

WEB-ENABLED ACADEMIC SUPPORT (WEAS) TO THE LEARNERS OF DISTANCE MODE PROGRAMMES

Background

In the 21st Century, applications of Information and Communication Technologies have contributed immensely to education, economic development, and social changes across the globe. With the reduced cost of electronic gadgets like laptops, smartphones and internet people are empowered to get connected and increase their learning and knowledge. As an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system we are required to reach the learners at their doorsteps. If we are able to provide services (pre-entry, admission, programme induction, study material distribution, supplementary study materials, learning, and counseling, assignments, pre-examination and examination, etc.) to the learners at their own place, pace and time it will be of great help to the learners.

Recently, NCIDE organized a two-day workshop on using freely available tools from Google suite for education. In the workshop, the participants not only ideated on providing different solutions to the problems faced by the learners at various stages of their study with the University but also experimented on realizing their ideas into prototypes. The participants were found enthusiastic in using the tools for providing Web-Enabled Academic Support (WEAS) to the distance learners. They can be further trained to develop a one-stop web portal for their programmes and they themselves can provide all kinds of academic and administrative support to the learners. This scheme of Web-Enabled Academic Support (WEAS) will be highly useful for those students who because of one or other reason are not getting counseling sessions at their study centres.

As this scheme of WEAS may be very effective, and useful for such learners without requiring any cost, it is proposed to try it out for five programmes having limited or low enrolment on a pilot basis. Initially, it can be implemented along with the existing provision of counseling at the study centres. If found effective, University may consider doing away with the counseling sessions for such low enrolment programmes and they can be provided web-enabled academic support. It will not only save lot of money spent on the counseling sessions, but it will also ensure timely academic support by the programme coordinators directly to the learners.

Objectives

The objectives are to:

- Creatively use the ICT tools for innovative teaching-learning in the ODL system,
- Empower the faculty to design, develop and offer WEAS to the learners, and
- Explore the possibilities of replacing the counseling session at the study centres in low enrolment programmes with the WEAS.

Features of WEAS

- **Virtual Learning:** Bringing distance learners and teachers on a single platform, enabling self-paced learning irrespective of time and distance separation.

- **Knowledge Management:** 24 × 7 availability and access to the platform with information, notification for important events/dates, digital format of course material, learning resources, a discussion forum for peer-to-peer learning and quizzes.
- **Low-IT Deployment Overheads:** Simple, hassle free and low maintenance ensures faster on-boarding and increases efficiency.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries will be the learners of limited or low enrolment programmes and faculty of various Schools. Faculty will get an opportunity to directly interact with their learners.

Expected Outcome

- Firstly, NCIDE will try to support and facilitate the development of WEAS for at least five programmes with limited or low enrolment.
- Secondly, the programme coordinators of the selected programmes will be empowered to use ICT tools for effective teaching-learning.
- Thirdly, a guideline-cum-handbook will be developed on creating Web Enabled Academic Support for learners.
- Fourthly, if WEAS replaces the counseling sessions then a huge amount of money can be saved.