner may feel a greater sense of achievement each time he/she completes a block. Again the point to remember is that each **course** consists of a few **blocks** which present a unified theme.

Unit

The term 'unit', of course, the context is that of TNOU, is used to denote a division of a block, at one level in terms of the theme or topic and at another level as the material used to teach the topic. A unit is a self-contained portion of a block covering one or more interwoven learning concepts. Each unit is broken into sections and sub-sections for the clarity of the presentation of concepts, information illustrations, etc. Each unit is, thus, an individual lesson and fits into the block it belongs to. It contains

orientation for learners, introduction to the content, explanation of the topics covered and exercises to help them learn the material. All the units of a block are logically, and also thematically, linked with each other.

The length of a unit is also an important feature to be taken into consideration. A unit shall consist of 5,000 to 6,000 words or 25 to 30 typed (double space) pages (A4 size paper) approximately and come to 15-17 printed pages. This kind of thrust is to be built on the basis of following three considerations:

- **Pedagogy**

Keeping in view the skills, attention span and study habits of the learners, the content load should be appropriate and manageable. A unit is a pedagogical unit that can be completed by a learner within a reasonable period of time, say for example, 5-6 hours, i.e., at the most three sittings. Pedagogically, the best unit is the one that can be completed in one sitting. But, then, there are constraints of thematic continuity, attention span, economy and bulk of print materials etc. which force us to opt for a unit of a larger size. However, it should not be too large to defeat the very purpose for which it is prepared.

- **Uniformity**

All the units should display a reasonable degree of uniformity for other reasons. For example, course writers have to be paid according to uniform scale, for which the unit size has to be standardized.

- **Printing**

Open and distance education institutions have to produce a standardized output i.e., to have a specified size and length of each unit/block, as the printer has to be paid for a particular size of a booklet.

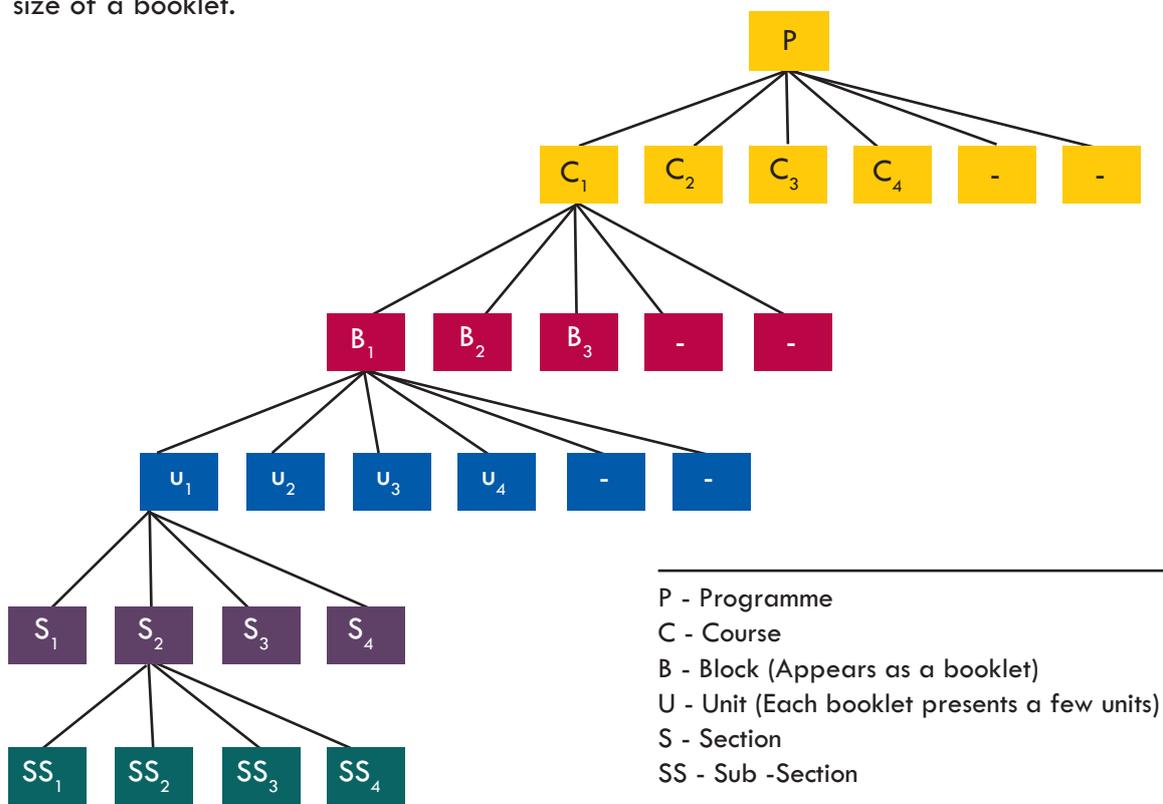


Figure 1 : Hierarchical Linkage Scheme

All the units, blocks and courses of a programme are interrelated. Their hierarchical relationship is presented with the help of the scheme.

Course Maintenance

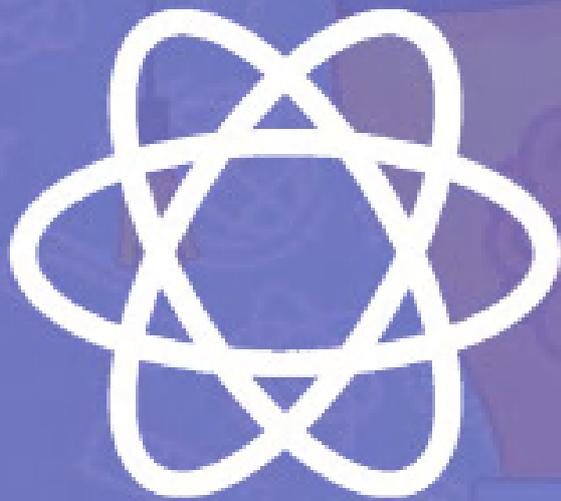
It involves maintaining 'correction file' (preferably block wise) receiving feedback, undertaking minor corrections in print materials in the form of errata sheets, supplementary materials, revision of extra readings, preparation of assignments, programme guides, prospectus, practical manuals and guides.

Course Updating

This deals with feedback analysis of various sources based on that undertaking minor changes in course contents, presentation of content and subsequent modifications in programme guide and programme delivery.

Revision

Programme/Course revision builds on the maintenance and updating of data, the experiences accumulated over a period of the programme delivery, re-looking at the entire curricular structure of the programme, the multi-media self-learning materials, assignments and manuals, teleconferencing and interactive radio counseling, laboratory and hands-on experiences and the entire programme delivery.



Chapter-IV

**Learning Activeness and Its
Relevance to SLM Prepara-
tion**

Learning Activeness and Its Relevance to SLM Preparation

Concept of Learning Activeness

Simply reading the unit will not guarantee learning. The material has to be such that the learners can interact with it more and learn better. This characteristic of SLM is known as learning activeness. A unit is said to be learner active if it has the potential to motivate the learners to sit up and be engaged in various types of academic activities such as jotting down points, explaining the concepts, collecting material, applying what has just been learnt to a new situation, doing self-check exercises, writing assignment-responses and similar exercises. Such built in strategies make a unit learner active and pedagogically purposive. This would lead to effective learning among distance learners.

Reading a course material or listening to a Radio Programme, or viewing a TV Programme is normally a passive and monotonous activity. Simply reading the words does not necessarily excite a learner to make any response. So the study material should make the learner active and responsive. Then only we can call it self-learning. Learning activities open up the genuine interaction between the learner and the material. A good distance teaching material will contain numerous activities (as many as a distance teacher can visualize and create), so that the student is perpetually stimulated to learn.

These learning activities should be put in a sequence as the learner progresses from one step to another gradually. For this the course writer has to exploit his/her existing knowledge, difficulty level of the material and how much of new information learners can absorb and needed at that level of their studies. Thus, the educational needs and abilities are to be prejudged to finalize learning activities. Learning activities are of different forms.

In face-to-face classroom situations, a teacher may ask students to answer a question, take notes on his/her lecture, observe and record an experiment or demonstration, or do quick exercises. But in open and distance education, which uses passive print and other media, we need to build in, these activities deliberately and aim at making them effective and purposeful.

Types of Learning Activities

Thinking

We know that learning involves interpreting facts and building links between them. We can stimulate thinking by setting questions, which will make the learner attentive and more interactive with the content. The questions will encourage them to stop and think for a while before moving on to the

next step. The multiple types of questions motivate them to think and find alternative answer to the question asked. These questions can force the learners to think on the issue being discussed and can draw their attention towards the content. Besides thinking, such questions will assess learners' retention.

Writing

Writing exercises help the distance learners consolidate what they have learnt in the unit. Writing the points down also makes them attentive and active. The main purposes of giving these questions are to give reinforcement, and to give practice in using the information which they have just gone through. Thus the simple activities can serve the purpose in many circumstances. But as our learners are adults, these activities should involve some sort of thinking. Overall framing questions keeping in view the above factors are not an easy task to any course writer, but certainly not an impossible one.

There can be several types of writing exercises:

- *Copying or Writing from Memory*: It is simply a way of strengthening the memory by repetition.
- *Answering Questions*: which involve extending what has just been learnt to other items in the same area. For example, practicing an arithmetical process, formulating aims and objectives in your subject of learning.
- *Applying What has just been Learnt to a New Situation*: For example, in the Indian context, which one may be better – the course team approach or appointing part-time course writers? Give at least three reasons to support your answer.
- *Answering the Questions Designed to Test Comprehension*: For example, explain the functions of an assignment in distance learning.

These activities provide periodic checks on the learning of distance learners.

Doing

The third type of learning activity is 'doing' something practical. It is said that one learns best by 'doing'. In the courses such as geography, science, etc., in which we wish to develop certain skills, some practical exercises or activities, should be given to the learners. The material can be clubbed with practical exercises. For example, the learners of Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education can be asked to prepare different nutritive food items for children; final year degree student of Sociology can be asked to compare the rural and urban societies after his/her own observation.

In some courses, learners can be organized into groups at study centers and given opportunities to perform skills, experiments, etc. The course writers have to make room for such activities within the materials. These activities can be of different types such as conducting experiments in science, reading of maps, going on study and field visits to collect information and data. The course writers should note that the activities listed above are illustrations only. A range of this variety of activities depends on the resourcefulness and interests of course writers. One caution to be observed by any course writer is that the amount of time a learner needs to spend on any activity/exercise etc.

As these activities/exercises are given along with the material; learner should not be diverted for longer duration by giving longer/difficult questions/activities/exercises etc. At the best learner may spend few minutes (5-10) and come back to the material for reading so that focus and rhythm of study would not be lost.

Access Devices

Access devices are those devices which help the course writer go as close to his/her learners as possibly he/she can, and help the learners come as close to the content as he/she can. These devices also help the learners find their way into the material. There are three main functions of these access devices:

- They enable learners to find what they need to read in the unit, i.e, the means and ways to reach the content.
- They make the content more intimate to learners and help them grasp what is presented in the unit.
- They perform the functions of a live classroom teacher, i.e, build a teacher in the material.

Some of the access devices are explained below:

Cover page

Course coordinators have to identify a suitable cover design for their course. If that is done, that would also communicate some broader view of the course to the learner and acts as an access device.

Title

We should give our unit a clear title, a title that can tell the learners what the unit is about. For example, to give the title 'Distance Education' is not enough. It should be more explicit and clear, for example, 'The Process of Course Production in Distance Education'.

Structure of the Unit

The structure with itemized sections and subsections should be given in order of the occurrence of the content in the material. The structure draws the learner's attention to the subject matter.

Objectives

The statement of objectives is always an important part of distance education materials. By objectives we mean – what should a learner be able to do (or do better), after going through the unit, that he/she was unable to do or could not do so well before. Here we need to note that 'objectives' are different from the 'aims'. The aims are expressed by a teacher as to what he/she would try to do or get across through his/her teaching activities. On the other hand, the objectives are the behaviours to be displayed by a learner. In other words, the 'aims' are for a teacher and the 'objectives' are for the learners to achieve. Of course, the objectives are derived from the aims. The objectives of the unit should be defined clearly in behavioural terms.

Division of Content

To make the content easily accessible, we divide the units into sections and subsections for easy reading and better comprehension. Each section is indicated distinctly by bold capitals and each subsection by relatively small but bold typeface. The significant divisions within sub-sections are in still bold typeface so as to make it easier for learners to see their place within sub-sections, and the items which need to be highlighted are numbered [i.e., (i), (ii) etc.]. For the purpose of uniformity we have applied the same scheme of 'portioning' in every unit throughout the TNOU courses.

Let Us Sum Up

In the last section of each unit, under the heading 'Let Us Sum Up' we summarize the whole unit for purposes of recapitulation and ready reference.

Check Your Progress

Besides, we give self-check exercises under the caption 'Check Your Progress' at a few places in each unit which invariably ends with model answers/possible answers to the questions set in these exercises.

Illustrations

The content should be supported with appropriate illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, photographs, etc. A concept map or flow diagram can show the interconnections of the content more clearly.

Glossaries

Adequate glossaries of keywords, new concepts, and technical expressions should be given in the unit after the summary.

Instructions

We should remember that our learners are physically separated from institutions. Therefore, precise and unambiguous instructions are to be given for how to go through the unit.

Suggested Readings

Many courses require learners to read some extra material in addition to the course units. Sometimes an extra material is essential while on other occasions, it may be entirely optional.

Answers to Check Your Progress /Possible Answers

Under answers you may present the answers to all the self-check questions, exercises, etc., set in the unit. For easy reference the answers need to be numbered the way the corresponding questions have been numbered.



Chapter-V

Standards for Preparation of SLM

Standards for Preparation of SLM

SLM in Print Form

- The Self Learning Material shall be developed as per the defined credit structure of the programme.
- The Self Learning Material shall involve the learner actively through various experience-based activities and assignments.
- The learner shall get the clear information about the structure of the programme and the course.
- There shall be a detailed learning map in the Self Learning Material for the learner so that she or he will be self-directed for completion of their studies.
- The content of the Self Learning Material shall be developed with dialogue and personal system of writing method which will create a nature of interactivity in the Self Learning Material.
- The Self Learning Material shall encourage the learner to apply new knowledge and skills.
- There shall be clear definition of learning objectives and outcomes.
- The content shall be divided into small sections (blocks) and sub-sections (units & sub-units) for effective learning.
- Activities shall be included in each unit of the Self Learning Material.
- There shall be assignments on each learning objective for self-assessment.
- The learner shall be directed through problem solving activities as applicable to the nature of the course.

SLM in Non-Print Form

The learners' perspective is an important aspect of quality assurance for e-learning. High quality e-learning content should be designed by skilled content and instructional design professionals. Good instructional design will reflect best practices and research on teaching and learning. The key principles of designing e-learning content are: (1) consistent layout and design; (2) clear organisation and presentation of information; (3) consistent and easy-to-use navigation; and (4) aesthetically pleasing design and graphics. Thus, the standards of Self Learning Material in non-print form as under:

- The e-learning material shall be designed as per the credit structure of the online programme.
- The course shall be organised into units and lessons.
- There shall be description of unit overview along with objectives, activities, assignments and resources that frame the unit.
- Availability of a programme map and correlation matrix among the courses in the programme.
- There shall be description of credit value of each module or unit in the course.
- There shall be clear guidelines on academic integrity and netiquette (internet etiquette) expectations regarding lesson activities, discussions and plagiarism.
- There shall be lesson overview, content and activities, assignments to provide the learning opportunities for learner to master the content.
- The course shall be designed to teach concepts and skills that the learner will retain throughout the study.
- There shall be multiple learning paths for engaging the learner in active learning.
- The content shall provide opportunities for learners to engage in high-order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasing by complex ways.
- There shall be appropriate readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements.
- The content shall provide for periodical feedback about the learner process.
- The course shall be easy to navigate.
- There shall be declaration of textbooks, courseware, and online resources necessary to refer additionally to complete and master the course
- The content shall be accessible on various devices.
- The e-learning material shall satisfy the needs of learners with disabilities.

The Format of SLM of TNOU

The SLM of TNOU will be in A4 size paper with the following specifications:

- The text margin will be of size 3-cm at top and bottom, 3.5-cm at left and 5-cm at right. The layout of paper will be mirror margined and the space at the left and right corner of the SLM will be used by the students for writing down their doubts during their self-study. These doubts may be clarified with the Academic Counsellor during the Counselling Sessions at recognized Learner Support Centres (LSC) of TNOU (Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to any recognized University) in the State of TamilNadu and Pudhucherry.

- The font used will be arial of size 11 with line spacing of at least 16-pt. and paragraph spacing of 6-pt. before and after.
- In Tamil, the font used will be arial unicode of size 12 with same line spacing and paragraph spacing as in English. With regard to Mathematics, Accountancy and other subjects involving formulas and problems the spacing may differ as per the requirements.
- The tables and figures included in the SLM will carry specific number and the relevant title for the same.

The terms in SLM and its Relevant Tamil Terminology

The terms used in SLM are translated in Tamil as follows:

Terms used in SLM	Relevant Tamil Terminology
Programme	பாடத்திட்டம்
Course	பாடம்
Block	தொகுதி
Unit	பிரிவு
Section	உப்பிரிவு
Sub-Section	தூண்டி பிரிவு
Structure	பாட அமைப்பு
Objectives	குறிக்கோள்கள்
Overview	அறிமுகம்
Let Us Sum Up	தொகுத்தறிவேயம்
Check Your Progress	உங்கள் முன்னேற்றத்தை சோதிக்க
Illustration	விளக்கப்படம்
Glossaries	கலைச்சொற்கள்
Instructions	அறிவுறுத்தல்கள்
Suggested Readings	பரிந்துரைக்கப்பட்ட நூல்கள்
Answers to Check Your Progress	உங்கள் முன்னேற்றத்தை சோதித்தறிவும் பரிந்துரைக்கான விடைகள்



Chapter-VI

Credit System and Preparation of SLM

Credit System and Preparation of SLM

The term credit is not a complete stranger in the educational field. However, in TNOU the expression credit has a special connotation and, therefore, deserves a detailed treatment here.

Credit System for Non-Semester Pattern

In TNOU, each Undergraduate Programme like B.A. or B.Com. programme consist of 96-100 credits in all. A learner can complete at the most a minimum of 32 credits per year. In other words the shortest time in which B.A. or B.Com. programme can be completed by distance learners is 3 years, and the number of credits that can be completed in one academic year is 32 credits.

Credit System for Semester Pattern

Majority of TNOU programmes shall be designed as semester pattern programme and a learner can complete at the most a minimum of 16 credits per semester.

Having said above that the number of credits one can complete in one academic year is 32. One way of looking at it is that an academic year may be assumed to consist of 32 working weeks. In actual practice at Conventional Universities the number of actual working weeks is less than 32, around 26-27 weeks. However, a distance learner who remains unaffected by the regular university regulations may not find it difficult to put in 32 weeks of actual work. Thus, to say that a credit comprises academic activities of various types that can be completed in one working week.

A different way of looking at a credit is to look for inputs in terms of learners hours. To explain the notion of learners hours, refer back to the Conventional System of Education. In the Conventional University system a student makes two types of inputs in terms of time/hour:

- Contact Time (the actual time spent by a student in contact with his/her teachers, demonstrators, class-mates etc.)
- Private Time (the time needed by a student to prepare a particular portion of a syllabus).

While as the contact time for each and every student is the same as it is provided by the time-table of the university/college, the private time is a variable and depends on individual learners – one learner may give more time to prepare a particular portion of a syllabus, while as a different student need less time to prepare the same portion. In distance education also there are two types of student inputs in terms of time/hours.

Study Time

The time a student may spend in studying the printed course units, work through in-text/self assessment questions, prepare responses for assignments, use audio/video materials at study centers or elsewhere, attend academic counselling sessions, attend teleconferencing sessions, work on experiments etc.

Private Time

The time needed by a student to prepare a particular portion of a syllabus.

In TNOU, it is tried to ensure that the study time demanded from a distance learner for a particular course should not fall below the contact time provided by a conventional University for the same or similar course. TNOU leaves out private time from the discussion as no control can be exercised on the private time needed by an individual learner which varies from learner to learner whether it is distance or conventional system.

The substance of what have been said is that at TNOU it would like to demand at least as many study hours from a distance learner as a conventional learner is meant to put in as contact time for a comparable course at a conventional university. This is needed on both counts – credibility of the system and recognition by other institutions and accrediting agencies.

On the basis of these data TNOU decides on the number of study hours which it would like our learners to put in for a particular programme. For example, for our undergraduate programmes TNOU expects a learner to put in 960 study hours per academic year.

Going back to the notion of credit, that these 960 study hours constitute 32 credit, or one credit at TNOU is equal to an input of 30 study hours. It is also said that one credit is equivalent to a week's study time, which then amounts to 5 study hours per day in a 6-day week or 6 study hours in a 5-day week. So far we have talked about the notion of credit in terms of student inputs seen as study time.

Now try to look at the notion of credit on the basis of course-materials. As explained elsewhere, a course in our system consists of a few blocks each of which is something like 60-80 printed pages. A Block usually presents a particular theme within a course. Each Block may have a few video and audio programmes to go within. Besides, each Block may have some in text/ self assessment questions and an assignment to go with it. It has been seen that generally one block of standard length (including the other materials and academic tasks that go with it) demand a study time of about 30 hours. There might be some variations here and there but generally work on one Block amounts to completion of one CREDIT. For example, the break-up could be as follows:

- 20 hours for studying the 4 units in a particular Block at the rate of 5 hours per Unit including work on intext/self-assessment questions.
- 3 hours of work on 1 video and 2 audio programmes accompanying the Block.
- 4 hours work on the assignment pertaining to this Block.
- 3 hours work pertaining this particular block, with the Academic Counsellors at Learning Support Centres.

Depending upon the nature of the programme, course and instructional design planned, the above components and its duration in a Block may vary.

Thus, if a distance learner works through a Block of the type we have mentioned above and also perform all the tasks that form a part of this Block, he/she will have to put in 30 study hours, which in other words means that he/she will have completed one credit of the course concerned.

The concept of credit as elaborated above, should help a Course Writer to visualize as to how and how much of a particular content may be presented in a particular Unit or Block.

For example, if a Block has 4 units, the unit should demand around 5-6 study hours. But, if it has 6 units, then each unit should demand at an average of about 3 ½-4 study hours.

A clear understanding of the notion of credit should help the course planners and course writers in taking decisions regarding:

- Length and design of a unit in a Block
- Nature of tasks set in an assignment
- Number and length of audio and video programmes in a course
- Nature and amount of academic counselling needed for a course.



Chapter-VII

Guidelines for Quality Assurance of SLM

Guidelines for Quality Assurance of SLM

Learning Material - Print Media

Learning Material through print-media is termed as Self Learning Material, being developed with the approach of self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating and self-evaluating. The following is an indicative list of quality standards for print material:

- The first quality assurance starts from **selection of SLM writers** who have right academic credentials and work experience. SLM writers are nominated and approved by the Board of Studies/Academic Council/Syndicate of the University.
- The second quality assurance is the conduct of **workshop for SLM writers** to explain the principles of instructional design, house style, diagrams, graphics, references, citation and format style. Attendance is a pre-requisite and made compulsory for SLM writers.
- The third quality assurance is to **check plagiarism** through latest reliable software to ascertain the original work of the writer.
- The fourth quality assurance is to review the SLM by the Reviewer nominated by the Board of Studies/the concerned Programme Coordinators and approved by the Vice-Chancellor to ensure appropriateness of contents, whether learning outcomes stated in measurable behavioural or operational verbs as per Bloom's Taxonomy and references as per the latest version of American Psychological Association (APA) style.
- The fifth process of quality assurance is to check the language accuracy by the language expert nominated by the Chairman of the respective Faculties and appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. The language expert ensures error free language and simplicity of language.
- Later, the Self Learning Material prepared is given for formatting by the technical person.
- The final form of SLM is to be vetted by the Board of Studies to certify fit for print.
- All the above said process must be completed within 3-6 months of time in order to provide to the learner in time.

The Self Learning Material shall be developed in defined formats with following features :

- Consistent layout and format.
- Inclusion of overview of content.
- A unit structure at the beginning of the unit.
- Plenty of examples.
- Reference to prior learning.
- Inclusion of national or international caselets and case studies.
- Content in segments synchronised with learning objectives and outcome.
- Explanation of icons used in content.
- Appropriate sequence of material.
- Explanation on technical, new, difficult terms or word in a glossary section.
- Inclusion of adequate suggested reading (both print and online).

Audio–Video Material: Quality Standards

- There shall be adequate consideration of learners' prior knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Level and style of language shall be appropriate.
- There shall be clear information on types of support material and study activities to be used by the learner.
- It shall be clear and unambiguous, also preferably free from pedagogic jargon.
- The aim, objective and target audience for the Audio Video (AV) material shall be clearly defined.
- It shall be capable of being evaluated to conform to the learning outcomes.
- There shall be clear guidelines with regard to the use of the Audio or Visual material vis-a-vis other content of the course.
- AV Material shall be developed in forms and formats that will be easily accessible by the learners.
- There shall be separate Audio Video manual for giving the guidelines of using the Audio Video material in study.
- Audio Video Material shall provide continuity and coherence within and between audio-based study sessions.
- There shall be synchronisation of Sound and Image in Audio Video material.
- There shall be appropriate graphics and animations relevant to the course content.
- There shall be appropriate 'visual texture' and rate of change of image to keep the learner involved.

Online Material: Quality Standards

- The course shall be organised into units and lessons.
- There shall be description of unit overview along with objectives, activities, assignments and resources that frame the unit.
- Availability of a program map and correlation matrix among the courses in the programme.
- There shall be description of credit value of each module or unit in the course.
- There shall be clear guidelines on academic integrity and netiquette (internet etiquette) expectations regarding lesson activities, discussions and plagiarism.
- There shall be lesson overview, content and activities, assignments to provide the learning opportunities for learner to master the content.
- The course shall be designed to teach concepts and skills that the learner will retain throughout the study.
- There shall be multiple learning paths for engaging the learner in active learning.
- The content shall provide opportunities for learners to engage in high-order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasing by complex ways.
- There shall be appropriate readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements.
- The content shall provide for periodical feedback about the learning process.
- The course shall be easy to navigate.
- There shall be declaration of textbooks, courseware, and online resources necessary to refer additionally to complete the course.
- The content shall be accessible on various devices.
- The online material shall satisfy the needs of learners with disabilities.

Computer-Based Material: Quality Standards

- The Computer-based material shall provide an environment for practise, at the learner's own pace and in his/her own time.
- The Computer-based material shall provide an environment for self-assessment.
- It shall allow learners to develop analysis and decision-making skills, to discover principles and concepts for themselves.
- The course shall be organised into units and lessons.
- There shall be description of unit overview along with objectives, activities, assignments and resources that frame the unit.
- Availability of a program map and correlation matrix among the courses in the programme.
- There shall be description of credit value of each module or unit in the course.

- There shall be lesson's overview, content and activities, assignments to provide the learning opportunities for learner to master the content.
- The course shall be designed to teach concepts and skills that the learner will retain throughout the study.
- There shall be multiple learning paths for engaging the learner in active learning.
- The content shall provide opportunities for learners to engage in high-order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasing by complex ways.
- There shall appropriate readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements.
- The course shall be easy to navigate.
- There shall be declaration of textbooks, courseware, and online resources necessary to refer additionally to complete and master the course.
- The Compute-based material shall satisfy the needs of learners with disabilities.

Open Education Resources (OER) of TNOU

The OER is an Open platform to access open educational resources having open license to (i)Reuse, (ii)Revise, (iii) Remix, (iv)Retain and (v).Redistribute. TNOU, in support of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, initiated this work to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education opportunities by repurposing high quality OER to facilitate innovative, interactive and collaborative learning environment where learner's set their own objectives rather than being restricted by institutions. TNOU foster flexible learning environment by using Self Learning Materials, Lecture Notes, Audio/video Lectures, Assignments, Course materials etc by both course of action, i.e., face-to-face mode and distance mode. Through this institutional OER repository University is going to gear up its basic educational facilities supported with information and communication technologies.



Chapter-VIII

Revision of SLM

Revision of SLM

For a course writer/distance educator, this is a very important component to be aware of, so that one can carry out the revision from time to time. Clarifications on the terminologies relating to the process are needed, so that one can avoid the possible confusion among distance teachers/educators when they talk about 'revision' and 'updating'.

Need for Revision

Life span of Distance Education programmes is a very important issue in the Management of Distance Education Institutions and their academic programmes. This issue gains further significance in an institution like the Tamil Nadu Open University which is heavily dependent on print based self-learning material in addition to other components such as audio/video programmes, video-conferencing etc. Academics involved in the design and development of programmes in open/distance education system aware that a particular programme can be offered for a certain period and revision of course materials is necessary after that period. For valid reasons the programme can also be totally withdrawn. Revision of self-learning materials is crucial for the following reasons:

- As distance educators, one should not provide the same material that had been developed a few years back to our students, because many minor or major changes must have taken place in that particular subject area;
- Unlike a classroom teacher, the distance educators will not be meeting their students to explain to them the minor or major changes that are taking place in the subject. So, updating the presentation of content incorporating the latest developments every day is not possible in distance learning situation;
- The only alternative in such a scenario is the revision of materials periodically, if not frequently.
- The other important issue is the 'economic aspect' of the revision process. Whether it is a major or minor revision, the process will be more or less the same as that of developing a new programme. Identifying an expert group, involvement of course writers for revision, production and printing of the material etc. are the same in both situations.
- The other important issue is 'time' that is needed for this activity. Plan in a systematic and meticulous way the schedule. Otherwise, meeting the deadlines and switching over to revised material will become difficult and problematic.

While course updating and maintenance form an integral part of programme delivery each year, the decision on revision comes up only when the programme/course coordinator/team thinks that the maintenance and updating data increasingly

becoming unmanageable, coupled with the institutional framework and policy which suggest that the course contents need periodic revision. Other factors which demand revision of a course/programme are - fast changes in the knowledge base of the discipline/area of study; recommendations of the statutory/ accreditation/ professional bodies; need for presentation of alternatives; and sometimes the demands of the employment market.

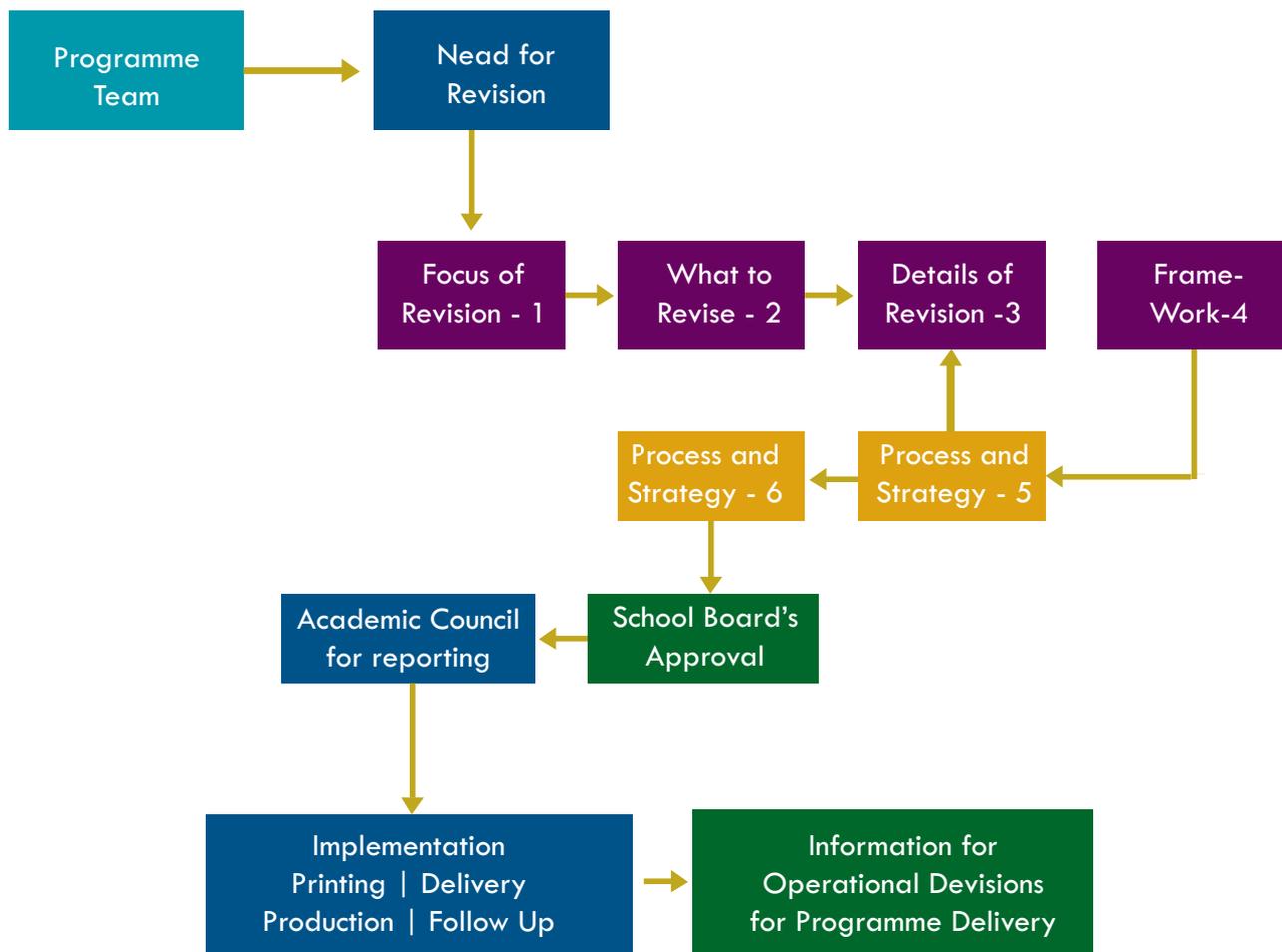


Figure. 2 - Flow Chart on Revision of TNOU Programmes

Details of Flow Chart on Revision

Focus of Revision - 1

Learner vis-à-vis programme/
course goals and the delivery
mechanisms

What to Revise - 2

Primary

- Syllabus (knowledge base)
- SLM (print and Non-print) - content and presentation
- Assessment & evaluation strategies

Secondary

- Programme/course requirements
- Programme/course delivery
- Employability
- Equivalence

Details of Revision - 3

- Curriculum Structure
- Programme goals, perspectives and focus
- Content selection and organization
- Credit and student workload
- Content relevance, updating
- Content density, difficulty, load
- Language
- Content presentation (self-learning style, access devices, activities, format, layout & design & style)
- Assignments, projects, practicals, counseling
- Programme development process
- Translation
- A/V media Production
- Programme delivery (subject to the extent of revision)

Frame Work - 4

- Nature of programme (bachelors degree programme/inter-disciplinary/ professional/modular /online, etc)
- Course(s) within the programme
- Revision perspective(s)
- Common minimum strategy to maintain sanctity of revision
- Programme goals/course goals within the programme (reshaping for carrying out further Certificate/ Diploma etc)
- Changing course development

Operational Issues

- Student database
- Course database
- Faculty workload
- Counsellor regular feedback
- Payment to course evaluators, counsellors data analysis
- Credit page allocation
- Translation

Possible Sources-5

Maintenance and Updating

- Corrections file (course-wise, block-wise)
- Formal testing of some modules
- Assignments and TEE answer scripts/ projects/practicals
- Feedback through course/ block, questionnaires
- Updating experiences
- Informal discussion with students, counselors, etc.

Specially Designed Feedback

- Learner Feedback
- Expert feedback
- Academic Counsellor feedback
- Employers/other stakeholders
- Instructional designer feedback course goals and the delivery mechanisms

Process and Strategy-6

(Revision Expert Committee Team)

- Programme/Course Coordinator
- Programme/Course team
- Collation of all kinds of feedback for the team to reflect
- Coordinator-writer-editor model
- Workshop model
- Consultation with service divisions
- Inter-disciplinary team

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 3. IGNOU (2013). *Block3, Unit 1,2 & 3 - Diploma in Distance Education*. New Delhi: IGNOU.
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