Background
IGNOU offers around 150 programmes at different levels through a network of regional centres, and several study centres/tele-learning centres spread all over the country and overseas. The study centres to provide easy access and effective support services to learners.

The University provides multi-channel, multiple media teaching-learning packages in the form of self-instructional print and audio/video materials, radio and television broadcasts, face-to-face counseling/tutoring, laboratory and hands on experience, video conferencing, interactive radio counseling, interactive multimedia CD ROM and internet based learning. With the advancement of technology, ICT is being used for teaching-learning to a great extent in all sectors of education. Technology enabled learning becomes more pertinent in the open and distance education system. During last few years, IGNOU has also developed an online system of education for the distance learners who would like to perform their studies by using internet based technologies.

Need of the Innovation
IGNOU imparts education to a large number of learners through open and distance mode. Use of technology is increasing day by day for better and effective education. Moreover, with the increased use of internet and mobile, people find it comfortable with web based teaching learning system. IGNOU Online portal is to provide one stop window catering to the learning needs of IGNOU learner community using learning management system that will help students to learn according to their own choice of time and place convenience through the internet. Portal should be user-friendly, ‘quick to learn’ for the above purpose.

Description of the IGNOU-Online
During 2012-2015 IGNOU has created a dedicated website http://www.ignouonline.ac.in to catering to the learning needs of IGNOU online learners’ community.

The Web applications described in this document is the http://www.ignouonline.ac.in website and associated support pages. This document seeks to provide the requirement specifications for the IGNOU Online Website. IGNOU-Online is one stop window catering to the learning needs of IGNOU learner community. It is a Learning Management System that will help students to learn according to their own choice of time and place convenience through the internet. It helps in exploring the links to access all learning resources available online. IGNOU-Online has a provision of linking Education Broadcast
also which is a webcasting facility linking students to educational channels – Gyandarshan, Gyanvani and EDUSAT. Virtual Class provides links to all the online programmes of the University.

The basic purpose of the IGNOU-Online is to provide the course wise search, submit the on-line registration form and make the online payment using their credit and debit cards. It also facilitates the assignment and term end examinations by ensuring the process of Student Evaluation Division (SED), IGNOU.

Faculty provides e-content of the units to be offered through online in word format along with related web resources like articles, video’s etc and scripting for organizing the flow of content, designs and interactivity. Special templates have been created to organize the content modules (Sections, Pages...). An interface has also been made to upload the course content and other interactive components by the course coordinators. They can review the content and other design elements for technical and subjective accuracy. The course coordinator with the help of the administrator can publish the content on the IGNOU-Online.

**Innovative Features of IGNOU-Online**

IGNOU-Online is a specially designed and developed Learning Management System to meet the requirements of IGNOU students. It has certain innovative features as described below:

1. Online learning allows a more student-centered teaching-learning approach. Because every student has his or her way of learning that works for them, getting an online education may help in ensuring that each lesson or material is completely understood before moving on to the next, which in turn, could result to better learning.
2. Online course materials can be accessed 24 hours a day every day. This means that students can easily read and review lectures, discussions and other materials relevant to their courses. There are some students who find it a bit difficult to understand spoken material in a typical classroom setting because of a number of distractions, boredom or tiredness. Such students can simply access the material online whenever they are prepared to learn.

3. In IGNOU-Online setting, a student is marked present if the student has actually participated in the classroom discussion. This encourages students to interact, increasing the diversity of opinion as everyone, and not just one or two students, is given the opportunity to share their thoughts.

4. IGNOU-Online offers a lot of savings because there are no additional costs for transportation and accommodation. Online education programs and courses also cost a lot cheaper than courses that can be taken in a traditional manner of open distance learning.

5. Making use of the tools and resources available in the IGNOU-Online, a student can interact with other students that can help in learning the skills and individual needs in order to adapt with the present and future technology.

6. Students who are taking online classes can also socialize, interact and discuss things that are not related to the course through "chat rooms" facility of IGNOU – Online.

7. IGNOU-Online has a provision for online instructor who can come from different locations across the globe; students are exposed to knowledge shared by the instructor which cannot be learned through books.

8. Students of online courses are also given the chance to talk with their instructors whenever they want to. Through online chat, email and newsgroup discussions, students and teachers can discuss concerns related to the material without having to wait for office hours.
Achievements
A prototype of IGNOU-Online was designed and developed in house. It is a full fledged Learning Management System having the facilities of uploading e-content, discussion forum, chat, self evaluation, etc. This LMS was successfully tested for few programmes of School of Law, School of Health Sciences and School of Agriculture. e-content for the programmes was also developed with the help of the concerned faculty.

Applications and Uses of IGNOU-Online
IGNOU – Online gives students an opportunity to choose from various schools, programs and courses which are not available in the area where they live in. This is especially beneficial for those who live in rural areas that only have one or two educational facilities, which most of the time, offer limited course and programme options for students.

Another benefit of taking online courses, and probably the most popular one, would be that it offers flexibility to students. Because they can attend classes and courses whenever and wherever there is a computer and access to the internet, they can easily plan out a schedule that would work for them. Because of the flexibility offered by online learning, not only students, but also individuals who already have full-time jobs or other commitments are able to take supplementary courses and even earn their degrees online.

Way Forward
As the use of technology in teaching-learning is increasing day to day, there is great scope for using web based technologies and programme for imparting need based education as per the pace and place of the learners. In that situation IGNOU-Online Learning Management System will prove to be a very important and useful system to provide online education. In future it can be further customized to be more user friendly system. A special e-learning or online-learning Cell having a core technical team may be created in NCIDE to develop e-content in dynamic format and to offer the online courses. Faculty may also be imparted appropriate training for developing e-content and offering online courses through IGNOU-Online.

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Period : 2014-15