



Centre for Distance and Online Education Central University of Himachal Pradesh Dharamshala (H.P.)- INDIA



GUIDELINES OF CENTRE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (CIQA) FOR ENSURING QUALITY IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AND ONLINE LEARNING (OL) PROGRAMMES

For assurance of quality in its ODL / OL programmes, the Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), Central University of Himachal Pradesh shall follow regulations and instructions issued by UGC / UGC-DEB and adopted by the University from time to time. On the basis of such regulations and instructions, the CDOE, CUHP has framed following guidelines for its implementation across ODL and OL programmes:

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (CIQA)

The Centre for Internal Quality Assurance shall be established by CDOE, CUHP for ensuring quality in various academic programmes offered by CDOE through Open and Distance Learning mode/Online Learning mode. It shall be headed by Director, CIQA.

II. OBJECTIVES OF CIQA

The objective of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) shall be to develop and put in place a comprehensive and dynamic internal quality assurance system to ensure that the programmes offered through Open and Distance Learning mode / Online mode by CDOE are of acceptable quality and can further be improved on continuous basis.

III. MAIN FUNCTIONS OF CIQA

The functions of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) would, *inter alia*, include the following, namely:

- i. To maintain quality in the services provided to the learners of CDOE.
- ii. To undertake self-evaluative and reflective exercises for continual quality improvement in all the systems and processes followed by CDOE, CUHP.
- iii. To contribute in the identification of the key areas in which CDOE, CUHP should maintain quality.
- iv. To devise mechanism to ensure that the quality of Open and Distance Learning programmes/Online Learning programmes matches with the quality of relevant programmes in conventional face-to-face mode.

- v. To devise mechanisms for interaction with and obtaining feedback from all stakeholders namely; CDOE learners, programme coordinators, course coordinators, mentors, faculty members, staff, prospective employers etc. for quality improvement.
- vi. To suggest measures to the authorities of CDOE, CUHP for qualitative improvement in ODL/OL programmes.
- vii. To facilitate the implementation of its recommendations through periodic reviews of ODL/OL programmes offered by CDOE, CUHP.
- viii. To organise workshops/ seminars/ symposium on quality related themes, ensure participation of all stakeholders, and disseminate the reports of such activities among all the stakeholders of CDOE, CUHP.
- ix. To develop and collate best practices in all areas leading to quality enhancement in services provided to the CDOE learners and disseminate the same to all concerned in CDOE, CUHP.
- x. To collect, collate and disseminate accurate, complete and reliable statistics about the quality of the programme(s) offered through ODL/OL mode by CDOE, CUHP.
- xi. To ensure that Programme Project Report (PPR) for each programme is according to the norms and guidelines prescribed by the UGC/UGC-DEB and other appropriate regulatory authority, wherever applicable.
- xii. To put in place a mechanism to ensure the proper implementation of Programme Project Reports by CDOE, CUHP.
- xiii. To maintain records of Annual Plans and Annual Reports of CDOE, CUHP, review them periodically and generate actionable reports for further quality enhancement.
- xiv. To provide inputs to the CDOE, CUHP for restructuring of ODL/OL programmes in order to make them relevant to the job market.
- xv. To facilitate system-based research on ways of creating learner-centric environment and to bring about qualitative change in the entire system followed by CDOE, CUHP.
- xvi. To act as a nodal coordinating unit for seeking assessment and accreditation of ODL/OL programmes from a designated body for accreditation such as NAAC etc.
- xvii. To adopt measures to ensure internalisation and institutionalisation of quality enhancement practices through periodic accreditation and audit of ODL/OL programmes offered by CDOE, CUHP.
- xviii. To coordinate between CDOE, CUHP and the UGC/UGC-DEB for implementation of various quality related initiatives or guidelines.
- xix. To obtain information from other Higher Educational Institutions on various quality benchmarks or parameters and best practices so as to execute the same in CDOE, CUHP on need-basis.
- xx. To record activities undertaken on quality assurance in the form of an annual report of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) of CDOE, CUHP.

- xxi. It shall be mandatory for Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) to submit Annual Reports to the CDOE and Statutory Authorities of CUHP about its activities at the end of each academic session. A copy of report in the format as specified by the UGC/UGC-DEB, duly approved by the statutory authorities of CUHP shall be submitted annually to the UGC/UGC-DEB.

IV. CENTRE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (CIQA) COMMITTEE

- i. Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) Committee shall have the following composition, namely:-
- a. Vice Chancellor of CUHP – Chairperson;
 - b. Three Senior Teachers of CUHP - Members;
 - c. Heads of Three Departments of CUHP in which programmes are offered through ODL/OL mode - Members;
 - d. Two external experts of Open and Distance Learning and/or Online education -Members;
 - e. Officials from the Administration and Finance Sections of CUHP – Members;
 - f. Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance – Member Secretary.
- The members at clauses (b) to (e) shall be nominated by the Vice Chancellor of CUHP.
- ii. The membership of such nominated members shall be for a period of two years. The Committee of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance shall meet at least once in a semester. The quorum for the meeting shall be two-third of the total number of members with mandatory presence of one external expert. The agenda, minutes and Action Taken Reports are to be documented with official signatures and maintained physically and electronically in a retrievable format by CIQA.
- iii. Centre for Internal Quality Assurance Committee shall perform the following functions, namely:-
- a. To oversee the functioning of Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, CDOE, CUHP and approve the reports generated by Centre for Internal Quality Assurance on the effectiveness of quality assurance systems and processes.
 - b. To facilitate adoption of instructional design requirements as per the philosophy of the Open and Distance Learning and/or Online learning as decided by the CDOE and the statutory bodies of CUHP for its different academic programmes.
 - c. To promote automation of learner support services of the CDOE, CUHP.
 - d. To coordinate with external subject experts or agencies or organisations, for the activities pertaining to validation and annual review of its in-house processes executed by CDOE, CUHP.
 - e. To coordinate with third party auditing bodies for quality audit of programme(s) offered through ODL/OL mode by CDOE, CUHP

- f. To oversee the preparation of Self-Appraisal Report to be submitted to the Assessment and Accreditation agencies for accreditation of ODL/OL programmes on behalf of CDOE, CUHP.
- g. To promote collaboration and association of CDOE, CUHP with other HEIs for quality enhancement of Open and Distance Learning and Online mode of education and research therein.
- h. To facilitate industry-institution linkage for providing exposure to the CDOE learners and enhancing their employability.

V. QUALITY MONITORING MECHANISM

- i. The guidelines on quality monitoring mechanism as prescribed by UGC/UGC-DEB or any other regulatory body shall be adopted by the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance for conducting institutional quality audits, to promote quality assurance and enhance as well as spread best-in-class practices of quality assurance in CDOE, CUHP.
- ii. **Quality monitoring shall be addressed under the following broad areas, namely:-**
 - **Governance, Leadership and Management:** This relates to the policies and practices of CDOE, CUHP in the matter of planning, human resources, recruitment, training, performance appraisal, financial management and the overall role of leadership, with a focus on the following key aspects:
 - a) **Organisation Structure and Governance:** The CUHP shall fill all sanctioned/required positions as sanctioned and prescribed by the UGC and establish a credible governance system.
 - b) **Management:** The leadership and management of the CDOE, CUHP shall strive to assess and review the organisational culture to achieve its vision, mission and goals.
 - c) **Strategic Planning:** The CDOE, CUHP shall undertake strategic planning of its activities and implement the same by aligning those with academic and administrative aspects to improve the overall quality.
 - d) **Operational Plan, Goals and Policies:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have well defined goals which are realistic and measurable, well-defined policies that are in sync with its strategic plan and are realistic and achievable, clearly stated guidelines for the implementation of its policies and plans, and transparent and accountable system for its policies and planning that are well communicated to its stakeholders.
 - **Articulation of University Goals and Objectives:** The CDOE, CUHP shall articulate a clear vision, mission, ethos and broad strategy consistent with the goals for offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning and Online learning mode.
 - **Programme Development and Approval Processes:** This area of concern relates to programme development and approval mechanism for the programme(s) to be launched, covering the following key aspects, namely:-

- a) **Curriculum Planning, Design and Development:** The curriculum planning, design and development of academic programmes through ODL/OL mode is a major academic activity of the CUHP. Therefore, it shall follow processes, systems and structures in place to carry out these responsibilities.
 - b) **Curriculum Implementation:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have specific implementation plans for identifying the time to be spent on specific components of the implementation phase. It is the basis for the effectiveness of the programme(s) offered through ODL/OL mode and their usefulness as a whole.
 - c) **Academic Flexibility:** The CDOE, CUHP shall adopt proper strategies for imparting academic flexibility, which refers to freedom in the use of the time-frame of courses, vertical mobility, and inter-disciplinary options facilitated by curricular transactions for CDOE learners.
 - d) **Learning Resource:** The CDOE, CUHP shall ensure quality learning resources in the form of Self Learning Materials (SLMs) for Open and Distance Learning mode and e-learning material (e-SLM) for Online learning mode of education. While deciding on the instructional packages, the CDOE, CUHP shall take into consideration various factors – the media and technology utilised matches the course content in order to enhance and expand learning, and to match the learner's needs; that these are accessible, practical and equitable and cost effective to the CDOE learners.
 - e) **Feedback System:** The process of revision and re-design of curricula shall be based on feedback from all stakeholders in terms of its relevance and appropriateness in catering to the needs of the society, economy and environment.
- **Programme Monitoring and Review:** The CDOE, CUHP shall plan and execute programme monitoring and review system to conduct periodic internal reviews and maintain the quality of academic programmes offered through ODL/OL programmes. For such reviews, the CDOE, CUHP shall also consider the attainments of learning outcomes that are assessed through the various tools for direct and indirect assessment.
 - **Infrastructure Resources:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have a system to elicit data on the adequacy and optimal use of the facilities - physical facilities, library (or e-library), Information and Communication Technology infrastructure etc. available in CUHP to maintain the quality of ODL/OL programmes and ensure qualitative support to each of the stakeholders.
 - **Learning Environment and Learner Support:** The learner support services including academic counselling and library services shall be a major pre-occupation of CDOE, CUHP for its Open and Distance Learning mode and Online mode learners. Additionally, CDOE, CUHP shall establish Information and Communication Technology facilities as component of the learning

environment which is focused around the pedagogical use of modern educational practices to support blended learning. Learner Support Services shall be provided through the campus-wide portal and e-Learning platform. The CDOE, CUHP shall take a more sophisticated approach to the use of Information and Communication Technology and expertise in e-learning. The approach shall provide a seamless learner-centred environment.

- **Assessment and Evaluation:** All the stated Learning Outcomes of a Programme must be part of its evaluation protocol. The CDOE, CUHP shall execute the evaluation through varied assessment tools including multiple choice questions, projects/dissertations, reports, case studies, internships, field works, presentations, laboratory works, and term-end examinations, to suit the different learning outcomes expected of the course elements. The CDOE, CUHP shall have its specified question paper pattern and assessment pattern (70% weightage for ESE and 30% weightage for CIA). The CDOE, CUHP shall have proper assessment and moderation system for assessing the learning outcomes of learners.
- **Teaching Quality and Staff Development:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have a well-established structure for promoting quality counselling, capacity building workshops, programmes, interactive teaching-learning and provide staff development programmes and activities to encourage academic staff to improve teaching and learning on continuous basis.

iii. Process of Quality Audit:

- **Academic Planning:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have robust and appropriate academic planning procedures to ensure that the programmes offered by it through ODL / OL mode are relevant to national economy, reflects strategic direction of CDOE, CUHP and offers a high-quality learner' experience. The CDOE, CUHP shall have adequate and appropriate teaching and other support staff along with infrastructure and technology support to ensure that the curriculum remains up-to-date and the university goals and objectives are achieved.
- **Validation:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have a mechanism in place for validation to ensure that its programmes are academically viable, that academic standards have been appropriately defined and that these offer CDOE learners the best opportunity to learn.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement Plans:** Quality deliverance of the Open and Distance Learning programmes and Online learning programmes and the outcomes attainment and continual quality improvements shall be ensured by the CDOE, CUHP, through the following as per directions of UGC-DEB:
 - a. **Reports related to Learner Support Services Cell / Centres.**
 - b. **Reports related to Examinations.**
 - c. **External Auditor or other External Agencies report:** The CDOE, CUHP shall get itself audited from external agencies; consider the

- comments made by external auditors, experts and third party of quality audit and implement the same as appropriate to the extent possible.
- d. **Systematic Consideration of Performance Data:** For effective evaluation and audit, the CDOE, CUHP shall ensure easy access to performance monitoring information such as course pass rates, learner entry profiles and progression and achievement reports, which should be available through web-based application and be used for report making by the CDOE, CUHP.
 - e. **Reporting and Analytics by the CDOE, CUHP:** The CDOE, CUHP shall generate the required reports out of such web-based applications and analyse learner and academic analytics for deciding the improvements to be executed for better performance.
 - f. **Periodic Review:** The CDOE, CUHP shall have an effective system for collecting feedback from the stakeholders regularly to improve its programmes. The CDOE, CUHP shall conduct self-assessments regularly and use the results to improve its systems, processes etc. and finally quality of programmes offered through ODL/OL mode.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES RELATED TO SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

1. **Quality Standards for Self-Learning Materials:**
 - i. Self-Learning Materials (SLM), should be self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating and self-evaluating.
 - ii. The Self-Learning Material shall be self-contained providing complete course description comprising overview of units and chapters/modules under these units along with objectives, activities, assignments and additional resources etc.
 - iii. There shall be description of credit value of each course. Each unit in a course shall have similar proportionate credit value.
 - iv. The course material shall provide an environment for practice, at the learner's own pace and in his/her own time.
 - v. There shall be clear guidelines on academic integrity and netiquette (internet etiquette) expectations regarding activities, discussions and plagiarism.
 - vi. The course shall be designed to teach concepts and skills that the learner will retain throughout the study.
 - vii. There shall be multiple learning paths for engaging the learner in active learning.
 - viii. The content shall provide opportunities for learners to engage in higher-order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasingly complex ways.
 - ix. The Self-Learning Material shall be structured on the Learning Outcome based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) issued by UGC from time to time.

- x. The Self-Learning Material shall be designed with the approach of two-way communication between the learner and content. The content of Self Learning Material shall be presented in an interactive, conversational format with dialogue and personal system of writing method which will create the nature of interactivity in Self Learning Materials.
- xi. The Self Learning Material shall involve the learner actively through various experience-based activities and assignments.
- xii. The learner should get clear information about the structure of the programme and course.
- xiii. The Self Learning Material shall encourage learner to apply new knowledge and skills.
- xiv. The content of a course should be divided into a few units on major related themes, each unit containing a few chapters/modules on a major theme for effective learning.
- xv. Chapters/Modules in the Self Learning Material shall be developed in defined formats with the following features, namely:-
 - a) Consistent layout and format;
 - b) Inclusion of overview of content;
 - c) A chapter/module structure, Introduction, and expected learning outcomes and reference to prior learning at the beginning of the chapter/module and Summary at it end;
 - d) Presentation of content in appropriate sequence in sections and sub-sections synchronized with learning objectives and outcome, containing plenty of examples including national or international case studies, wherever relevant;
 - e) Explanation of icons, symbols, formula etc. used in content;
 - f) Explanation on technical, new, difficult terms or word in a glossary/ keyword section;
 - g) Inclusion of adequate suggested readings (both print and online).
- xvi. In case of online learning programmes, the courses shall employ following four quadrant approach, as per the SWAYAM Guidelines: -
 - a) Quadrant-I is e-Tutorial; which shall contain: Video and Audio Content in an organized form, Animation, Simulations, video demonstrations, Virtual Labs, etc, along with the transcription of the video.
 - b) Quadrant-II is e-Content; which shall contain; self-instructional material (digital Self Learning Material), e-Books, illustrations, case studies, presentations etc, and also contain Web Resources such as further references, Related Links, Open source Content on Internet, Video, Case Studies, books including e-books, research papers and journals, Anecdotal information, Historical development of the subject, Articles, etc.
 - c) Quadrant-III is the Discussion forum for raising of doubts and clarifying the same on real time basis by the Course Coordinator or his team.

- d) Quadrant-IV is Assessment, which shall contain; Problems and Solutions, which could be in the form of Multiple Choice Questions, Fill in the blanks, Matching Questions, Short Answer Questions, Long Answer Questions, Quizzes, Assignments and solutions, Discussion forum topics and setting up the FAQs, Clarifications on general misconceptions.
- xvii. The courses offered in OL programmes shall be rich in innovative presentation techniques to ensure that learner attention is retained.
- xviii. It shall be the responsibility of the Course Coordinator to ensure that none of the graphics, animations, images, sound clips, video clips used in e-SLM are plagiarized or cited without formal permissions from owners.
- xix. A four-credit course in OL mode shall typically have 20 hours of video content and 20 hours of reading material.
- xx. For Quadrant III (Discussion Forum), one Mentor can be appointed per course for every 250 learners registered for a programme (through OL mode) to facilitate the Course Coordinator. The Mentor shall be the subject matter expert adept in handling technology. The Course Coordinators and Mentors shall need to participate actively in the Discussion Forum. Apart from discussion forum on Swayam platform, other interactive platforms like; web conferencing may also be considered.

2. **Quality Standards for Audio–Video Material:**

- i. The audio-video material shall supplement and complement the Self Learning Material and based on the curriculum structure.
- ii. There shall be adequate consideration of learner prior knowledge, skills and attitudes while developing A-V material.
- iii. Level and style of presentation and language in A-V materials shall be simple and appropriate to aid in self-learning.
- iv. The A-V material shall be in bilingual mode (English and Hindi) for the larger interest and benefit of CDOE learners.
- v. There shall be clear information on types of support material and study activities to be used by the learner.
- vi. A-V material shall be clear and unambiguous, also preferably free from pedagogic jargon.
- vii. The aim, objective and target audience for the audio or video material shall be clearly defined.
- viii. It shall conform to the learning outcomes.
- ix. There shall be clear guidelines with regard to the use of the audio or video material vis-a-vis other content of the course.
- x. Audio or video material shall be developed in forms and formats that will be easily accessible by the learners and compatible with web-based delivery.
- xi. The content in A-V material shall be interactive with appropriate use of graphics, animations, simulation etc. to keep the learners engaged.

3. Quality Standards for Online and Computer based Material:

- i. The digital content should not be merely scanned files of the Self Learning Material. The digital content shall be made available in accessible format such as Word Processing, Portable Document Format or E-Pub format.
- ii. The file size should not be very heavy so that the CDOE learners are easily able to access and download the content.
- iii. The course content in digital format shall be easy to navigate and searchable through metadata.
- iv. The digital content shall be Unicode compliant so that font issues are not faced by the CDOE learners especially in case of Hindi language.
- v. Digital content should be accessible to all with special attention to the needs of the CDOE learners with disabilities.
- vi. Since the CDOE learners may not have access to unlimited Internet data plan, it is advisable that the audio-video material shall be made available through streaming server.
- vii. The compression of the digital files shall be be optimised so that the quality shall not be compromised and content is easily accessible.
- viii. For digital content, the appropriate required players shall be easily available or made available by CDOE.

4. Quality Standards for Curriculum and Pedagogy:

- i. The curriculum objectives shall be consistent with the mission of CUHP.
- ii. There shall be involvement of CDOE authorities and academic staff in the process of framing the curriculum and its revision from time to time.
- iii. There shall be such learning experiences for CDOE learners which allow a diversity of methods (like; learning from practice, opportunities for distributed and concentrated practice, learning with peers, learning in formal situations inside and outside the department, personal study, specific teacher inputs etc).
- iv. The curriculum shall have defined structure.
- v. There shall be a complete strategy on teaching and learning methods to be followed in ODL/OL programmes.
- vi. The instructional methods or pedagogy and the media mix in ODL/OL programmes should be clearly spelt out.
- vii. A comprehensive methodology for assessment and evaluation in ODL/OL programmes should be clearly stated.
- viii. There shall be the use of reference points and expertise from outside the CUHP, if required, in programme development, course development, its review and approval.
- ix. There shall be description of credit value for each course with similar credit weightage for each unit in the course.

Prof. Vishal Sood
Director, CDOE