



# VELS



INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS)  
(Deemed to be University Estd. u/s 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)

PALLAVARAM - CHENNAI

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# Self-Learning Materials (SLM) Policy



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## Content

| <b>Chapter</b> | <b>Title</b>   | <b>Page No.</b> |
|----------------|--|-----------------|
| I              | Introduction   | 3               |
| II             | Self-Learning Materials and its Characteristics          | 4               |
| III            | Terms Used in SLM Preparation                            | 6               |
| IV             | Learning Activeness and its Relevance to SLM Preparation | 8               |
| V              | Standards for Preparation of SLM                         | 12              |
| VI             | Credit System and Preparation of SLM                     | 15              |
| VII            | Guidelines for Quality Assurance of SLM                  | 18              |
| VIII           | Revision of SLM  | 22              |

# Chapter-I

## Introduction

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The VISTAS-CDOE has established the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) to create and implement a comprehensive and dynamic internal quality assurance system to deliver high quality courses of higher education in the Open and Distance Learning and Online Learning.

One of the primary responsibilities of CIQA is to supervise the creation of Self Learning Materials (SLM), and the Centre has created a policy document for the creation and revision of SLM of VISTAS-CDOE in accordance with the standards and regulations established by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

This policy document is intended for those who are now working in or plan to work in the distance education system and want to learn how to develop self-learning materials for distance learners as well as how to update SLM on a regular basis.

The primary objective of VISTAS-CDOE is to demonstrate how the knowledge gained in face-to-face teaching can be effectively applied to the new writing assignment for distance learners.

The broad objective of this document is to assist course writers in developing adequate writing abilities and self- confidence to write Self Learning Materials (SLM) and revise those materials

It is a fact that the study materials have a significant impact on the effectiveness and success of distance learning programmes. Therefore, the Course Writers have a significant role to play in creating Self-Learning Materials. Writing for open and distance learning is more difficult and quite different than writing for in-person instruction, writing for a book or writing for a journal.

Self-Learning Materials must investigate multiple communication channels and modes in order to meet learners' demands.

The format that we explain in this document is adaptable to best practices for future advancements.

Updating self-learning resources is just as crucial as creating them from scratch. Every distance teaching course needs to be updated from time to time to incorporate the developments in the field of study or discipline.

The courses should be reviewed the performance of the courses based on the feedback that is obtained from the students, tutors, academic counselors, experts and others in order to make the course more relevant, learner friendly and academically rich.

This document briefs about the revision of SLM for the above mentioned reasons.

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### Self-Learning Materials and Its Characteristics

The Self Learning Materials (SLM) are intended for independent usage by both on-site and distance learners. The SLM contains all the content created to encourage independent learning. The students in distance education rely primarily on these carefully prepared teaching materials, which are largely pre-planned, pre-produced, and pre-packed, and have minimal interaction with the institution or the tutor.

#### **The Characteristics of SLM**

Self-Learning Materials (SLM) are distinct from a textbook chapter or a journal article. A textbook's chapters often provide material in a very compact form. Compared to learning materials, they are equivalent to references.

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. SLM, on the other hand, acts as a tool for learning. The main Characteristics of SLM are discussed as follows:

#### **Self-explanatory**

A student should be able to navigate the information on their own with minimal outside assistance if the content is provided in a certain way. Self-explanatory and conceptually sound content should be provided. To do this, the information is rationally analysed before being presented. The coherence and continuity of the text are upheld by this arrangement. The SLM encourages learners to learn for themselves as a result.

#### **Self-contained**

A learner shouldn't have to look for extra resources or even a teacher, hence efforts should be taken to make the course material self-sufficient. 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 goal of the study material should be to give students the appropriate direction, advice, and tips at each step of their education. Easy-to-understand explanations,

sequential development, illustrations, learning exercises, and other formats are used to provide the self-directed material. In a classroom setting, the course content plays the part of a teacher who can direct, instruct, moderate, and control the learning process. Therefore, the entire learning process should be guided by the course material.

Some teachers in traditional classroom settings likewise behave without feeling when they guide, instruct, moderate, and control the learning process. There may be a variety of causes, including time restraints, the teaching method, a lack of interest in these factors, etc. However in the context of distance learners, the course writer 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 learning tools, such as a live instructor, should be very motivating for the students. The learning materials should pique their interest, pose questions, connect concepts to everyday circumstances, and give students a sense of purpose throughout the entire process. Without the course author's extra work, it is difficult to construct these scenarios. At each step of learning and retention, the sense of reinforcement needs to be strengthened.

### **Self-evaluating**

The study materials should include options for feedback because the learners are still cut off from the Open and Distance Learning institutions and the instructors. The students should be aware of their progress if they are to ensure optimal learning. Self-evaluation in the form of self-check questions, tasks, exercises, etc., gives students the feedback they need to know how they're doing, reinforces what they've learned, and encourages them to keep learning. By providing a suitable amount of self-check exercises, learning activities, and check your progress questions, the course writer should create a built-in evaluation system.

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 materials are based on the principles of self-learning. So a unit, besides information, provides the learners study guide – directions, hints, references etc., - to facilitate their independent learning.

To make the content comprehensible, it is supported by simple explanations, examples, illustrations, activities and so on.

## Chapter-III

### Term 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 examples, B.A. Programme in Economics, B.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. 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 VISTAS-CDOE, 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:

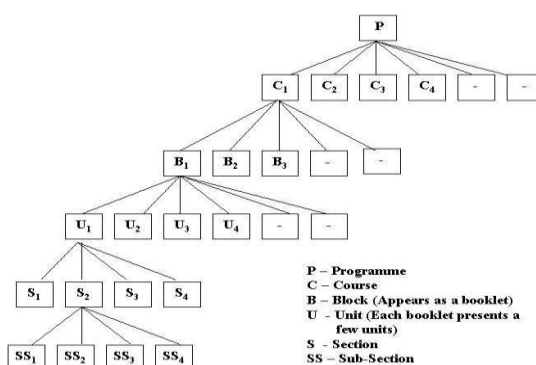
**i. Pedagogy-** Keeping in view the skills, attention span and study habits of the learners, the content load should be appropriate and manageable. A unit is a pedagogical unit that can be completed by a learner within a reasonable period of time, say for example, 5-6 hours, i.e., at the most three 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, 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.

**ii. 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.

**iii. 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 etc.

**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, programme delivery etc.

**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.

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# 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 can we 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.
- **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 etc.

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:

1. **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.
2. **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'.
3. **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.
4. **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.

5. **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 purposes of uniformity we have employed the same scheme of ‘portioning’ in every unit throughout the VISTAS-CDOE courses.
6. **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.
7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **Glossary:** Adequate glossary of keywords, new concepts, and technical expressions should be given in the unit after the summary.
10. **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.
11. **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.
12. **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.

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# Standards for Preparation 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 VISTAS-CDOE**

The SLM of VISTAS-CDOE 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 Faculties during the Personal Contact Programme(PCP) at VISTAS-CDOE.

- 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 10 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 of SLM and its Relevant Tamil Terminology

| Terms used in SLM              | Relevant Tamil Terminology                              |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Programme                      | பாடத்திட்டம்  |
| Course                         | பாடம்   |
| Block                          | தொகுதி  |
| Unit                           | பிரிவு  |
| Section                        | உட்பிரிவு   |
| Sub-Section                    | துணை பிரிவு   |
| Structure                      | பாட அமைப்பு   |
| Objectives                     | நோக்கங்கள்  |
| Overview                       | அறிமுகம்  |
| Let Us Sum Up                  | தொகுத்தறிவோம்   |
| Check Your Progress            | உங்கள் முன்னேற்றத்தை சோதிக்க                            |
| Illustration                   | விளக்கப்படம்  |
| Glossary                       | கலைச்சொற்கள்  |
| Instructions                   | அறிவுறுத்தல்கள்   |
| Suggested Readings             | பரிந்துரைக்கப்பட்ட நூல்கள்                              |
| Answers to Check Your Progress | உங்கள் முன்னேற்றத்தை சோதித்தறியும் பயிற்சிக்கான விடைகள் |

## Chapter-VI

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# Credit System and Preparation SLM

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

### **Credit System for Non-Semester Pattern**

At VISTAS-CDOE, B.B.A. or B.Com. programme consists of 140 credits in all. A learner can complete at the most a minimum of 46 credits per year. In other words the shortest time in which B.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 46.

### **Credit System for Semester Pattern**

All the VISTAS ODL programme has semester pattern and a learner can complete at the most a minimum of 22 credits per semester.

Having said above that the number of credits one can complete in one academic year is 46. One way of looking at it is that an academic year may be assumed to consist of 46 working weeks. In actual practice at Conventional Universities the number of actual working weeks is less than 46, around 26-27 weeks.

However, a distance learner who remains unaffected by the regular university regulations may not find it difficult to put in 46 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. At VISTAS-CDOE, 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. VISTAS-CDOE leave 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 VISTAS-CDOE it would be 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 VISTAS-CDOE 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 VISTAS-CDOE expect a learner to put in more than 1380 study hours per academic year.

Going back to the notion of credit, that these 1380 study hours constitute 46 credit, or one credit at VISTAS-CDOE 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 Faculties at VISTAS-CDOE.

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, 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.

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# 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/EC of the VISTAS.
- 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 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 **vettted** 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 case lets 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 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 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.

## **Chapter-VIII**

### **Revision of SLM**

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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**

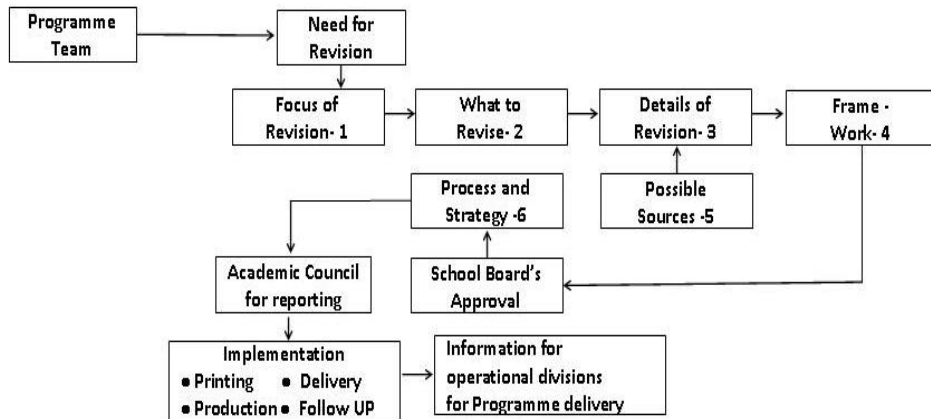
Life span of Distance Education programmes is a very important issue in the Management of Distance Education Institutions and their academic programmes. This issue gains further significance in an institution like the VISTAS-CDOE which is heavily dependent on print based self-learning material in addition 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 class room 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.

### Flow Chart on Revision of VISTAS-CDOE Programmes



### Details of Flow Chart on Revision

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| <p><b>Focus of Revision-1</b><br/>Learner vis-à-vis programme/course goals and the delivery mechanisms</p>   | <p><b>What to Revise-2</b><br/><b>Primary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus (knowledge base)</li> <li>• SLM (print and Non-print) - content and presentation</li> <li>• Assessment &amp; evaluation strategies</li> </ul> <p><b>Secondary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme/course requirements</li> <li>• Programme/course delivery</li> <li>• Employability</li> <li>• Equivalence</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Details of Revision-3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum Structure</li> <li>• Programme goals, perspectives and focus</li> <li>• Content selection and organization</li> <li>• Credit and student workload</li> <li>• Content relevance, updating</li> <li>• Content density, difficulty, load</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Content presentation (self-learning style, access devices, activities, format, layout &amp; design&amp; style)</li> </ul> | <p><b>Framework-4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of programme (bachelors degree programme/inter-disciplinary/professional/modular/on line, etc)</li> <li>• Course(s) within the programme</li> <li>• Revision perspective(s)</li> <li>• Common minimum strategy to maintain sanctity of revision</li> <li>• Programme goals/course goals within the programme (reshaping for carrying out further Certificate/ Diploma etc)</li> <li>• Changing course development</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assignments, projects, practicals, counseling</li> <li>● Programme development process</li> <li>● Translation</li> <li>● A/V media Production</li> <li>● Programme delivery (subject to the extent of revision)</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Operational Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student database</li> <li>● Course database</li> <li>● Faculty workload</li> <li>● Counsellor regular feedback</li> <li>● Payment to course evaluators, counsellors, data analysis</li> <li>● Credit page allocation</li> <li>● Translation</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Possible Sources-5</b></p> <p><b>Maintenance and Updating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Corrections file (course-wise, block-wise)</li> <li>● Formal testing of some modules</li> <li>● Assignments and TEE answer scripts/ projects/practicals</li> <li>● Feedback through course/block, questionnaires</li> <li>● Updating experiences</li> <li>● Informal discussion with students, counselors, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Specially Designed Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learner Feedback</li> <li>● Expert feedback</li> <li>● Academic Counsellor feedback</li> <li>● Employers/other stakeholders</li> <li>● Instructional designer feedback</li> </ul> | <p><b>Process and Strategy-6</b><br/>(Revision Expert Committee Team)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme/Course Coordinator</li> <li>● Programme/Course team</li> <li>● Collation of all kinds of feedback for the team to reflect</li> <li>● Coordinator-writer-editor model</li> <li>● Workshop model</li> <li>● Consultation with service divisions</li> <li>● Inter-disciplinary team</li> </ul> |

### Sources:

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3. DDE-3 Block-3, Unit 1, 2 & 3 - Diploma in Distance Education, IGNOU, New Delhi, May, 2013.
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6. TNOU SLM Policy-2019.