

A Report on WEAS@RCs- A Single Window Information and Facilitation Tool for Learners

Student Support Services is the backbone of any ODL system. Some of the major components of student support services are pre-admission counselling, induction subject-specific counselling, information services related to programmes, rules, regulations, procedures and schedules of the University, management of assignments to tutor for comments, grading and marking a facility for undergoing the term-end exam etc. In this context, it is imperative to ensure right kind of support to the students at the right time. The appropriate use of technology to provide various kind of information and support to the students can provide reliable solution. Creation of Web Enabled Academic Support (WEAS) would be able to provide required support through a one stop portal.



The Web Enabled Academic Support@RCs, commonly known as WEAS@RCs aims to provide an interactive one-stop portal, that will help the students in getting informational support from the RCs. It has three major components WEAS@RCs for prospective learners, WEAS@RCs for existing learners, and WEAS@RCs for Alumni. The main highlight of the WEAS@RCs is student centric portal with elements of interactivity and multimedia enabled information. Currently, almost work related with WEAS@RCs for prospective learners has been completed in collaboration with RC Delhi -1 and RC Noida.

IGNOU students are geographically spread all over the country and most of the time they are at distance from the university. While studying at IGNOU they might have different types of problems and doubts to be clarified. If they are not addressed in time, then they convert into the

grievances. But, if required information and support is made available to the learners in time at one place, it is expected that their most of the doubts will be clarified and the problems will be resolved. Though, almost all kind of information is available at one or other place. But it becomes difficult for the learners to search the appropriate information. That is why it becomes imperative to develop a single window information and facilitation platform in the name of WEAS@RCs providing all kinds of academic and administrative information and support to the students with the help of simple and easily accessible technology.

The WEAS@RCs has three major components as discussed below in brief.

1. WEAS@RCs for Prospective Learners

One of the goals of the National Education Policy, 2020 is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education from 26.3 percent as of 2018 to 50 percent by 2035. This provides an opportunity as well as challenge to ODL Institutions to gear up with this situation and become more proactive in the various marketing endeavours. They also need to engage prospective learners to enable them to be able to be a part of their system, thus contributing in a big way. In this context, it is envisaged that RCs through the “WEAS@RCs for prospective learners” will get an opportunity for a new level of engagement with prospective students. For example, one of the components viz. Join a Programme, enables a student to explore a programme of their interest on the basis of pre-defined 105 disciplines, and enables the RCs to collect data of interested students, to follow-up with them further. The portal has other components also like Why to choose IGNOU to learn, how to apply for admissions, the instructional system, FAQs, what student’s say and of course a dedicated page about STAR students of IGNOU. The uniqueness of this portal is that most of that it judiciously uses text with multimedia enabled information through 3-5 min video. This enables the visitors to quickly gather information in a nutshell.

2. WEAS@RCs for Existing Learners

Learners of IGNOU being at distance from the university and spread geographically all over the country, necessitates to provide them timely support both academic and administrative. The WEAS@RC aims at providing various kind of information important for the learners and facilitate them in completing their study through technological support. The basic components of the WEAS@RCs for Existing learners include the following:

- Interactive Multimedia Information related to study material support, types of services provided by the Regional Centres, where and how to study? assignment support, evaluation support, how practical sessions work? how project work? Re-registration process, FAQs, etc.
- FAQs and Useful Resources for the students
- Various other information required by the students such as Know about Results
- Pool of digital resources in various regional languages for the learners through the RCs

- Discussion Forum and feedback facility
- Corner for Creativity and Innovation, and much for useful for the students of IGNOU.

3. WEAS@RCs for Alumni

Since its inception, IGNOU has provided higher education to a large number of students with different socioeconomic and educational background. Many of them must be placed at very good and prominent positions in different organizations including their own setups and businesses. Such alumni of the university may be a good resource for motivation and support to the existing and potential students of IGNOU. For that purpose, WEAS@RC plans to make a provision for creating a database of successful students of IGNOU and connecting them with the existing students through various activities. It will also display the success stories of the IGNOU Alumni on the portal.

Though the proposed WEAS@RCs itself is an innovative initiative to provide various kinds of academic and administrative support services to the distance learners through a single window platform, the important innovative features of the WEAS@RCs are as given below:

- The portal provides all kinds of information and various kind of learning & support resources in an integrated form through a single window online platform.
- The technology used for development and deployment of the WEAS is very simple, and easy to access without requiring for any additional infrastructure.
- The WEAS@RCs can be accessed by anybody anytime through any kind of device including computer, laptop or mobile, etc.
- The WEAS portal is dynamic in nature having provision for regular updation by the coordinators of the portal.
- The portal has interactive features like discussion forum, ask a question, and provision of feedback from the users, etc.

Currently, the WEAS@RC is being developed by the NCIDE in consultation with the Regional Centres Delhi 1 and Regional Centre, Noida on an experimental way. WEAS@RC is expected to be extended to other RCs also. We will be happy to get suggestions and inputs from the stakeholders of WEAS@RCs for improving the features of the portal.

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