

# IGNOU

## Effective Learning :



**A Practical Guide For Open Distance Learners**



Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education  
**Indira Gandhi National Open University**  
Maidan Garhi, New Delhi - 110068

**Handbook**

**2**

# **EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

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*A Practical Guide for Open and Distance Learners*



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Distance Education**

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# **STRIDE Handbook 2**

## **EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

**A Practical Guide for Open and Distance Learners**

*Revised* version of earlier “*Handbook 2: How to Study*” prepared by

*B.N. Koul and K. Murugan (1989)*

*Additional Updated Sections (2001)*

**Section 1:** based on ES-311 of PGDDE

**Section 2:** written by Dr. P.K. Biswas.

**Section 3:** based on “IGNOU Profile 2001”.

**Section 4, 6, 10, 13, 15:** by Dr. Sanjaya Mishra

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## **PREFACE**

STRIDE HANDBOOK 2 is a thoroughly revised updated and redesigned version of the previous Handbook 2. It has grown in size because of the important developments that have taken place in Open Distance Learning (ODL). Experience shows that in respect of the sources of knowledge available in the form of books, journals, etc., in any field, including ODL, it becomes often difficult for the functionaries to update themselves with the latest knowledge available in the field. It is also not easy for those who are engaged in certain specialized areas of the system of ODL to access all the necessary sources of knowledge and assimilate them in the quickest possible time and then carryout their functions. In order to get the minimum necessary knowledge about the system at the macro level and the necessary practical guidance to carry out the given tasks, it is essential that the functionaries are provided with manageable components of both theory and practicals in the form of a handbook or manual. It has been our experience at STRIDE that the Handbooks are the most sought after training materials whenever the academics and other functionaries have to speak on any particular theme or handle practical problems faced by themselves or by the students in the process of teaching and learning at a distance.

This revised edition of Handbook 2 takes care of a number of recent developments at the conceptual and practical domains of learning at a distance. The design of the Handbook is new and certain devises have been added. Incorporation of certain examples and illustrations of self-learning will encourage the readers to compare their experiences with what is suggested here, and go in search of new ways of tackling the problems in their self-study. Theoretical aspects discussed in the original handbook have been retained to some extent, but a number of additions have been made as well. At the same time, new developments based on our experiences in India have been added to make the Handbook more upto date and purposeful. Any suggestions to improve the Handbook are welcome.

**(Prof. P.R. Ramanujam)**  
**Director**  
**STRIDE-IGNOU**

## **TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

If you don't know what is important, you will try to do everything, People will expect you to do everything, And in trying to please everyone, you will have no time to know what is important!

How to manage your time?

- Be organized
- Set Daily Objectives
- Keep time for leisure
- Keep things at proper place
- Avoid gossips
- Learn to say 'No'
- Keep emergency time

How to learn better?

When, where and How to study?

Read with a purpose

# Tips for Effective Learning in Open University

With our collective experiences over the years, and research on characteristics of distance learners and their approaches to learning, the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) has prepared a handbook on *Effective Learning*. In the foregoing pages, we provide you a few tips to learn effectively in the Open University, i.e. IGNOU, taken out of this handbook. As a distance learner, most of the time you study alone in isolation, but are surrounded by various other environmental constraints and issues, which effect your study. Some of you might also have returned to study after a long gap, and find the volumes of study materials intimidating. But regular study habits, self-discipline, and organized approach will enhance your self-confidence, and ability to perform better in examinations. We are sure, by practicing the following tips you will be in a better position to reach your desired goals in life.

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## **On Becoming a Distance Learner**

Now, that you have joined a programme at IGNOU, it is very essential to know what it means to be a distance learner.

***Taking Responsibility:*** Being an adult you have to take responsibility for your own action in day-to-day life. Similarly for studies too you need to take responsibility. In our school days, our teachers were always with us to advice, coax and sometimes force us to study. In a way they were taking responsibility for what we learned. By contrast most of us today would not like to be told to read and concentrate on studies. We need to learn what we want and on our own. We have to take responsibility of choosing the subject, time and environment of our learning. This essentially means taking control of your learning and to be an independent learner.

***Being Self-Motivated:*** Being a distance learner means working in isolation with minimum social interaction with peer group. It is not always possible to share your feelings with other people, especially when you have a problem. In such situations, it is easy to get frustrated and lose motivation to learn. But it is not very difficult to maintain the motivation level in the positive direction. You need to develop contact with people who are also studying similar programme through distance mode. By sharing your problems, you will notice that you are not alone in the boat!

***Develop Positive Attitude:*** The power of positive thinking is very high and can lead to high success. If you think you can't do certain things, it is almost certain that you can't. But if you try with a positive attitude, there is every possibility that you will succeed. Therefore, it is essential to have a positive attitude for distance learners to face difficulties during the course of studies.

***Clarify Expectations:*** Even with positive attitude and high motivation level, you may be disappointed because of your and other's expectations on you. Higher expectation leads to more stress and if you are stressed, it would be difficult for you to complete the requirements of the course/programme. Therefore, you need to adjust your expectations to the level of input

(involvement) that you decide to put in. Also you need to develop a sort of goal for yourself to remain motivated and think positively.

**Setting Goals:** Without goals in our life, it is imperative that we will not reach anywhere. Therefore pause a while and think about your short term (cover the next few months) and long-term goals (over the next few years). Write down in separate sheets and keep for your record. If possible display them in your study area as a reminder.

## **Managing Your Time**

**Observe your present time management:** Keep a record of your daily activities by noting down how do you actually spend your time. You may do this for 3-4 days. It is better you keep hourly record for all the 24 hrs of the day. This will give you an idea about the time that you can really reduce to squeeze in your study schedule.

**Be Organised:** It is easier said than done. Once you have analysed your daily schedule, it is now time to organise them. Prepare daily "to do" list for the next day before you go to bed. Mark these with sign 'Urgent', 'Important' and 'Routine'. You need to remember that all the listed activities have to be done in a day. But they may be done in different order. Try to accomplish all the listed activities. While organizing the "to do" list take care that you have at least 2 hours for your studies.

**Set Daily Objectives:** You should set objectives that are achievable in a day. One possible objective could be to devote at least 2 hours for studies. Preparing objective helps us feel satisfied and motivated as a result of accomplishment of tasks.

**Keep Time for Leisure:** While it is good to be workaholic, at the same time you should not overlook the necessity of leisure. In fact, it is an essential component to let your brain and body unwind. If you push too hard and don't relax, the quality of work you are doing will suffer. However, time for relaxation should be fixed. May be you do some meditation, walking and breathing exercises. But don't over do it – if you plan relaxation for half an hour, don't do it for 2 hours!

**Keep things at proper place:** Lot of our time is wasted searching for a pen or a key chain or a spectacle or an appointment diary, kept at a place other than its usual one. Therefore, a simple tip for time management is to keep things at their proper place.

**Avoid Gossips:** It is a common practice to indulge in unnecessary discussions ranging from office politics to international news and beauty pageants that are actually not related to our daily activities. This habit takes lot of our time, and then we feel the stress of work. Therefore, it is better to avoid gossips.

**Learn to say 'No':** Most of the time we are involved in activities for which we are not responsible. This happens because, we don't know 'how to say no' to undesirable requests. This is a difficult task. But it is not impossible to say 'no' without being arrogant or offending the sentiment of the requesting person.

**Keep Emergency Time:** Everything in life does not go according our own schedule and wish. For some reason or other, things may go out of your hand and require more time than planned. Therefore, it is better to keep emergency time between two activities to work as shock absorber.

It will not disturb your work schedule, and of course, if you complete a task on time, the emergency time will allow you to relax or improve the task!

### **How do we learn?**

Learning is not a passive activity. You can't just learn by just listening to lecturers or reading a text. To learn, you have to use the learning material actively by involving in critical thinking, questioning and reflect on the ideas and concepts. Depending on the nature of the subject and your prior knowledge and experience with the subject, learning occurs either slowly or at a rapid pace. Few general tips to learn fast are:

1. Review what you have learnt regularly; say after one day, one week, and one month. This will enable you to transfer learning from our short-term memory to long-term memory.
2. Develop mental imagery while reading. It helps to relate new learning to visual images.
3. Use mnemonics to remember new learning. Mnemonics are words made up usually of the first letter of the words you are trying to remember.
4. Develop mind maps through diagrams to remember complex concepts.

### **Studying: When, Where?**

With good study habits, you could spend less time in studying and, thus, learn more in a given period of time. Also with a well-planned timetable you should be able to start each day with a list of tasks to be performed in your study sessions.

#### ***When?***

There is no specific time to study. It depends on your own available time and plan. Some prefer to study early in the morning, other study before they go to bed. However, it is important that you plan for study regularly everyday.

#### ***Where?***

Ideally, you should be able to study anywhere in a quiet library, or on a crowded bus. But let us not be idealistic. To be realistic, most of us cannot entirely shut off our minds to distractions. By implication, the place of study should be as free as possible from such surroundings as might affect our attentions. Also, you need a place that is firmly associated in your mind with serious study. Wherever, you find a place to study, try to study always at the same place. Not only does this mean there will be fewer new things to dislodge your attentions from your work but also, as you build upon the habit of sitting in that place to work, you will find you can switch into a learning mood the moment you sit down. However, you should not let this place habit get so strong that you are incapable of studying in other places.

### **Reading for a Purpose**

Different texts require different approaches depending on what you are expected to obtain from them. Reading a popular news magazine or sports magazine would be different from reading a textbook. Also you may need to read some books in parts, some wholly but not necessarily carefully, and a few others diligently and with attention. The implication here is that your strategy should be flexible in tackling the materials. One strategy that has been in use is the SQ3R technique. SQ3R stands for the initial letter of the five steps in reading a text. The five steps are: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, and Review.

### **Taking Notes**

Very rarely do we make notes. And this is one of the common causes of our failure in academic pursuits. Note-making help us mainly in two ways:

- i) It keeps us active while we are learning (and thus aiding our concentration)
- ii) It help us have a record of what we have studied (irrespective of the media)

If we really want to have a grip on what we have read, heard (audio) or watched (video), it is always helpful to put a few words on paper than to have a head full of hazy memories. The memories may drift away in the course of time unless you nail them down with words. And you can keep your written record as a permanent reminder. While taking notes during reading or a lecturer, it is important that you keep the following in mind:

- i) if you are quoting an author's exact words make sure you put them in quotation marks.
- ii) try to summarize what you have read or heard but take care that you are stating facts, not opinions.
- iii) if you are giving your or someone else's opinion, make sure you record this on the card so that you will not confuse the opinion with fact.
- iv) try not to make notes on matters of common knowledge.
- v) do not make notes on the same information twice.

The habit of summarizing in your own words and making outlines/concept mapping of what you have learned are helpful in understanding and transfer of concepts to long-term memory.

### **Learning from Media**

In the age of electronic revolution, we learn from various sources. Print is no more the only medium through which we learn. Of late, Television has been playing a major role in our life.

***Learning from Television:*** A television programme is a carefully crafted sequence of images and words to form a convincing story before the viewer. As a learner, you will simultaneously see moving pictures/images synchronized with relevant words/message as explanation to have an immediate impact. Being information rich, watching television programme requires sufficient attention. Which in other words mean, if you try to take note during watching, it is possible that you may miss few important points. It is not possible for you, as a learner to control the medium. Therefore, it is very important for you to watch television programmes carefully, preferably in an environment/room, where there is less distraction. Make a summary of the programme immediately after watching it.

***Learning from Radio:*** Unlike TV, radio programmes are only audio based. It may be much difficult to grasp the context of the audio in absence of the visuals. But radio programmes are very effective, because of its easy access. Also now radio phone-in programmes are being used to make it interactive for counselling purposes. It is better for you as a student to read the relevant text before the radio broadcast to understand the programme better. If you have access to recorders (audio and video) it would be better to record them and use it as per you convenience. In such a situation, you can pause/stop, rewind/forward and think as well as take notes.

***Audio and Video Cassettes:*** Learning from audio and videocassettes is very significant in open and distance learning. Using multi-media approach to teaching and learning, audio-video programmes are prepared either as supplementary, complementary or integrated medium of learning materials with print being the mainstay. The audio and videocassettes have the advantage of interactivity through learner control pause/stop, rewind/forward mechanism. It is desirable for you to make immediate notes/summary of the programme that you watch and/or listen. It is also better, if you can discuss it with another learner or a counsellor.

**Teleconference:** The one-way transmission of Television has been suitably adjusted to make it a new interactive channel of learning. Though there are various types of teleconference, the most commonly used in India is one-way video and two-way audio teleconference. Using this technology, learners can actually interact with experts on real-time basis. However, the only problem of learning from teleconference of this nature is again the synchronous nature of the programme. As a learner you have to come to a specific place at a specific time to take part in the learning process. However, with the emergence of the educational channel-*Gyan Darshan*, it is possible to participate in interactive sessions from your home as well. To make the most out of such sessions, it is very important for you to read the relevant course materials first and then identify issues, problem areas, etc. for discussion. You can put your questions to the expert in the studio during a session and get your query clarified using a telephone line. For details of such programmes in your chosen subject grab a copy of the *Gyan Darshan magazine* published by EMPC, IGNOU.

### **Preparing Assignment Responses**

Writing is a crucial step without which the process of study is incomplete. It is more so in distance education. Submission of assignment-responses in distance education system is made compulsory, more often than not, to serve two purposes. They are:

- i) to initiate academic communication between the teacher/institution and the student and thereby establish a useful dialogue between them, and
- ii) to be used for continuous evaluation.

By implication, distance education involves you in a lot of writing. And as you are away from the teacher, most of the time, during the teaching/learning process, it's natural that you may feel little diffident in writing assignment-responses, at least the first one or two.

Before you answer the assignments, you should ask the following questions:

- What is demanded of me?
- Does the question call for an outline or a detailed account?
- Am I expected to demonstrate my knowledge on a given issue or just present what I have read in the materials supplied to me?
- Am I expected to refer to any particular sources of information or experimental data?
- Am I expected merely to describe things as they are or must I analyze and explain them?
- Need I discuss implications and suggest application and/or give illustrations?

Once you have answered the assignments, pause for a while and try to answer the following questions before submission at your study center.

- i) Does the response answer the question or deal with the issue/topic taken up?
- ii) Does it cover all the relevant aspects and with sufficient details?
- iii) Is the content presented accurate and relevant?
- iv) Is the presentation logical and clear?
- v) Are the main points well supported by examples/arguments/illustrations etc.?
- vi) Does the presentation make a clear distinction between your own ideas and those of other?
- vii) Have the acknowledgements been furnished?
- viii) Is it of the right length?
- ix) Is the grammar, punctuation and spelling acceptable?
- x) Has the response been neatly typed or legibly written?

Once you receive the evaluated assignment responses, you can learn a lot from it. Take a close look at the tutor comments provided in the margin of the response and the global comment sheet. A careful reading of the comments will give you an idea:

- where you have gone wrong
- what actually the demand of the question is
- how it should have been tackled
- from which perspective the response/question has been viewed by the tutor
- what the personality of the tutor is (who otherwise is "faceless" during the teaching-learning process)
- how an assignment of similar kind can be effectively tackled etc.

### **Learning from Peer Group**

Most of the time, during the learning/teaching process a distance learner is physically away from the tutor or institution. You will get opportunities to interact with your tutors and peer group in the counseling sessions organized at the study center. In order to make best use of the counseling sessions, read the relevant materials before and engage yourself in clarifying and discussing with your tutors and peer group. Participate in the discussion in an open mind, allowing free flow of ideas. Take note of important points identified by other peer group members. Your tutor will probably moderate the discussions and clarify doubts. But, in the absence of a tutor too you can make the best use of your time at the study center by organizing your own group learning activities, where you can engage in cooperative teaching and collaborative learning, ie. You can help some one else learn and clarify few points, and you can ask some other members some questions for clarification.

### **Taking Term End Examination**

Whatever we may think of them, examinations are part of our life. In the existing system of education, career prospects primarily depend on how well or poorly we have fared in examinations. And so, there is little wonder that many of us approach examinations with some anxiety. While a certain amount of tension is unavoidable, we should not contract 'exam-fevers'?

***Preparing for the Examinations:*** The surest way to success in examination is to conscientiously employ effective study techniques over a period of time. For example, if you follow the tips provided here your chances of success will be enormously improved. If you follow them, you will certainly remember more, have a better understanding, and be able to organize your ideas quickly and effectively.

Revision of text materials plays a vital role in your preparation for examinations/tests. The following are the two good reasons for doing regular revisions right from the start:

- i) We may not have enough time to revise everything we have studied in a course/programme at the last minute.
- ii) We will find the later materials easier to study as we may have already had a firm understanding of what precedes them.

***On the Examination Day:*** When you receive the question paper,

- read the instructions carefully
- read the question paper right through very carefully paying individual attention to each question. (Spend at least a few minutes in reading through and getting the feel of the paper, and don't jump at questions)

- be objective and don't misread the questions or don't try to twist the question to suit your convenience
- be sure what precisely the questions demand of you (Look at the key verbs. They will tell you what kind of answer you are expected to give).
- budget your time (i.e. you should carefully allocate your time according to the weightage given to each question. If all the question carry equal weightage, divide up your time equally)
- plan your answer (if possible, even before you actually present it, try to have a logical well organized skeleton outline)
- form a sense of priority (i.e. you will begin answering your best question).

### **Preparing a Project Proposal**

*In some of the programmes, there are small components of research in the name of project work/project report. If the programme in which you have registered has one, then look for specific guidelines in the project work handbook or the Programme Guide.*

The proposal is comparable to a blueprint, which an architect prepares before he/she actually works on a structure. The initial draft proposal is subject to modification in the light of your analysis or of the supervisor's suggestions. Since good research must be carefully planned and systematically carried out, procedures that are improvised from one stage to other will not suffice. A worthwhile research is likely to stem only from a well thought out and well-designed proposal. A project proposal should contain the following parts:

- i) the statement of the topic/problem
- ii) hypothesis
- iii) significance of the problem/implications of the study
- iv) definitions/assumptions/limitations
- v) a resume of related literature
- vi) methodology, and
- vii) conclusion

### **Using and Acknowledging Sources**

For preparation of your assignments and project report, you will normally use various kinds of sources of knowledge. A very common source is the Library. Each study centre of IGNOU is equipped with some valuable books on the programmes activated at that centre. As a learner, you can make use of your study centre library during working hours of the study centre. Also, you can make use of your institutional library or any other library in your city/town. The developments in computers and Internet technology have enabled us to search documents from anywhere in the world using the World Wide Web search engines. Whether from a library or from the Internet sources, it is important to acknowledge the source of the document when you prepare assignments and/or project reports. There are two very important points, you must know in relation to acknowledging sources -- (i) not to plagiarize (using others ideas and expressions as your own), and (ii) provide reference of the source correctly.

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## Open and Distance Learning

Open and Distance Learning has a relatively short history. It can be traced back to 1840 when Sir Issac Pitman used postal medium to deliver shorthand instructions in England. Since then, it has grown from a simple system of postal delivery to a complex multimedia based educational delivery and interaction mode. Over the years, it has been given a varied nomenclature, such as correspondence education, distance education open education etc. These terms, however, have specific connotations. We will discuss them to clarify their meaning and usage. However, open and distance learning has few basic characteristics. It is based on learner autonomy and learner-centredness, learning at one's own pace, time and place, and learning in real-life situation.

### *Section includes:*

-  **Distance Education**
-  **Correspondence Education**
-  **Open Education**
-  **Are you ready for ODL?**

There has been a lot of confusion over the use of terms such as non-formal education, distance education, non-traditional education and open education, some frequently used terms today. The reason simply is that educational processes underlying these expressions are similar in one or the other aspect, either in terms of their philosophy or their procedures. In other words, unless we are clear about the philosophy underlying these expressions and also the procedures which they imply, there is bound to be an element of confusion. Let us resolve this wrangle, before we proceed further.

### A Clarification of Terms

By formal education, we mean campus-based education at the school, college and the university levels where curricula and syllabi have certain established patterns. The teachers and the taught know the age groups, methods of teaching, materials (text books) used, evaluation methods, etc. By non-formal

education, we corollarily, refer to all other methods whereby we take education to those who have not been able to get formal education.

It is true that openness to methodology is characteristic of distance education, but it should be noted that 'non-distance education' or 'face-to-face education' might also use 'open' methodologies. Moreover, 'distance education' is possible without being 'open'. It should be clear that there could be various degrees of 'openness' of education. At the moment, it is difficult to say as to what level of 'openness' of education may legitimize the nomenclature 'Open University' for any university.

'Distance Education' is an expression which officially replaced the earlier term 'Correspondence Education' in the Twelfth World Conference of the International Council for Correspondence Education, held in Canada in 1982. Since then, the Council has been renamed as the International Council for Distance Education. The debate and the search for an appropriate expression to encompass all the characteristics which came to be associated with what was known as Correspondence Education till recently was accelerated by the emergence of the British Open University in 1969 and the consensus, as indicated above, was achieved in 1982. The expression marks a deviation from the earlier distribution-strategy-based nomenclature to the nomenclature representative of the spatial and temporal relationship between the sources of education and the receiver of education. Of late, the expression 'Open and Distance learning' has become a common one, emphasizing the convergence of 'open philosophy' and 'distance mode' with 'learning' at the centre of all activities.

### **Correspondence Education**

The distinction between correspondence education and distance education lies in their aims, methods and orientation. Whereas, correspondence education is an extension of conventional education as far as its imparting of prescribed knowledge for issuing of certificates is concerned, distance education aims at more varied goals. These include personal growth, training for better job prospects and job enhancement, change in attitude, etc., in addition to imparting of knowledge. Distance education also employs a multimedia approach including human contact. Correspondence education, on the other hand, depends mostly on printed materials distributed by post. The procedure adopted for admissions to the courses and examinations are more or less the same as have been in use over the centuries in the traditional college/university education. Thus, correspondence education is essentially a name based on the mode of

- i) distribution of didactic materials, and
- ii) of effecting interaction, if needed, between the teacher and the taught.

Distance education contrastingly is oriented towards pedagogy: it tries to build the teacher in the materials. Now we may turn to the concept of 'openness'.

### Open Education

We may define 'open education' as a system of education that does not operate through the traditional conventions which are essentially restrictive in nature - admission restrictions, attendance restrictions, restrictions on the candidature for examinations, restrictions on the time period to be devoted to a course, restrictions on the number of examinations given and taken in a year, restrictions on subject combinations for a particular degree, restrictions on the modes of didactic communication and didactic tasks, etc. The larger the number of such restrictions left unobserved, the higher the degree of the 'openness' of the type of education under consideration.

It should make our point clear that 'correspondence/distance education institutes' may or may not be 'open' in the sense we have referred to above or may be open only to a limited degree. And in the same way, even a tradition college/university may become 'open' to a recognisable degree.

In what follows

- i) we shall avoid using the expression correspondence education, unless we have to use it with a specific meaning and
- ii) the expressions 'distance education' and 'open education' will be used synonymously. (The distance mode allows the educational systems to be 'open' and the openness of the educational systems suits the promotion of distance education). In other words we will use the phrase open and distance learning.

Besides these three terms, there are a few more widely used terms, but their currency is localised. They are as follows:

- i) **External system/studies:** This term is in use in Australia. It does confuse one, when one thinks of the 'external system' as it functioned in London years ago. The London model of 'external system' makes it possible for learners to sit for recognised examinations, but teaching is not be associated with the system. It is obvious that the term does not connote all that is meant by the term 'distance education' today. We have external system of examination in many universities in India too.

- ii) **Extra-mural system:** This expression is used in New Zealand to convey what distance education means to most of us.
- iii) **Independent study:** This expression was more in use in the North America in the early days of distance education. However, some institutions have stick to term.
- iv) **Home study:** This term is localised mainly in Europe, probably under the influence of Swedish schools of correspondence courses. However, in currency it is at a few places in Canada and the USA as well.
- v) **Off-campus studies :** To denote a contrast with on-campus traditional type of studies, the expression 'off-campus studies' is widely used in the Pacific region —Australia and South-East Asian countries.

As indicated above, these terms do have local currency. But the term 'distance education' or 'open and distance learning' enjoys international currency. These localised terms may havenot been replaced entirely and immediately by the more acceptable term 'distance education', the fact however, remains that current literature and reports on activities pertaining to this field are presented under the label 'distance education' and/or 'open learning'.

## **The Next Step**

Having taken admission in an Open University you may now realise that it is not a correspondence course. You have joined a new and complex mode of teaching and learning - Open and Distance Learning. So far, you were acquainted with face-to-face teaching. Through this handbook, we shall try to orient you to the new teaching-learning methods, technologies and practices used in Open and Distance Learning. In section two, we will provide you an overview of open and distance learning in India. Before you proceed to the next section take the following test.

## **Are you ready for Open and Distance Learning?**

1. My need to study the programme in which I am admitted is:
  - (a) high- I need it immediately for a degree, job, or other important reason.
  - (b) moderate- I could take it on campus later or substitute another course.
  - (c) low- it is a personal interest that could be postponed.
2. Having face-to-face interaction is:
  - (a) not particularly important to me.
  - (b) somewhat important to me.
  - (c) very important to me

## EFFECTIVE LEARNING

3. I would classify myself as someone who:
  - (a) often gets things done ahead of time.
  - (b) needs reminding to get things done on time.
  - (c) puts things off until the last minute.
  
4. Classroom discussion is:
  - (a) rarely helpful to me.
  - (b) sometimes helpful to me.
  - (c) almost helpful to me.
  
5. When an instructor hands out directions for an assignment, I prefer:
  - (a) figuring out the instructions myself.
  - (b) trying to follow the directions on my own, then asking for help as needed.
  - (c) having the instructions explained to me.
  
6. I need someone to constantly remind me of due dates and assignments:
  - (a) rarely.
  - (b) sometimes.
  - (c) often.
  
7. Considering my professional and personal schedule, the amount of time I can devote to study is:
  - (a) more than 15 hours per week.
  - (b) more than 7 hours per week but less than 15 hours.
  - (c) less than 7 hours per week.
  
8. When I am asked to use TV, radio, computers or some other new technologies presented to me:
  - (a) I look forward to learning new skills.
  - (b) I feel apprehensive, but try anyway.
  - (c) I put it off or try to avoid it.
  
9. As a reader, I would classify myself as:
  - (a) good- I usually understand the text without help.
  - (b) average- I sometimes need help to understand the text.
  - (c) below average- I often need help to understand the text.
  
10. As a person:
  - (a) I am self-motivated to learn new things.
  - (b) I need someone else to motivate me to read and learn.
  - (c) I am not all motivated to learn any more.

**OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

**Calculation**

*For each (a) 3 points*

*For each (b) 2 points*

*For each (c) 1 point*

*Add all the points that you score for item no.1 to 10.*

**Interpretation**

**Score between 10-15 points:** *The need to develop as a distance learner is strong in you. Reflect on the questions and see why the responses are so. This handbook will be of immense help to you and has been designed primarily for people like you.*

**Score between 16-25 points:** *You already have some qualities of being a successful distance learner. Read this handbook carefully to strengthen some of the aspects which you need to develop.*

**Score above 25 points:** *Open and distance learning is best suited for you if you have chosen the answers honestly. You already have the basic qualities of a successful distance learner. This handbook will help you more in your learning pursuit.*

***Calculate your Score and analyse it***

## Open and Distance Learning in India

At the time of independence, higher education in India was accessible only to the upper class of the society. There were 19 conventional universities and 420 affiliated colleges all over the country (Sahoo, 1993). Immediately after independence, the University Education Commission (1948-49) recommended that in a well-planned educational system opportunities should be provided at every level to students for the exercise of their reflective powers, artistic abilities and practical work.

*Section includes:*

-  **Growth of DE in India**
-  **CCIs in India**
-  **OUs in India**
-  **DEC**

Within a few years, the rapid expansion of primary and secondary education, and the need for higher degrees among middle and upper-middle classes to apply for suitable jobs acted as strong forces for expansion of higher education in India. By 1960, the number of universities had increased up to 45 and the number of affiliated colleges rose up to 1222. Enrolment in colleges and universities increased from about 180,000 during 1947 to 890,000 during 1960 (Sahoo, 1993).

The then government apprehended that quantitative expansion of conventional colleges and universities would lead to dilution of standards in higher education. It was also observed that the conventional classroom based higher education had its limitations. It couldn't increase the accessibility of higher education to a larger section of people. These limitations paved the way for alternative systems. In this context, the Planning Commission of India (1960) had made a significant observation in the Third Five Year Plan that proposals for evening colleges, correspondence courses and award of external degrees were under consideration. The matter was referred to the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE). The CABE in its 28<sup>th</sup> meeting (January 16-17, 1961) suggested further detailed studies by a small committee. Consequently,

the Ministry of Education constituted an expert committee in March 1961 under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, the then Chairman of UGC to look into the proposal in detail and make recommendations. The Committee, consisting 10 members from different organisations like Ministry of Education, UGC and different universities of India, studied the proposal in detail and recommended the introduction of correspondence courses at university level leading to a degree or equivalent qualifications. The Committee had made suggestions with regard to the nature of courses to be introduced, instructional processes, use of media and so on. Further, it recommended that Arts and Commerce courses should be introduced first through correspondence education systems followed by science subjects.

It was necessary to associate experienced teachers and top ranking scholars in the preparation of courses to maintain educational standards. The new system should be more flexible in terms of admission and duration of study. There should be personal contact (through tutorials) between the teacher and the taught.

The Committee had observed that a large number of aspirants could be educated through correspondence courses as competently as those at the universities and affiliated colleges. It also suggested that the University of Delhi should run correspondence courses in the first instance.

The University of Delhi agreed to the proposal of the expert committee and appointed a sub-committee to prepare a programme of action of correspondence courses. The sub-committee recommended the introduction of various courses like English, Economics, Modern Indian Languages, Mathematics, History, Political Science and Commerce. Following the recommendations, the University established the School of Correspondence courses and Continuing Education in 1962 as a pilot project.

## **Streamlining the introduction of Correspondence Courses at the University level**

The Education Commission of India (1964-66) supported the idea of introducing correspondence courses at the university level. It was optimistic about the role of correspondence education in general disciplines and suggested that it should also include courses in science, technology and vocational fields. The Commission justified the relevance of correspondence education as a system of taking education to the doorsteps of those who were motivated to study either at home or at their place of work and recommended that correspondence courses should be introduced at the university level on a large

scale. This idea was highlighted in the National Policy of Education (1968). It was also suggested that education through correspondence should be given the same status as full-time or conventional system of education. The Planning Commission in its Fourth Five Year Plan (1966-71) recommended the expansion of higher education through correspondence courses, evening colleges and part-time classes.

In 1967, UGC appointed a Committee to streamline the introduction of correspondence courses at the university level. The government of India sent three delegations to the USSR during 1967 to 1971 to study the system of correspondence courses in that country. In line with the suggestions given by these delegations, the UGC formulated a set of guidelines to improve the system of correspondence education in India.

By this time, the pilot project of the university of Delhi elicited good response from the students. Panjabi University, Patiala set up a full-fledged Directorate of Correspondence Courses in 1968. A number of other universities like Meerut (1969), Jamia Milia Islamia (1970), Mysore (1970), Madurai Kamaraj (1971), Punjab (1971), Bombay (1971), Himachal Pradesh (1971) Venkateshwara (1972), Andhra (1972) etc. are established institutes of correspondence courses. All the institutes had received a good response from the prospective learners. This had encouraged UGC to take further steps for strengthening correspondence education at the university level. The establishment of Open University in UK (1969) also drew attention of the UGC policy makers. They started to think of strengthening correspondence education through the Open University system in our country.

### **Proposals for an Open University**

In 1970 (International Education Year), the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the UGC and the Indian National Commission for cooperation with UNESCO, organised a seminar on 'Open University'. The seminar recommended the establishment of an open university in India on an experimental basis. The Government of India appointed eight member working group on Open University in 1974. The leading role was given to G. Parthasarathi, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The working group had recommended establishing an Open University by an act of parliament as early as possible. The university should have jurisdiction over the entire country so that, when it is fully developed, any student even in the remotest corner of the country can have access to its instruction and degrees (Working Group Report, 1974). The working group suggested several measures to be followed in instructional and management processes of the open

university which include: admission procedure, age relaxation, preparation of reading materials, setting up of core group scholars in different fields, setting up of study centres, vehicle of curricular programmes, live contact with teachers, and so on. On the basis of the recommendations of the working group, the Union Government prepared a draft bill for the establishment of a National Open University, but due to some reasons the progress was delayed.

## **Further Growth**

During 1970s several other universities/institutes in the country established their Directorate of Correspondence courses. Some of them are: Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (1973), Patna University (1974), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (1974), Barkatullah University (1975), Utkal University (1976), Kurukshetra University (1976), Kashmir University (1976), University of Jammu (1976), Osmania University (1977), Allahabad University (1978), SNDT Women's University (1979), and Annamalai University (1979).

Two other institutions viz., National Staff College for Educational Planners and Administrators (presently named as National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration) and Association of Indian Universities (AIU) introduced special courses for educational administrators and teachers respectively during 1979.

The growth of Correspondence Course Institutes continued through the 1980s. During the 1970s, 19 correspondence course institutes were established throughout the country, and in 1980s 17 such institutes came into existence. Some of these institutes are: University of Calicut (1981), University of Madras (1981), University of Poona (1983), Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth (1985), M.D. University - Rohtak (1988), and so on.

## **First State Open University**

Though the progress of national open university was delayed, the state of Andhra Pradesh came up with the first state open university in the country on August 26, 1982, through an Act of the Andhra Pradesh state legislature. Presently it is named as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. The headquarters of this university is situated at Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. It has 137 study centres spread all over the state. The main objective of this university was to provide educational opportunities to those learners who could not take advantage of higher learning in conventional universities. The university offers both short term and long-term programmes. The areas include Master degree programmes, professional programmes, Bachelor's degree programmes, Research programmes and so on. The academic package of this

university consists of various media like print, audio and visual materials and contact sessions. The university can also use radio programmes and arrange practicals for science courses.

## **National Open University**

In 1985 the Union Government made a policy statement for establishment of a national open university. A Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Education to chalk out the plan of action of the national Open University. On the basis of the report of the Committee, the Union Government introduced a Bill in the Parliament. In August 1985, both the Houses of the Parliament passed the Bill. Subsequently, the National Open University came into existence on September 20, 1985. It was named after late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (established by the Act of Parliament) is responsible for introducing and promoting distance education at the university level, and for coordinating, determining and maintaining standards in such systems functioning in the country. In section three we shall discuss about IGNOU in particular.

## **Other State Open Universities**

The establishment of IGNOU has proved to be a significant milestone in the development of open and distance education in India. Seeing its success more state open universities came into existence within 15 years of IGNOU's establishment. These are: Kota Open University (1987), Nalanda Open University (1987), Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (1989), Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (1992), Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University (1994), Karnataka State Open University (1996), Netaji Subhas Open University (1997), and Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University (1999). For a brief discussion on Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and Kota Open University you may see IGNOU Handbook 1 on *Open and Distance Education*.

## **Present Status**

At present 10 open universities and 70 Correspondence Course Institutes (CCIs) are functional in our country. The CCIs are generally part of conventional universities set up by central or state governments. They generally follow the courses and syllabus of the parent institutions. The students of these institutes study the same course and are awarded the same degree as those of the regular students. In many CCIs printed materials are presented in modular forms. Some have started transforming their materials

into self-learning print materials as used by the IGNOU and some other state open universities. Most of the courses offered are of general type. Very few are professional courses.

IGNOU and some other state open universities like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University have launched several technical and professional programmes/courses. IGNOU alone has launched 62 programmes consisting of 673 courses (IGNOU Profile, 2001). Some of the programmes offered by these universities are: Computer programmes, Management programmes, Engineering programmes, Medical programmes, Library Science programmes, Programmes in Electronics, Distance Education, Horticulture, Tourism Studies, Mushroom Cultivation, Journalism, Desk-top Publishing and so on.

These open universities have adopted a multi media approach for teaching/learning by developing self-learning print materials, providing facilities for face-to-face counselling in study centres, broadcasting radio and telecasting TV lessons through different radio and television channels, providing facilities for practical for science courses and so on.

Some newly established state open universities like Netaji Subhas Open University have not falling behind. They have started developing self-learning materials on 6 science courses (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Botany, Zoology and Geography) with an intention to launch these courses during the next academic session. They have already launched courses in the Bachelor of Arts and Commerce programmes. They are heading for a strong student support services as well.

A steady increase in student enrolment has been observed in almost all the open universities in the country. Around 20 lakhs students are on the rolls at present. IGNOU has the highest number of students (750873: IGNOU Profile, 2001) followed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (450 thousand: Venkaiah, 2000).

IGNOU as a National Open University has been using communication technology in a broad way. Taking other open universities and CCIs/Directorate of Distance Education into consideration, IGNOU is heading for a networking in near future.

## **Distance Education Council**

IGNOU has two main functions:

- (i) to offer various academic programmes that lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees, and
- (ii) to function as an apex body for distance education in the country.

In order to perform the second function, IGNOU has set up the Distance Education Council (DEC) in 1991 under section 25 of IGNOU Act 1985. The major roles assigned to DEC are:

- Promotion of open and distance education systems in the country
- Coordination of Open and Distance education activities
- Maintenance of standards in distance education institutions, and
- Providing financial and technical support to other state open universities and distance education institutions in the country.

Though DEC was established in 1991, it started functioning in 1992-93.

### ***Promotion of Open and Distance Education Systems***

The DEC disseminates information about open learning materials and methods of study. It provides technical and advisory support to state governments for setting up new open universities. It also provides financial support to state open universities and CCIs/Directorate of Distance Education for upgradation of their course materials, developing human resources, using advanced communication technology and so on. Further, the DEC provides Research Projects in distance education to the faculties of state open universities and CCIs.

### ***Coordination of Activities***

The DEC has taken necessary steps to create a network of open universities for joint programme development, sharing and delivery of programme/courses. Subsequently, IGNOU has shared programmes with almost all the state open universities in the country.

### ***Maintenance of Standards***

DEC has developed self-assessment manuals for the state open universities and performance indicators for evaluation of ongoing programmes. It has developed norms and standards to examine the suitability and viability of various programmes offered through distance mode like Computer Education (MCA, BCA), Management Programmes, Library and Information Science

Programmes (MLISc, BLisc) etc. These documents include: Curriculum design, eligibility criteria, admission procedure, duration, modularity of programmes, teaching-learning strategies, learning resources, student support services, delivery mechanism, evaluation, faculty, fee structure, content structure, instructional inputs, counsellor training, infrastructural facility requirements, monitoring, performance review and so on.

### ***Providing Financial and Technical Support***

DEC has been providing funds for downlink facility for Wide Area Network (WAN) and Local Area Network (LAN) to the State Open Universities (SOUs). It has been providing financial assistance to SOUs and CCIs for infrastructure development (mainly for equipments), for transformation of course materials to self-learning materials and so on.

## **The Next Step**

After having broadly surveyed the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) scenario in India, let us now turn to a more specific topic in the next section. The objective of discussing an overall picture of ODL in India is to provide you a broad picture of the educational environment, and emphasize that you are not alone studying in an open learning environment. There are hundred thousands of people like you taking the advantage of the opportunity provided by open learning. I am sure this broad picture will inspire you further to continue with your learning endeavour. As mentioned earlier, in the next section, we will discuss about IGNOU in details. This will help us to understand the system better.

## Indira Gandhi National Open University

Indira Gandhi National Open University was established in 1985 to democratise higher education. The aim was to provide cost-effective, quality education to large sections of our population including those living in remote and far-flung areas. A mere fifteen years since its inception, IGNOU has carved a niche for itself among the premier educational institutions of the country. The University has been a pioneer in Distance Education and the recipient of the centre of Excellence in Distance Education award conferred by the Commonwealth of Learning in 1993.

*Section includes:*

-  **An Overview of IGNOU**
-  **Objectives, Functions & Features**
-  **Organisation & Management**
-  **Instructional Support Systems**

IGNOU has over 800,000 students with extremely varied profiles, spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. The University is serviced by an efficient and effective networking of 46 Regional (16 of which are Army, Navy and Air force centres) and 882 Study Centres, all over India. As an Open University, IGNOU has come a long way since 1985 having crossed national boundaries in providing higher education as well as assisting other developing countries in this field (Vice-Chancellor's Report, 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation, IGNOU, 2002).

State-of-the-art telecommunication systems have further helped in reaching out to the hitherto remote sections of the society. Quality and equity have been the guiding principles behind all the endeavours of IGNOU. Taking a cue from the huge success of Indira Gandhi National Open University, other states have also established their own Open Universities.

### Objectives

The University's Act states that, the University shall:

- impart education and knowledge through various means suited to the open and distance education mode;
- provide not only higher education to large sections of the population, but particularly disadvantaged segments of society;
- encourage, coordinate and assist open universities and distance education systems to uphold standards in such systems in the country; and
- provide national integration and strengthen the natural and human resources of the country through the medium of education.

## Functions

IGNOU serves two main functions:

- (1) It offers various academic programmes (now about 62) that lead to Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees. It develops and produces courses for delivery through open learning and distance education mode. IGNOU is also actively involved in research, training and extension education activities.
- (2) In its capacity as an Apex Body, it co-ordinates and monitors distance education system throughout the country. IGNOU has also constituted the Distance Education Council and has provided expertise and assistance to other Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country.

## Features

IGNOU stands significantly apart from other universities because of:

- national jurisdiction
- flexible admission rules
- individualised study; flexibility in terms of place, pace and duration of study
- use of latest educational and communication technologies
- student support services
- cost-effective programmes
- modular programmes
- resource sharing, collaboration and networking between other open universities

## Organisational Structure

As per the **IGNOU ACT, 1985**, the President of India shall be the visitor of the University. It also states the following as authorities of the University:

The Board of Management  
The Academic Council  
The Planning Board  
The Board of Recognition  
The Schools of Studies  
The Finance Committee and  
Such other authorities as may be declared by the Statutes to be authorities of the University.

The officers of University are:  
Vice-Chancellor  
Pro-Vice-Chancellors  
Directors  
Registrar  
Finance Officer and  
Such other officers as may be declared by the Statutes to be officers of the University.

***Vice-Chancellor***

The Statutes of the University state that Vice-chancellor shall be the ex-officio chairman of the Board of Management, Academic Council, the Planning Board and the Finance Committee. It shall be his/her duty to see that the Acts, the Statutes, the Ordinances and Regulations are duly observed and he/she shall have all the powers necessary to ensure such observance of all rules and regulations.

***Pro-Vice-Chancellors***

The Statutes state that "Every Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall assist the Vice-Chancellor in respect of such matters as may be specified by the Vice-Chancellor on his/her behalf from time to time and shall also exercise such powers and perform such functions as may be delegated to him/her by the Vice-Chancellor.

**Authorities of the University**

IGNOU being an academic institution, the primary function of administration is to provide support to the academic activities of the University. The following statutory authorities effectively manage the overall functioning of the University.

***The Board Of Management***

The principal executive body of the University is the Board of Management. The Board is empowered by the Statutes to look after the management and administration of the revenue, finances and the property of the University and the conduct of all administrative affairs of the University.

### ***The Academic Council***

The Academic Council exercises general supervision over the academic policies of the University and gives direction regarding methods of instruction, evaluation, research and improvement on academic standards. It also provides guidance and supervision to research activity in the University.

### ***The Planning Board***

It is the responsibility of the Planning Board to design and formulate appropriate programmes and activities in the University. It also has the right to advise the Board of Management and Academic Council on any matter that it may deem necessary for the fulfillment of the objectives of the University.

### ***The Finance Committee***

The Finance Committee advises the University on all financial matters, fixing the limits for the total recurring and non-recurring expenditure for the year based on the income and resources of the University. It meets at least thrice a year to examine the accounts and to scrutinise the expenditure of the University.

### ***The Distance Education Council***

IGNOU also functions as an apex body of the Distance Education System in the country. The Distance Education Council has been entrusted with the primary responsibility of promoting and coordinating open learning and distance education systems in the country, while monitoring and determining their standards.

## **Instructional System**

IGNOU's method of instruction differs radically from that of other conventional universities. Indira Gandhi National Open University has adopted a multimedia approach to instruction. The different components being: self-instructional materials, counselling sessions, both face-to-face and via teleconferencing. For courses in Science, Computers, Nursing as well as Engineering and Technology arrangements have been made to enable students to undertake practical classes at select study centres.

### ***Flexibility***

In the tradition of Open Learning, IGNOU provides considerable flexibility in entry qualification, place, pace and duration of study to its students. A

Bachelor's Degree Programme (i.e. BA/B.Com/B.Sc) of 3 years duration can be completed in 8 years if the student so desires.

### ***Credit System***

IGNOU follows a credit system that is based on the time factor involved in studying. One credit is equivalent to 30 study hours inclusive of all learning activities. Different programmes have different credit requirements. Students have the right to collect credits at their own pace, convenience and according to their own capability. IGNOU also provides a credit transfer facility whereby credits may be transferred from any other University to IGNOU after fulfilling the necessary requirements.

### **Academic Programmes**

As of now IGNOU offers 62 academic, professional/vocational and awareness-generating programmes, leading to certificates diplomas and degrees. A candidate is awarded his/her degree after the successful completion of the chosen programmes. IGNOU engages experts from all over the country for the design and development of their courses and programmes ensuring the quality and effectiveness of its study materials.

A diagrammatic representation of the Course Development Process is given below:

## **Evaluation System**

At IGNOU a two-tier system of evaluation is followed:

- Continuous evaluation through tutor-marked/computer-marked assignments, practical assignments, project work, and
- Term-end examinations

Assignments and Term-end exams are mandatory. Proportionate weightage is given to both assessment components for evaluation purposes. Students securing the highest score at the first attempt are awarded gold medals during the annual convocation ceremony of the University.

## **Student Support Services**

At a study centre, the following facilities are extended to students:

- Subject-specific academic-counselling by part-time academic counsellors
- Audio and Video viewing facilities
- Library facilities
- Participation in Teleconferencing
- Information services related to rules, regulations, procedures, schedules, etc. of the University
- Submission of assignment-responses for tutor-comments and grading/markings and
- Term-end examinations.
- Computer access and practicals

In areas where study centers are not available the innovative concept of the Distance Learning Facilitators (DLF) has been put in place.

## **The Next Step**

Having had an overview of Indira Gandhi National Open University – one of the mega-universities of the world, our next step shall be to understand what it means to be a distance learner. You should feel proud of being a student of this university of international repute and strive towards your goal through the flexible learning opportunity provided by this system.



## On becoming a Distance Learner

Now that you have joined a programme at IGNOU, it is essential to know what it means to be a distance learner. In this chapter, we will discuss the basic qualities that you need to develop in order to become a successful distance learner. The qualities that we discuss are suggestive in nature and may require some time to develop. They do not happen all at once, especially, if you are returning to learn after a gap. You need to adopt these qualities to suit yourself and your particular context.

*Section includes:*

-  **Learner responsibility**
-  **Motivation, Attitudes and expectations**
-  **Setting goals**

### Responsibility

Being an adult you have to take responsibility for your own action in day-to-day life. In your studies, too, you have to be a responsible student. In our school days, our teachers were always with us to advise, coax and sometimes force us to study. In a way they were taking responsibility for what we learnt. In contrast to that, today most of us would not like to be told to read and concentrate on studies. We need to learn what we want and on our own. We have to take responsibility for choosing the subject, time and environment of our learning.

In the process of learning you also have to take responsibility for deciding the value of the content, their accuracy, validity, etc. During school days, we were not expected to make value judgement and could not but accept whatever the teacher said. Whereas, today, being adults we start questioning, we argue the rationale, and carefully weigh the value of ideas and concepts. We analyse, evaluate and judge the quality of learning of the content as well the learning process.

This essentially means taking control of your learning and being an independent learner. In this handbook, we are trying to develop you as an effective independent learner.

### **Motivation**

Being a distance learner means working in isolation with minimum social interaction with peer group. It is not always possible to share your feelings with other people, especially when you have a problem. In such situations, it is easy to get frustrated and lose motivation to learn.

It is very easy to get de-motivated and put a full-stop to learning. But it is not very difficult to maintain the motivation level in the positive direction either. You need to develop contact with people who are also studying similar programmes through distance mode. By sharing your problems, you will notice that you are not alone in the boat! To develop contact with your peer group make it a point to attend contact classes/counselling sessions organised for your programme. You may also contact your study centre/regional centre to find out who are the others who are enrolled in similar programmes and if there is any one who lives near your house. Officials of the university and counsellors are usually more than willing to help people like you to overcome such problems. So do talk to one of them if you are facing such difficulty to maintain your motivation level.

### **Attitude**

You must have come across many dictates like "develop a positive attitude", so and so is a "person with a negative attitude", etc. What really does attitude mean? According to Thurstone, attitude is the sum total of an individual's inclination and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and convictions about any specific topic. They are basically learned behaviours over a period of time. Therefore it is possible to look into things around us in a positive and realistic way, rather than being critical all the time.

So, you need to have a positive notion about things around you. The power of positive thinking is very high and can lead to immense success. If you think you can't do certain things, it is almost certain that you can't. But if you try with a positive attitude, there is every possibility that you will succeed. Therefore, it is essential to have a positive attitude for distance learners to face difficulties during the course of studies.

## Expectations

Even with positive attitude and high motivation level, you may be disappointed because of your own and other's expectations of you. Most distance learners drop out of the courses when they receive their first packet of study materials and assignment questions and when they receive their first assignment grade. Low grade and negative comments often discourage learners. However, our academic counsellors are trained to avoid negative comments. But, it is also true that most of us do not realise the challenges of higher education and either do our assignments casually or develop high expectations. Higher expectations leads to stress and if you are stressed, it would be difficult for you to complete the requirements of the course/programme. Therefore, you need to adjust your expectations to the level of input that you decide to invest. Also, you need to develop a sort of goal for yourself to remain motivated and think positively.

## Goals

Without goals in our life, it is but natural that we will reach nowhere. Therefore pause awhile and think about your short term (cover the next few months) and long-term goals (over the next few years). Write down in separate sheets and keep for your record. If possible display them in your study area as a reminder. Some of your goals may look like the following:

- Get my graduate/postgraduate degree (long term goal)
- Complete 2 courses this year
- Study 14 hours every week (short term goal)
- Study 2 hours daily
- Complete one assignment every fortnight

Once you have developed your goals, it is essential that you put sufficient and sustained efforts in these directions. You need to break your goals into small achievable chunks. Achieving the goals will be highly satisfying for you and will aid you in sustaining your motivation and interest.

## The Next Step

In the next part, we will discuss some general, but specific studying habits on how to become a successful distance learner. The specific study habits include effective time management, how to study, note taking and learning from the electronic media.

## Time Management: How can I find time?

Today, all of us are short of one precious thing - time. You ask anybody for a job, and the most repeated reply would be - " I don't have the time". Our experience shows that most distance learners drop out because of "lack of time". However, on deeper investigation, we have found that time is a valuable resource for part-time learners and many of those who dropped out were actually not comfortable with managing their own time. After all, we all have 24 hours in a day, and therefore, time management skill is one of the most important ingredients of success in learning as well as in life. You need to be extra disciplined to adjust your family life, job, studies and recreation.

### Section includes:

-  **Time Management Skills**
-  **Planning and Scheduling**

Depending upon the nature of programmes you have enrolled, you may have to find out about 15 hours of time per week to study. In the following section, we shall describe strategies to manage time effectively. However, if you cannot follow them, because of your own learning style or personal life pattern, it really does not matter as long as you can devote some time everyday to your study. After all, it is your decision to study. Before we proceed to specific strategies for managing time, let us quote an interesting saying:

*If you don't know what is important,  
You will try to do everything  
If you try to do every thing,  
People will expect you to do everything,  
And in trying to please everyone,  
You will have no time to know  
What is important!*

The bottom line of the saying is to "Decide what is important for you". That alone will lead to better time management.

## How to manage your time?

**Observe your present time management:** keep a record of your daily activities by noting down how do you actually spend your time. You may do this for 3-4 days. It is better if you can keep hourly record for all the 24 hours of the day. This will give you an idea about the time that you can really squeeze out for your study schedule.

**Be Organised:** It is easier said than done to be organised. Once you have analysed your daily schedule, it is now time to organise them. Prepare daily "to do" list for the next day before you go to bed. Mark the different chores as 'Urgent', 'Important' and 'Routine'. You need to remember that all the listed activities have to be done in a day. But they may be done in different order. Try to accomplish all the listed activities. While organizing the "to do" list take care that you have at least 2 hours for your studies.

**Set Daily Objectives:** You should set objectives that are achievable in a day. One possible objective could be to devote at least 2 hours for studies. Preparing objectives help us feel satisfied and motivated as a result of accomplishment of those tasks.

**Keep Time for Leisure:** While it is good to be a workaholic, you should not overlook the necessity of leisure. In fact, it is an essential component to let your brain and body unwind. If you push too hard and don't relax, the quality of your work is likely to suffer. However, time for relaxation should be fixed. May be you do some meditation, walking and breathing exercises. But don't over do it – if you plan relaxation for half an hour, don't do it for two hours!

**Keep Things at Proper Place:** Lot of our time is wasted searching for a pen or a key chain or a pair of spectacle, or an appointment diary kept at a place other than its usual one. Therefore, a simple tip for time management is to keep things in their proper place.

**Avoid Gossips:** It is a common practice to indulge in unnecessary discussions ranging from office politics to international news and beauty pageants that are actually not related to our daily activities. This habit takes lot of our time, and then we feel the stress of work. Therefore, it is better to avoid gossips.

**Learn to Say 'No':** Most of the time we are involved in activities for which we are not responsible. This happens because we don't know 'how to say no' to undesirable requests. This is a difficult task. But it is not impossible

to say 'no' without being arrogant or offending the sentiment of the requesting person.

**Keep Emergency Time:** Everything in life does not go according to our own schedule and wishes. For some reason or the other, things may go out of your hand and require more time than planned. Therefore, it is better to keep emergency time between two activities to work as shock absorber. It will not disturb your work schedule, and of course, if you complete a task on time, the emergency time will allow you to relax or improve the task!

### **Planning Ahead**

Once you are able to systematically organise your time, it would be better to plan for a relatively long time say six month or twelve months, depending upon the nature of the programme of studies that you have undertaken. This planning is specially related to your studies and how you intend to accomplish them over time. For example, you have to submit about 10-15 assignments, attend counselling sessions, read the learning materials. For all these activities you need to plan at the beginning of semester/year. Prepare monthly year planner with box for everyday (example on page 28) for one month. Set your targets based on the basic guidelines suggested earlier. For example, the assignments have their due dates. So you have to complete them at least a week before the due date. Also you need to start them early. Therefore we suggest that you write down starting date, completion date and submission date for assignments. Mark important holidays and dates related to your studies. If your programme has project report to be submitted, plan it a well and prepare a schedule. The calendar of activities ought to lead to things to do daily list".

### **The Next Step**

In this section we have discussed, improving time management skills will require:

- Planning and setting realistic goals
- Ability to be organised and systematic
- Learning to relax and take regular short breaks
- Avoiding interruptions, gossips, unnecessary activities; and
- Your ability to remain motivated through personal records on achieving objectives.

Time management is very crucial for learning. In the next section we shall discuss how we learn. This brief section will discuss learning skills.

<b>Sun</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>
			<b>1</b> Planning and preparing Assignment # 3	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Submission of Assignment #3	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Due Date for Assignment #3	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> Attending Counseling for Course #1	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Planning and preparing Assignment #4	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Meeting Mr. X for discussing course #2
<b>26</b> Submission of Assignment #4 Attending Counseling	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Due date for Assignment #4	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

*Example of a Plan for a Month: Calendar*

## Understanding How We Learn

**W**e believe that an understanding of how we learn is very important for the process of learning. It will enable you to take care of the issues and strategies to learn. If I ask you the question, how do you learn, the answer would probably vary from individual to individual. But, I am sure, if you have understood a subject, you can remember it, express it in your own words, and use what you know. Successful learning experiences show

- Learning in an active and dynamic process;
- Learning occurs in fits and starts; and
- Evaluation and feedback are vital to learning.

*Section include:*

 **Learning process**  
 **Memorising through Mnemonics, mindmaps, etc.**

Learning is not a passive activity. You can't just learn by simply listening to lectures or reading a text. To learn, you have to use the learning material actively by involving in critical thinking, questioning and reflecting on the ideas and concepts. You might also have experienced that in spite of your best efforts sometimes you are not making any progress. This is because learning does not happen at a uniform pace. Depending on the nature of the subject and your prior knowledge and experience of the subject, learning occurs either slowly or at a rapid pace. In the process, feedback has a significant role. Feedback from a teacher allows you to clarify the concepts, get motivated, and know your strengths and weaknesses. In the learning materials that we provide you, all these active learning processes have been included.

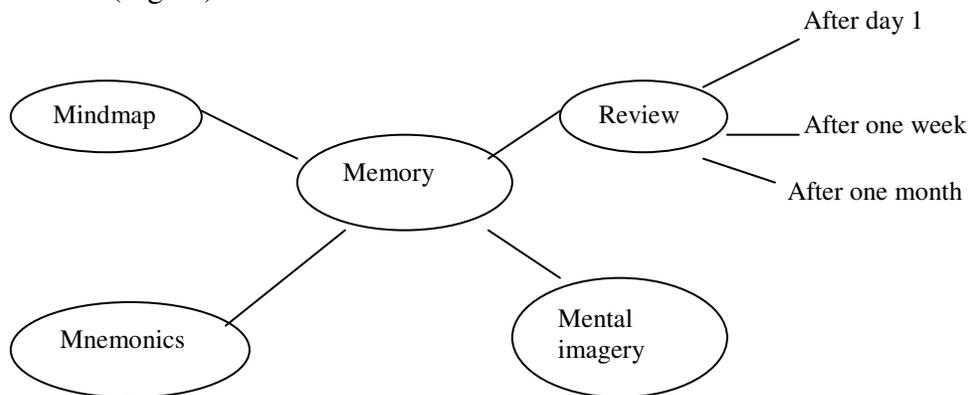
You will be surprised to know that memory has an important role in our learning. We forget almost 60% of what we read within 24 hours, if it is not reinforced through review immediately. In order to transform short-term memory to long-term memory it is essential that

## UNDERSTANDING How We LEARN

- The same information or practice is repeated several times;
- The new information is associated with some other information/picture already in the long term memory; and
- The learners are allowed sufficient time to assimilate new information/knowledge

In view of this, we would suggest below a few strategies to how to learn.

1. Review regularly what you have learnt: say after one day, one week, one-month. This will enable you to transfer learning from our short-term memory to long-term memory.
2. Develop mental imagery while reading. It helps to relate new learning to visual images.
3. Use mnemonics to remember new learning. Mnemonics are words made up usually of the first letter of the words you are trying to remember.
4. Develop mind maps through diagrams to remember complex concepts (Figure).



### Adult Learning

Since, you are an adult learner, it is important for us to emphasize the basic tenets of adult learning. It is believed that adult learners are different from children, and therefore their approach to learning differs considerably. Research shows that adult learners learn effectively:

- in an informal non-threatening learning environment ;
- when they have a need to learn something;
- when their individual learning needs and styles are catered;

## **EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

- in situation where their previous learning experiences are valued and used;
- where they have a control over the learning content and activities;
- when they are actively engaged in mental as well as physical processes;
- when they receive sufficient time to assimilate new learning;
- when they can apply new learning to some situation;
- where they can measure their own progress towards achievement of their own learning needs; and
- from real life situations and realistic problem solving environment

It is worthwhile to mention here that the self-instructional materials are prepared on the basis of all the above criteria to make learning more productive and purposeful.

### **The Next Step**

In this brief but important section, we have tried to emphasise the need for understanding our own learning style. We have presented a generic model of learning, and in the next section, we discuss specifics about studying.

## Studying: When, Where and How

**W**ith good study habits, you could spend less time in studying and, thus learn more in a given period of time. Also with a well-planned time-table you should be able to start each day with a list of tasks to be performed in your study sessions. The more precise you are, the more incentive you have to get on with it. You should always think in terms of what you want to get done rather than merely of how much time you are going to put in.

*Section include:*

 **When, Where and How to study**

### When to Study

It is possible that you may not find the suggestions listed below suitable for you. Perhaps you may find them suitable or perhaps, a few of them suitable to you. Whatever the case you will get an idea about how you might plan your schedule, and what suits you most.

Consider the following:

- i) **Each time** you receive a package of course materials, plan out the study sessions you think you will need to deal with it;
- ii) **Every week-end** make out a study time-table showing where you plan to fit in each of your study sessions for the week ahead;
- iii) Try to do some study nearly **everyday**. You should get into the habit of using odd half-hours as well as longer spells of time. (For example, you can do a bit of background reading, or preliminary scanning on a train journey or during a lunch break);
- iv) Tackle your toughest work **at times when you are at your best** whether this is the first thing in the morning, later in the day, or even in the middle of the night;

## EFFECTIVE LEARNING

- v) Leave **enough free time** for re-creation and leisure activities. It is important not to let your studies bog you down, otherwise you and the studies suffer;
- vi) Make a note of what you hope to achieve in **each of your study session** - either in terms of completing some task like an assignment or a section in a text, or in terms of reaching the objectives specified at the beginning of the unit etc;
- vii) Whenever, you sit for your studies, you should
  - review what you did in your last session on the topic
  - concentrate on whatever you are studying
  - take study-breaks within each hours of study especially when you intend studying for several hours at a stretch

You should also remember that your original timetable is just a useful basis on which to work. You will need to take a critical look at it frequently to see whether any temporary or permanent changes are needed. For instance, you may need to

- spend more time on an assignment or a special project
- alert your share-out of time among subjects because of changes in their relative difficulty
- make up for study-time which you have lost, for one reason or the other in the previous week.

It would be a good idea if you could revise the timetable at the beginning of every week.

### **Where to Study**

Ideally, you should be able to study anywhere - in a quiet library, or in a crowded bus. But let us not be idealistic. To be realistic, most of us cannot entirely shut our minds off to distractions. By implication, the place of study should be as free as possible from such surroundings as might affect our attentions. Also, you need a place that is firmly associated in your mind with serious study. Wherever, you find a place to study, try to study always at the same place. Not only does this mean that there will be fewer new things to dislodge your attention from your work but also, as you build upon the habit of sitting in that place to work, you will find you can switch into a learning mood the moment you sit down. However, you should not let this place habit get so strong that you are incapable of studying in other places.

The only equipment you need apart from text materials is a table, a chair and sufficient light and proper ventilation. (Some may do without a table and a chair). The study place should not be either too warm or too cold. The less you are aware of your surroundings while studying the better. Let it be known (to you family, friends etc.) that during study sessions you should not be

## **STUDYING: WHEN, WHERE AND HOW**

interrupted. Clearly you will need the good will and cooperation of your family in this regard. Also, let your study hours be known to your friends so that they will also respect your work.

Having talked about study-hour and place of study, we may also touch upon the amount of time you should spend on your studies. It must be recognized that the time you spend in studying will clearly depend on the subject, and how well you know it. It is therefore unrealistic to prescribe a hard and fast rule about period of time you spend on a specific subject.

You should not, however, brush aside the significance of over-learning. It helps you retain information over a long period of time. Therefore, there is no harm if you continue practising an activity/exercise or reading a particular chunk of information etc. even after you **think** you have learned it.

Do our physical postures have something to do with our study?

The best position for study is to sit upright at a table or desk. The bed may be attractive and enticing, but once you lie down, ensuing a sleep is inevitable. Even an easy chair may prevent you from doing real study.

Some of you perhaps, will not get all the facilities you want, as you are either staying in a hostel or someone else's house. Or perhaps some of you have the habit of lying on the bed and studying effectively. We do not contend that one should strictly follow the conditions mentioned. As long as you can put in serious efforts and study well, you should not worry about the prescribed study-conditions.

### **How to Study**

Studying has long been the primary means by which learning -- irrespective of levels of learning and modes of teaching - takes place outside the classroom. Through home assignments, independent study on special projects and guided study under a supervisor, the student organises materials, formulates ideas that may be evaluated by the teacher and works on exercises to gain specific skills.

Besides course materials, the student very often relies upon a library to collect specialised information and new learning sources such as audio/video cassettes filmstrips, etc. Whatever may be the educational atmosphere, study habits, motivation to learn and general attitudes are paramount in determining academic success or failure.

At one stage or the other we may have uttered or heard woes of the following nature:

"I spent the whole day studying but could not comprehend a thing".  
"I don't even remember what I read, though I spent the whole night studying."  
"I always listen to music when I study."  
"I don't know how to study."

Perhaps, you have uttered or heard many more.

## **The Next Step**

The primary concern of this handbook is to suggest to you how to learn effectively. Thus, in the rest of this handbook, we shall be talking about the techniques of study under various heads. In a broader sense, we have dealt with the skills and sub-skills of reading and writing, as they serve our immediate purpose. In the next section we will discuss specific strategy of purposeful reading – i.e. SQ3R technique.

## Reading for a Purpose

Different texts require different approaches depending on what you are expected to obtain from them. Reading a popular news magazine or sports magazine would be different from reading a textbook. Also, you may need to read some books in parts, some wholly but not necessarily carefully, and a few others diligently and with attention. The implication here is that your strategy should be flexible in tackling the materials. One strategy that has been in use is the SQ3R technique. Let us now talk about this in a greater detail.

### *Section include:*

-  **Survey**
-  **Question**
-  **Read**
-  **Recall**
-  **Review**

SQ3R stands for the initial letter of the five steps in reading a text. The five steps are

- i) Survey
- ii) Question
- iii) Read
- iv) Recall
- v) Review

We shall discuss each one of these steps in the given order.

### **Survey**

It refers to a quick glance through the title page, preface, chapter headings, and index of a text. Surveying of a text helps you grasp the central topic/theme of the text. For example, a glance at the title page may give you:

- the general subject area
- the level of approach
- the author's name and
- the date and place of publication

Normally a glance at the preface will give you more details regarding the author's message in the text. It also helps you decide whether or not the text deserves your attention. A contents survey gives you similar support. An index-survey will tell you instantly whether or not the text contains what you need. It also helps you in saving time and effort by directing you straight to the most relevant pages.

### ***Surveying a Chapter/Unit***

Before you begin each new chapter/unit you should survey it rather more carefully than you may have done when surveying a book as a whole. Pay special attention to:

- The first and last paragraphs (an author may use them to give his/her survey of what is to come, or a summary of what has been said).
- Summaries (They may appear at intervals as well as at the end of a text).
- Headings (Most authors divide one monolithic block of information into several consumable chunks - sections, sub-sections etc. - for easy reference and better comprehension. Many of us ignore the headings and thereby the vital clues contained in them. Obviously, headings tell you what topic is dealt with in each section or sub-section. Besides, the relative letter sizes or prominence of the headings suggest how they go together, what goes with what etc. At times, the author's use of number also gives us similar suggestions).

In self-instructional materials pay special attention to the structure, introduction, objectives and let us sum up.

### **Question**

Your survey of the text will raise in you some questions, general ones though. For example, glancing at the title page, preface and content, you might ask yourself:

- How far do I depend on this book?
- Will the book be helpful to me as its preface suggests?
- Why should or should not the author devote a whole chapter to such-and-such a topic?

Even these general questions are of some help to you in deciding how you might treat the text. When you turn from surveying the book as a whole to a specific chapter/topic, your questions will naturally become specific. At times, the author himself will pose questions at the beginning or at the end of a

chapter. Since questions are generally more helpful if asked at the beginning of a chapter it is always better to take note of the end-of-the chapter questions too, during your survey. At any cost, you should not overlook the author's questions lest you bypass a very helpful guide to effective studying. While studying self-instructional material, having surveyed the structure, objectives, introduction, summary, etc. you must pay special attention to the issues raised by the author in the introduction, summary and objectives. You can re-frame the objectives as questions to be answered after reading the specific unit.

## **Read**

Reading a text demands a critical mind. In other words, when we read a text we apply our mind with all its critical skills. Unless we read actively, the questions which have been formulated, can never be answered satisfactorily.

At this stage in the SQ3R technique we need not

- make notes (we may tend to note down the author's opinions/words rather than our own. This is no help at all in our understanding and learning)
- underline the words or phrases either (in our second reading, perhaps, we will find that the words or phrases which have been underlined are not crucial for our purpose).

Main ideas can be found at every level of the text. The text as a whole will have, perhaps, one very general main idea. The main idea of each chapter/unit will be rather less general. And each section within a chapter will have a more specific main idea, and the main idea of each paragraph will be most specific of all. Ideally, our job is to pick out the main idea at each level.

### ***Read faster and better***

Reading is an integral part of any curriculum. Very often we find ourselves reading magazines, telephone directories, text books, menu cards and so on. But the process of reading and concentration differ depending on the information we want to cull out from the text.

As students we spend a great deal of time working on books and other printed materials. We would be able to use this more effectively if we could read faster and change our speed of reading depending on the content requirement. For example, if we read a textbook intending to make notes we read slowly and if we are looking for a number in a telephone directory, we usually scan through the pages quickly to locate the number.

## EFFECTIVE LEARNING

You should be able to vary your reading speed according to the complexity of the material and the purpose for which you are reading. If you are trying to get an overall gist of a piece of writing you should be able to read two or three times faster than when you are trying to see through the detailed development of an argument. But even when the material is difficult you may benefit from scanning it through quickly before you get down to reading it more intensively.

Normally, we expect every piece of the text to manifest its full meaning at the first instance itself. This sure is not the right attitude. You may have to go through it several times before you get the right message of the author. Several rapid readings will probably give you greater understanding and take less time than a single, painstaking effort to assimilate all the points made in the text.

Slow readers tend to read one word at a time, often mouthing the words as they do so. They also tend to take frequent glances back at words they have seen already. Some read so slowly that by the time they go to the end of a paragraph, or even a sentence, they might have forgotten how it began.

Here are a few suggestions for you.

- Stop talking to yourself while reading i.e. make sure you don't mouth words or utter them aloud as you read;
- Stay alert, read with a sense of purpose, anticipate what you are about to read and aim to get your eyes along that line of print as far as possible;
- Try to read in "thought units" (two or three words at a time) i.e. stop reading word by word and look for the way of words group themselves within each sentence. So that your eye, stops only three or four times in a line of print instead of at every word;
- Build up your vocabulary (normally, a good reader has a large repertoire of words and so he/she reads not only with greater comprehension but also faster);
- Practice reading faster (i.e. time your reading of magazines, articles of known length and test your recall of the contents; read all your study materials, even if you have to read them more than once).

We said that a large repertoire of words help us read faster. We shall see here the major ways of building our vocabulary.

### ***Vocabulary building***

The following are the five oft-suggested ways which help us build up our vocabulary.

## READING FOR A PURPOSE

- i) You should not restrict yourself to your own subject texts. You should inculcate the habit of reading widely.
- ii) Whenever you come across new words, you should write them down in a notebook.
- iii) Get into the dictionary habit; look up and note the meaning of each new word as soon as you come across it.
- iv) Use your new words in your writing (and speech) at the first opportunity.
- v) Make your own glossary for technical words and phrases that occur in what you read.

Because reading has no subject matter of its own, whatever you read is reading, whether it is a newspaper, a menu, a journal, a road map or a textbook. The efficiency of your reading depends greatly upon:

- your basic reading skills
- your background of experiences in the area in which you are reading
- the difficulty level of the material
- your interest in the material; and
- your purpose(s) of reading.

For reading better we should be able to do the following efficiently:

- i) Finding the main/central idea
- ii) Drawing inference (i.e. reading between the lines)
- iii) Distinguish between the fact and opinion
- iv) Creative reading

### ***i) Finding the main/central idea***

To find the main idea of a paragraph, you must find what common elements the sentences share. Some writers place the main ideas as the topic sentence and many put the title of the topic in bold print. However, in literature this is not a common practice -- the main idea may not be stated directly but implied. In such situations, the reader has to find it from the clues provided by the writer. There is no foolproof method of finding the main idea. However, the oft-repeated suggestion is that we should first determine the topic of the paragraph and then find out what the author is trying to say about the topic that is special or unique. Once we do that, we must be able to locate the main idea.

We generally use the term **central idea** rather than **main idea** when we refer to group of paragraphs, a story etc. To find out the central idea, the introductory paragraph is usually helpful because it either contains or anticipates what the central idea is and how it will be developed. In self-instructional materials, the

central idea is normally depicted through a heading or sub-heading, thereby allowing the learner to comprehend the concept easily rather than to search for the central idea.

### ***i) Drawing inference***

You would have come across writing which do not directly state what they mean but present ideas in indirect, roundabout way. That is why drawing inference is called "reading between the lines". Mystery writers find references essential to maintain suspense in their stories. For example, Sherlock Holmes and Perry Mason mysteries are based essentially on the ability of the characters to uncover evidence in the form of clues that are not obvious to others around them.

Textbook writers normally present information in a more straightforward manner than fiction writers do. Nevertheless, even text materials include implied meanings that we must deduce or infer. For example, when you read about the actions and decisions of some characters in a novel you can deduce something about their personality. When we read about North Pole, we can infer the kind of clothes one needs there. Good readers, while reading try to gather clues to draw inferences about what they read - oddly they are not usually aware of it.

To read effectively and in a better way, you should imbibe the habit of raising key questions about the material you are reading. This will help you draw inference from what you are reading and supply data to substantiate your inferences. While reading self-instructional material, you must ask questions to yourself about the significance of the concepts/ideas discussed. How these can be related to other similar activities or how they can be applied, and so on. In the process you will be able to build your own reflective opinion on the subject matter.

### ***ii) Distinguish between fact and opinion***

The ability to differentiate between facts and opinions is a very important skill of critical reading that we need to develop for effective reading. We should know that everything we read may not necessarily be completely true or correct. Accordingly, we should be able to **react** to the message in the text.

### ***iii) Creative reading***

Good readers are able to look beyond the obvious and come with new or alternative solutions. In short, it involves divergent thinking. Do not let your thinking be unidirectional i.e. you should try to solve problems in many different ways and be intelligent risk-takers.

## READING FOR A PURPOSE

Does the discussion sound serious? Perhaps, it is meant to be so. Yes, as studying is serious unless we make serious efforts to study effectively, we cannot perhaps succeed in our pursuits.

Before we proceed further, can you give a few characteristics of a good reader?

A good reader

- has a good repertoire of vocabulary
- states the main/central ideas of information
- does inferential reasoning
- assimilates information
- makes analogies, analyses and evaluates information
- thinks beyond the obvious

Now we shall look at the fourth stage in the SQ3R technique

### **Recall**

What is read, need to be recalled for retention. Even if the material we read is perfectly straightforward we need to recall what has been read for long-term memory. Regular attempts to recall will help improve our learning in three ways:

- i) better concentration
- ii) chance to remedy misinterpretation
- iii) reactive reading.

We should write down the key points we remember and, make brief notes of the main ideas and details we think are important. We will discuss about note-taking in the next section.

How often to recall?

This is a pertinent question, though 'how often' depends chiefly on how good a reader you are. During reading of the self-instructional material, if you have taken notes of keywords/concepts in the margin provided, it will help you to recall. Also, check your progress exercises in self-instructional materials are points of recall and self-evaluation of your progress. As such, you must do the check your progress exercises as suggested, in order to reap desired benefit.

## **Review**

The purpose of reviewing is to check the validity of our recall. The best way to do this is to have a quick survey of materials. This will help you review whether or not you have comprehended rightly.

Having talked about the SQ3R technique, we should be able to say whether or not we should strictly follow the logical order in which SQ3R is presented if we adopt this technique.

Although the steps of SQ3R are in a logical and natural order, there may be overlaps and repetitions between them. For instance, even while the emphasis is on `survey' or `read' we may still find ourselves asking questions or we may want to interrupt the third stage (i.e. read) for purpose of recalling and reviewing or even for the purpose of repeating "survey". Nevertheless, there is no harm in adopting SQ3R in the same order.

The SQ3R technique need not necessarily be confined only to printed materials. With suitable modification in the stages, we can apply this technique to electronic media too. The stage we may have to change is the third one i.e. read. This may be replaced by either `listen to' or `watch' depending on whether we are dealing with an audio or a video programme. The rest of what we talked in relation to printed materials might as well be applied to electronic media.

## **The Next Step**

Having discussed the SQ3R technique, we will elaborate on the note-taking strategies in the next section. Before, you go to the section, pause for a while and think about your own note-taking habit. Do you take note while at a lecture while reading a text book. See for yourself in the next section, how your own strategy can be further developed.

## Notes and How to Take Them

**V**ery rarely do we make notes. And this is one of the common causes of our failure in academic pursuits. Note-making help us mainly in two ways:

- i) It keeps us active while we are learning (and thus aiding our concentration)
- ii) It help us have a record of what we have studied (irrespective of the media)

*Section include:*

-  **Summarising**
-  **Outlining**
-  **Note-taking**

If we really want to have a grip on what we have read, heard (audio) or watched (video), it is always helpful to put a few words on paper than to have a head full of hazy memories. The memories may drift away in the course of time unless you nail them down with words. And you can keep your written record as a permanent reminder.

### Note-keeping

There are many ways of keeping our notes. Normally we follow one of the following:

- notes on loose sheets of paper of uniform size
- notes on odd scraps of paper
- notes in a thick hardbound notebooks
- notes on note cards

Which of the four would you prefer?

Ideally we should be able to arrange our notes in order so that the notes on a given topic are kept together - whether we collect them from reading books, listening to lectures or watching video programmes or whether we made them recently or last year. In such a situation, bound notebooks are of little help

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because we will be forced to store our notes in the order we wrote them. With a loose-leaf binder, on the other hand, we can re-arrange our sheets of papers, at times remove some, re-write or add a few new materials.

Very often, we find ourselves in a dilemma as to whether or not to put in some information. We get relatively more time to make up our mind when we are working on print materials than we do in lectures or in watching a TV or video programmes.

Your notes should contain enough of the author's/lecturer's line of argument or discussion to bring it all clearly back to mind at a later stage. In making notes, you should always remember to put in only the essentials. By implication you should not end up putting together a mini-text!

Guide for writing notes on note cards:

In making notes on note cards, you should keep in mind the following:

- i) if you are quoting an author's exact words make sure you put them in quotation marks
- ii) try to summarise what you have read or heard but take care that you are stating facts, not opinions
- iii) if you are giving your or someone else's opinion, make sure you record this on the card so that you will not confuse the opinion with fact.
- iv) try not to make notes on matters of common knowledge
- v) do not make notes on the same information twice.

**Now we shall talk about the ways of making notes. There are mainly two ways of making notes.**

- i) Summarising
- ii) Outlining

We shall touch upon each of these in the order given above.

### ***i) Summarising***

Summary is a condensed version of the original written in continuous prose. A good summary ought to be brief and ought to include only essential information --the main idea of the paragraph or the central idea of an article (the sequence must be followed in the summary only if it is essential). In a summary we need to include only the information stated in the paragraph or article and not your opinion or what you think should have been included.

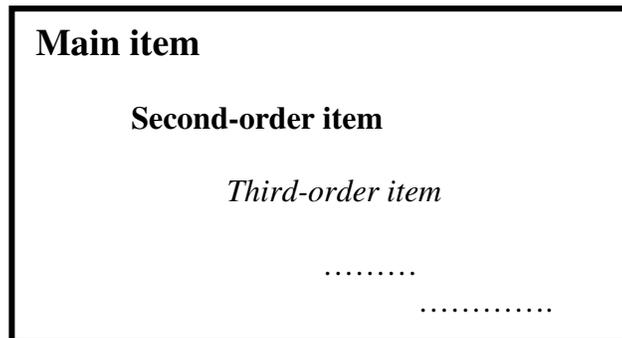
**ii) Outlining**

Normally, we present the essential points in an almost diagrammatic fashion. This is called outlining. Wherever possible try to outline rather than summarise what you read or listen to. In an outline we can list even minute details which may not be possible in a summary.

Guidelines for Outlining:

Here are a few guidelines for outlining whatever you read or listen to:

- Get a skeleton for your outline from the author's headings. Expand each heading into a meaningful sentence containing the main idea of the section or sub-section it belongs to.
- If the headings are only a few you need to look at the topic sentence of each paragraph in the section. It probably carries a main idea that you will need to put in your notes to help develop the argument. In case you want to include important details, you can present them in parenthesis.
- Once you pick out the main ideas you should indent them from the margin according to their relative importance. For example, you can start the main items at the margin, indent second-order items by say half an inch; third order items go in by another half inch and so on. An illustration is given below.



- You should not, however, indent too little or too much. If indentation is too little, the relationships won't be clear and in the latter case, you may not have room for your notes.

You should not be under the impression that an outline could be made only by indentation. You can always use letters and numbers to outline a given topic. Generally the following norm is observed for outlining:

- Roman numerals (I, II, etc.) for the main topics, putting a period after each Roman numeral
- Capital letters (A, B, etc.) for sub-topics, with a period after each capital letter
- Ordinary Arabic numerals (1,2 etc.) for details under sub-topics and small letters under the details for less important points. A period after each number and letter.
- Roman numbers, capital letters, ordinary numbers and small letters in straight vertical lines.
- Each topic begins with a capital letter, whether it is a main topic, a sub-topic or a detail. Unless it is a sentence, a period after a topic is not essential.
- Topics are usually phrases, sometimes sentences. They should not be mixed up.
- Development of a concept map/mind map is also a very useful way of taking notes geographically. We have illustrated it in Section 6.

Look at the content page of this booklet. A survey of the content page will give you an outline of the content presented in the booklet. Apart from the ways suggested for outlining, we can use the kind of numbering system followed in the content page for purposes of outlining. However, the system as it is, may not help us much. We have to add the details in the form of phrases to get a fuller help from the outline.

**Keeping the sections and sub-sections intact, can you supply details in order to make a good outline of the content presented in the handbook?**

Now let us look at the mechanics involved in note-making.

### **The Mechanics of Note-making**

Reading someone else's note and deducing meaning from it is difficult. At times, reading from our own notes poses problems. If our handwriting is illegible, one can think of using a typewriter/word processor for this purpose. If some of us cannot afford this, it is advisable to write legibly.

You should not try to make notes in full sentences. We may not get sufficient time to do so. For example, if you are attending a lecture or a seminar the ideal thing would be to use abbreviations.

Abbreviations like the following are widely used in note making:

1. e.g. for example

## NOTES AND HOW TO TAKE THEM

2. i.e. that is
3. c.f. compare in this context
4. N.B. important
5. = is equal to
6. # is not equal to
7. > is greater than
8. < is less than

Proper attention should be paid to present the materials in a logical way. The more logical the presentation of your notes looks on the page, the more easily you will be able to picture them in your mind's eye.

Guide for note taking during a lecture:

Though as a distance learner, you will very rarely find lecture sessions to support your learning, we provide here few note-taking tips in general. This will help you in other lecture-based learning situations and as a life skill in general. Of course, there is no single note-taking technique that is best for every one. Yet, there are a few basic principles that do apply to most of us. Some of them may sound naïve, nevertheless, they need to be mentioned:

Consider the following:

- Go to a lecture with a positive attitude
- Sit in a seat where you can see as well as hear the speaker. (The speaker's facial gestures and body movements help give meaning to what he or she is saying). Try to sit as close to the front as possible. Make sure that you can see the chalkboard or if an overhead projector is used, the transparencies are clearly visible. . Avoid sitting near a door or window. (There may be an element or two who will divert your attention.)
- Go prepared with writing papers, pencils or pens. As mentioned earlier loose-leaf notebook is better than a notepad because the pages are usually larger. You can easily make notes and reorder them or insert other materials (When you take a page of a notepad, all the other pages may fall apart.)
- Listen carefully. The speaker will usually give you a number of helpful clues. Here are some items to listen to and/or note during a lecture.
  - emphasis announced with the words “this is a key point”; “this is very important”; “this is vital information” and so on. Write these points down and underline them.
  - emphasis implied by time spent on a subject. Obviously the speaker feels something is important if he or she dwells on its for a considerable

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- period of time. Underline or box your notes on the topic explained at length. This will help you distinguish the important items from the rest.
- outlines the lecture written on the chalkboard or displayed on an overhead projector. Copy this and leave enough room to insert additional points that arise in the lecture.
  - guides in the form of main ideas listed on the chalkboard or the transparency.
  - handout containing points to be covered in the lecture.
- Ask questions. This is essential in helping you understand something better. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you have not understood a point. Asking a question slows down the teacher/presenter, gives you a chance to get across his/her message.

This is applicable, even if you attend a seminar, symposium and the like. If you are listening to an audio or watching a video, perhaps, you can't put a question to the lecturer directly. In such a situation, you can put questions to yourself and try to solve them, failing which you can always write to the person concerned for clarification, if you have access to him or her. You can even talk to your friends or colleagues to sort out the problems.

- Before a lecture, review your notes from the previous lecture (if any) or consult your text (if the lecture deals with a particular topic in your text) to set up a right frame of mind. You should however, remember that you learn more from recall than from just rereading your notes.
- The notes you take during a lecture should make sense to you when you read them at a later stage. And so, they should be organised. Here are some suggestions on the technique of making notes during a lecture.
  - Use "buzz" words (words that sound a buzzer in the mind i.e. key words) or "telegraphic writing" (it involves the use of one or two words to recall a complete message). Economy of writing is important in taking notes, but the notes should not be so bareboned that you have difficulty remembering what you wrote.
  - Concentrate on making generalizations. You can leave some space under each idea in case the lecturer returns to an idea to emphasize or embellish it -- you can add material to the particular item,
  - Divide your page into two halves. Put your generalizations and supporting details on the right-hand side (or the left-hand whichever is convenient to you) put the buzzwords, comments dates and questions (to ask, when you can) on the other - as closely paralleled as you can with the generalizations they refer to.

## NOTES AND HOW TO TAKE THEM

- After a lecture, go over your notes to see if they make sense to you. It is a good idea to date your notes. If you go over them and find that some are not clear, it is helpful to have a reference point for these notes.

### **The Next Step**

Have you started taking notes while studying this handbook? I am sure, you are using the side margin to take notes. While so far we have discussed mostly learning from print materials, in the next section we will discuss how to make the best use of the electronic media.

## Learning from Media

In an age of electronic revolution, we learn from various sources. Print is no more the only medium through which we learn. Of late, television has been playing a major role in our life. Before television, it was radio which played a significant role in reaching people, informing and educating. Of course, radio is still a dominant medium with wide access. Recently, computers and Internet have started influencing the way we learn. All these media are very powerful to reach, teach and enrich. But learning from them is quite different from reading a book. In this section, we will provide you basic tips to learn from broadcast (TV, Radio) and non-broadcast (Audio, Video) media.

### *Section include:*

Learning from

-  **Television**
-  **Radio**
-  **Teleconference**
-  **Audio/Video**

### Learning from Television

A television programme is a carefully crafted sequence of images and words to form a convincing story before the viewer. As a learner, you will simultaneously see moving pictures/images synchronised with relevant words/message as explanation to have an immediate impact. Through television, educational materials are provided which are complex and where it is felt that effective teaching can't be transacted through print. Real life situations, expert opinion, graphical animations are presented in the television programmes to make it more interesting and effective.

However, the most common problem in learning from TV is forgetting to tune in at the right time. Also, it is difficult to concentrate if you are watching TV in the living room where various other distractions are around. Being information rich- watching television programme requires sufficient attention. In other words, if you try to take note during watching, it is possible that you may miss a few important points. It is not possible for you as a learner to control the medium. If you skip a few points, may be you have to wait till its re-transmission. Therefore, it is very important for you to watch television programmes carefully, preferably in an environment/room where there is less

distraction. Make a summary of the programme immediately after watching it. If you have a colleague who has watched the programme, it is better to discuss the programme to remember the key points/issues.

## **Learning from Radio**

Radio programmes are used to teach when a simple lecture or discussion is sufficient. Unlike TV, radio programmes are only audio-based. Yet, they have almost similar problems like that of the TV. Additionally, it may be even more difficult to grasp the context of the audio in absence of the visuals. But Radio programmes are very effective, because of its easy access. Also now radio-phone in programmes are now being used to make it interactive for counselling. It is better for you as a student to read the relevant text before the radio broadcast to understand the programme better. This is also true of television.

If you have access to recorders (audio and video) it would be better to record them and use it as per your convenience. In such a situation, you can pause/stop, rewind/forward and think, as well as take notes.

## **Audio and Video Cassettes**

Learning from audio and videocassettes is very significant in open and distance learning. Using multi-media approach to teaching and learning, audio-video programmes are prepared either as supplementary, complementary or integrated medium of learning materials with print being the mainstay. The audio and videocassettes have the advantage of interactivity through learner control pause/stop, rewind/forward mechanism. It is desirable to make immediate notes/summary of the programme that you watch and/or listen. It is even better if you can discuss it with another learner or a counsellor. In spite of all the merits of audio-video programmes, distance learners use them the least. One of the significant reasons for its low use is the amount of time it takes to learn from audio and video. However, if you can organise your time effectively, audio and video programmes can prove to be very useful in your learning process.

## **Teleconference**

The one-way transmission of television has been suitably adjusted to make it a new interactive channel of learning. Though there are various types of teleconferences, the most commonly used in India is the one-way video and two-way audio teleconference. Using this technology, learners can actually interact with experts on real-time basis. As such a kind of virtual classroom is created through teleconference. However, the only problem of learning from teleconference of this nature is again the synchronous nature of the programme.

As a learner you have to come to a specific place at a specific time to take part in the learning process. However, with the emergence of the educational channel-Gyan Darshan, it is possible to participate in interactive session from your home as well. To make the most of such sessions, it is very important for you to read the relevant course materials first and then identify issues, problem areas, etc. for discussion. You can put your questions to the expert in the studio during a session and get your query clarified using a telephone line. For details of such programmes in your chosen subject grab a copy of the *Gyan Darshan magazine* published by EMPC, IGNOU.

### **The Next Step**

This was the last section in this part. At the end of this section, you should be able to use electronic media purposefully for your learning endeavour. Having discussed good study habits in this part, which are general, we will move to specific tasks that are needed to be a successful learner at IGNOU – especially preparation of assignments, which is a compulsory component in all courses.

## Preparing Assignment Responses

**W**riting is a crucial step without which the process of study is incomplete. It is more so in distance education. Submission of assignment-responses in distance education system is made compulsory, more often than not, to serve two purposes.

They are

- i) to initiate academic communication between the teacher institution and the student and thereby establish a useful dialogue between them,
- ii) to be used for continuous evaluation.

### *Section include:*

-  **Analsing questions**
-  **Material collection**
-  **Planning & writing the response**
-  **Learning from tutor comments**

By implication, distance education involves you in a lot of writing. And as the students are away from the teacher, most of the time, during the teaching/learning process, it's natural they tend to feel a little diffident in writing assignment-responses, at least the first one or two of them.

If the assignments are of "objective type" like multiple-choice questions, true or false type etc. which have just one right answer, you may not have any problem at all. (And so, we shall overlook this item here.) But those assignments that are open ended (i.e. essay questions) pose problems.

What are the strategies that you should use to overcome these problems?

### **Understanding the Question**

Before you attempt an assignment you should ask questions like:

- What is demanded of me?

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- Does the question call for an outline or a detailed account?
- Am I expected to demonstrate my knowledge on a given issue or just present what I have read in the materials supplied to me?
- Am I expected to refer to any particular sources of information or experimental data?
- Am I expected merely to describe things as they are or must I analyse and explain them?
- Need I discuss implications and suggest application and/or give illustrations?

Questions of this nature will help you to understand what actually is required of you.

### **Collecting materials relevant for the Assignment**

If you ask yourself questions as listed above you would know for certain whether or not a particular assignment requires some extra materials besides the course materials sent to you by the institution.

Suppose you are required to furnish extra details what are you expected to do?

Obviously the first stage is to look for relevant material. You should not just grab a pile of books or articles and begin reading in a vague hope that something useful for your purpose may pop up. To get good results you must read purposefully, and the best way of ensuring this is to have a set of questions to be answered. For this purpose, you have to break down an essay question into various bits of questions before you attempt writing the response. These questions will help you not only in producing a good response but also in the initial stages of collecting relevant materials for the response.

What do we mean by breaking up a question?

Suppose you are to write a response on the application of various electronic media in distance education. The topic can be approached with the following questions:

- What are the various electronic media normally in wide use in distance education?
- What are their contributions to the distance education systems?
- What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of print, non-print media; audio-video etc.?

- How can the contributions of various media be applied to any distance teaching course of my own subject specialization?
- What is the feasibility and the future of electronic media in the context of Indian situation?
- How are various media integrated?.

*(Perhaps, you can add a few more too.)*

Having done so, you can choose more relevant topics which therefore have to be discussed elaborately; which ones should be kept on a low key etc. Breaking up a question of the kind mentioned above would certainly help you bring out a reasonably good assignment response.

## **When should you start working on an assignment?**

Even if you have a month or more to submit an assignment, you should not wait until the week before your deadline. Writing an assignment in a hurry won't yield you any good result.

Start doing preliminary thinking and writing down the questions as early as possible after receiving the assignment. There are at least two very good reasons for making a start immediately:

- i) In casual conversation, in your general study, in your reading etc., you may quite accidentally come across ideas that will be relevant to your assignment. If you have not even started giving some thought to your topic, you may miss many of these ideas and end up having to re-read the texts merely because you did not realise their significance the first time.
- ii) The unconscious mind may be active at a problem even though we have turned our attention to other matters. And so, it is wise to keep a notebook to jot down the ideas as and when they occur to you or a useful quotation or illustration if you come across any.

## **A note**

Each page of distance teaching (print) material will have a big margin for you to jot down points when you read through the pages. You should inculcate the habit of using these margins.

This helps you

- i) have a record of what you have read

## PREPARING ASSIGNMENT RESPONSES

- ii) have a ready reference
- iii) save your time(i.e. you need not have to go through the pages once again to find out the main idea or an essential point)
- iv) identify the items for which you need clarifications
- v) in writing assignment-responses

It is always good, therefore, to use the margin-space provided in distance learning materials i.e. print materials.

### Planning an assignment-response

Usually we start writing a response as soon as we read the assignment without giving any time for thinking and planning the response. Perhaps, we can write a few pages but we cannot keep up the tempo and enthusiasm throughout, unless we know what exactly we are writing. So, planning is a necessary step in writing an assignment-response.

#### Consider the following:

<b>Step 1 Selection of material</b>	You may have a number of pages full of notes pertaining to the topic given. Obviously, not all of them will be equally useful for your purpose. Some will seem trivial and for your purpose. You may have to weigh their relative importance in the overall framework. Accordingly you can either leave out some or add some. In essence, you must be selective.
<b>Step 2 Write an outline</b>	In this step, you should work out the basic structure or outline. Your outline should ideally have 3 parts i.e., introduction: the main body and conclusion. Remember to have enough examples/illustrations/supporting statements to corroborate your claim. This is essential in writing an assignment-response.

What would you write in the suggested three parts of the assignment?

<b>i) Introduction</b>	Comment on the issue taken up (What do you understand by it? How is it important?)
<b>ii) The main body</b>	Develop your line of argument through a few main ideas. Support each main idea with examples and illustrations drawn from experience or other texts. (Do not forget to furnish details regarding the sources of information).
<b>iii) Conclusion</b>	A summary of main ideas: comment on the issue taken up indicating wider implications or future trends or scope for further consideration.

Usually, introductions are written after the body and the conclusion is prepared. This helps us put all that we have discussed in the response. Starting with an

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introduction will force us to tailor the main content according to the introduction. Conversely if we do not have definite aims built into the introduction we may tend to overlook the essentials of the question, and an unwieldy assignment-response may be the result.

You should also take care of the

- i) style
- ii) layout and
- iii) physical appearance of the response

We shall talk about each one of these in the order given above.

- i) Style: By "style" here, we mean presentation. You should
  - write complete sentences
  - avoid slangs and abbreviations (if proper expansions are not available)
  - present the content as simply and directly as possible
  - use everyday language (need not be pompous or poetic - unless the occasion demands)
  - be concise
- ii) Lay out: In writing an assignment-response you should
  - use headings/sub-headings (if appropriate or relevant)
  - split your work into paragraphs
  - incorporate a picture/diagram or two (if need be)
  - make clear distinction between your ideas and those that you have quoted (use quotation marks if you quote) from other sources.
  - acknowledge any text(s) from which you have drawn some ideas by writing a bibliography
- iii) Physical appearance: Normally, many of us ignore this aspect. But attention paid to the physical appearance of the assignment-response is worth spending time on. However crude it may sound the assignment-responses are evaluated by human beings. (Note we are not talking about computer marked assignments.) You should therefore give due consideration to the physical appearance of an assignment-response.

## PREPARING ASSIGNMENT RESPONSES

What are the items you should take care of?

You should

- have a neat draft
- write/type clearly (whatever may the case) and keep a copy of it with you. You should not be forced to lose a grade if one of your responses is not traced.
- use quality papers (You should not at any cost use bits of paper. This might make the tutor feel that you are indifferent to the work assigned)
- do not be too anxious to get a response out of the way
- look at it as a means of sharpening your thinking (remember academic communication is initiated through your response)
- do not mind rewriting a part/whole of the response, if it has not come up well.

Before you send the response to the institution, go through it once or twice. It may require some minor corrections, proof readings etc.

The checklist of the kind given below, will perhaps help you finalise the response.

### Checklist

- i) Does the response answer the question or deal with the issue/topic taken up?
- ii) Does it cover all the relevant aspects and with sufficient details?
- iii) Is the content presented accurately ?
- iv) Is the presentation logical and clear?
- v) Are the main points well supported by examples/arguments/illustrations etc.?
- vi) Does the presentation make a clear distinction between your own ideas and those of others?
- vii) Have the acknowledgements been furnished?
- viii) Is it of the right length?
- ix) Is the grammar, punctuation and spelling free of errors?
- x) Has the response been neatly typed or legibly written?

Once you get the answer in the affirmative to each of the items presented in the checklist, you can confidently send the response to your Study Centre.

*We should pause for a minute here.*

You should not get discouraged if your response fails to receive the score/grade you expected. It is always possible that the tutor has interpreted the question in a different way and looks at it from a different point of view.

A tutor's comments are born out of his/her attempt at correlating and comparing his/her own interpretation of a particular chunk of information with the corresponding student response in terms of both content and presentation. We should also mention here that the tutor's idea of the ideal response (to an assignment) is a variable that is affected as much by his/her own views as by the range and variety of the assignment-responses he/she receives. In such a situation, if you are convinced of what you have written, you will always initiate an academic dialogue between you and the tutor. Many of us feel thwarted if the score/grade expected is not awarded. A rationalised approach as suggested above will help lessen the tension and establish a useful rapport between you and the tutor.

Generally, when we receive the evaluated assignment-responses from the institution, our tendency is to look at the grade/score awarded and keep the response aside. Some of us perhaps will compare whether or not what has been expected is awarded. A few of us may have a cursory glance at the comments written. How many of us really read the comments carefully?

### **Learning from tutor-comments**

The comments of the tutor play a crucial role in most schemes of distance education. The distance students' face-to-face contact with their tutors being relatively minimal, teaching will have to be carried out mainly by means of "comments" on assignment-responses.

A careful reading of the comments will give us an idea:

- where we have gone wrong
- what actually the demand of the question is
- how it should have been tackled
- from which perspective the response/question has been viewed by the tutor
- what the personality of the tutor is (who otherwise is "faceless" during the teaching-learning process)
- how an assignment of similar kind can be effectively tackled etc.

In short, comments compensate the absence of a live teacher and help in distance learning. We should therefore inculcate the habit of getting the maximum benefit from the comments written. This is a vital study skill for any

## PREPARING ASSIGNMENT RESPONSES

distance student. In bypassing the comments, aren't you simply insulting your own product i.e., the response?

Time spent on writing an assignment-response yield fruit only when you read and learn from the comments. It is human to be curious to know **how** you have performed. Nevertheless, you should be also curious to know **what** yardstick is used to assess your performance. This can easily be deduced from the tutor's comments.

We are sure these guidelines will be useful in preparing better assignment-responses.

### **The Next Step**

In this section we discussed various strategies to prepare rewarding assignment-responses. Learning from the feedback provided by your tutor-counsellor will reinforce your learning and hence take care in reading the tutor's comments. In the next section we discuss how to prepare a research proposal. This is a general section. If the programme, which you are pursuing do not have a research/project component, you can think of skipping this section at present. Nevertheless, reading this section will help you prepare any research proposal that may come to you in future.

## Preparing a Research Proposal

In some of the programmes, there are small components of research in the name of project work/project report. If the programme in which you have registered has one, then look for specific guidelines in the project work handbook or the Programme Guide. This section is basically on overview and introduction to prepare project proposals.

### A Blueprint

The proposal is comparable to the blueprint, which an architect prepares before he/she actually works on a structure. The initial draft proposal is subject to modification in the light of our analysis or of the supervisor's suggestions. Since good research must be carefully planned and systematically carried out, procedures that are improvised from one stage to other will not suffice. A worthwhile research is likely to stem only from a well thought out and well-designed proposal.

We shall here look into the essential constituents of a research proposal. They are:

- i) the statement of the topic/problem
- ii) hypothesis
- iii) significance of the problem/implications of the study
- iv) definitions/assumptions/limitations
- v) a resume of related literature
- vi) methodology
- vii) conclusion

We shall talk about each one of the items listed above in detail.

*Section include:*

-  **Components of a Research proposal**
-  **Planning and scheduling**

***i) The statement of the topic/problem***

This may be either in an interrogative form or an imperative one. An attempt focussing on a stated goal gives proper impetus and direction to the research process. While presenting the problem we should be able to limit the scope of the research in such a way as to make a definite conclusion possible.

***ii) Objectives***

The objectives of the study/research are generally derived from the problem statement. They show in precise terms what would be the end-result of the study. In other words, what you are looking for. While preparing objectives, you should not be over ambitious to list as many objectives as possible. It would be prudent to be practical to list few achievable objectives with the time frame that you have. The objectives can be written using action verb or in question form.

***iii) The hypothesis***

It may be appropriate to formulate a major hypothesis and several minor hypotheses. This approach clearly establishes the nature of the problem and the logic underlying the investigation, and gives direction to the data-gathering process. A good hypothesis has several basic characteristics:

- it should be reasonable
- it should be consistent with known facts or theories
- it should be stated in such a way that it can be probably true or probably false
- it should be stated in the simplest possible terms.

What do really mean by a 'hypothesis'?

A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a question. It is a hunch, or an intelligent guess, subjected to verification. The gathering of data and logical data-analysis provide a means of confirming or disconfirming the hypothesis by deducing its consequences.

It is important that you should formulate the hypothesis before you start gathering the data. Formulation of the hypothesis in advance of the data-gathering process is necessary for an unbiased investigation. However, you can always form additional hypotheses after the data are collected and analysed.

***iv) The significance of the problem/implications of the study***

It is essential to point out how the answer to the question or the solution to the problem can influence theoretical bases or current practices. Careful formulation and presentation of the implications or possible applications of knowledge helps to give the project urgency, justifying its worth. There is little justification for the expenditure of research effort on trivial or superficial researches/investigations.

***v) Definitions/assumptions/limitations***

We should, in our proposal, define all unusual terms that could be misinterpreted. Such definitions help us to establish the frame of reference with which we approach the problem. We should also clearly state our assumptions, and limitations regarding the project. This helps us focus our attention on valid objectives and minimize the dangers of over generalization.

***vi) A resume of related literature***

To show familiarity with what has already been done, a brief critical summary of previous research and the writings of recognized experts is necessary. Since effective research must be based upon past knowledge, this step helps to eliminate the duplication of what has already been done, and provides useful hypotheses and helpful suggestions for significant investigation. In looking for related literature we should take into consideration the following:

- reported problems or closely related problems that have been investigated
- design of the study, including procedures employed and the details about the instrument used for collecting the data
- population-data (if any) that were studied
- variables that could have affected the findings
- loopholes that are visible
- suggestions for further research

***vii) Methodology***

You should be able to say the kinds of tool you may use for research purposes. Usually, if it is a kind of 'investigative research' oral interviews and questionnaires are used as standard tools. The questionnaire may comprise 'open-ended questions and/or 'structured' (i.e. yes or no type) ones. The methodology section should also include the population of the study and how you will be going about determining the sample size. A detailed analysis of how you might go about collecting your data, analysing them etc. is essential in a proposal.

**viii) Conclusion**

You should briefly present here what you have talked about in the rest of the proposal and the possible outcome of your study/research.

**Planning and Scheduling**

To complete the project on time, it is advisable to prepare a time schedule. This will help you budget your time and energy effectively dividing the project into parts and assigning dates for the completion of each part will help you systematize your work on the project. This also minimizes the natural tendency to procrastinate the work.

We should be aware of the fact that, at times, some phases of the problem cannot be started until other phases have been completed. Some parts of the final report like the review of related literature can be completed while waiting for the data to be collected. Since academic research/project involves rather critical time limitations and definite deadlines for submitting the final report, preplanning of procedures with definite data-targets is very vital. It is more so in the case of distance learners.

**The Next Step**

In doing research, you need the cooperation of many people. You need to interact with your peers, superiors and experts to understand and critically examine issues for research. In this section we have provided you with an overview of how to prepare a project proposal. In the next section, we shall elaborate on the usefulness of counselling sessions and how to take advantage of discussions with peer groups.

## Learning from Peer Group

Most of the time, during the learning/teaching process a distance learner is physically away from the tutor or institution. The two-way communication between them is initiated through assignment-responses. We can claim that the materials are so designed that the student can interact with the course writer, while reading. What is vitally lacking, however, is immediate feedback.

While you put your own point of view and hear immediate responses of full or partial agreement or disagreement, you have the chance to modify and crystalize your ideas in the ebb and flow of discussion. Such lively discussion with your peers is possible only when you meet them at a study centre.

*Section include:*

-  **How to participate in discussions**
-  **Benefits from counselling sessions**

Sometimes, the counseling session may take the shape of a discussion with the initiative of the counsellor or one of the learners. If it is so, you must take advantage of the situation and participate fully in the discussion.

There are several ways in which you can make the best use of such discussions. Consider the following:

- i) Find out about the topic or theme in advance and read up on it.
- ii) Identify questions, issues, or contradictions that you would like to draw attention to.
- iii) Listen carefully to the opinions being expressed and the facts with which they are backed up; make occasional notes - it helps you concentrate on the discussion.
- iv) Compare the facts with those known to you, and the opinions with your own. Politely challenge inaccurate or illogical statements.
- v) If someone advances an opinion or argument that you don't understand properly, you can ask the person to present it in a different way so as to put his/her viewpoint more clearly.
- vi) Be prepared to ask questions or offer illustrations.

## LEARNING FROM PEER GROUP

- vii) Put forward your own opinions for discussion. If they are sound, they will benefit others. If not, they will get out of your system before they become part of you.
- viii) If you know of an opinion or argument that would enrich or enliven the discussion, but has not yet been raised, put it forward, even if it is not your own.
- ix) Help the group in keeping the topic/theme in mind and avoid straying too far into side-issues that are of interest only to a minority.
- x) Whenever you speak, keep yourself to the point and be as precise as possible. If your peers want to elaborate, they will certainly ask you.
- xi) You should not be afraid of thoughtful silences.
- xii) You should also help your peers who have difficulty in getting their meaning across.
- xiii) Make a few notes afterwards to remind you of the main lines of the discussion and the state of your own opinions at the end of it.

To put it briefly, it is possible to derive benefits from commenting on a paper/discussion presented by someone else, provided you:

- read and think about the topic
- take an active part in the discussion
- make relevant brief notes of the main points of the discussions

Useful discussions at times spring up in corridors, in the bus and so on. Even though we may not have formally prepared for such discussions, we find ourselves participating in them. If you don't carry a pocket notebook with you, the first thing when you reach home is to note down the important points that emerged during group discussions.

### **A Note**

A group discussion can sometimes lack direction. If that is the case, we naturally tend to feel that our time is being wasted. To avoid this you should have a clear purpose or goal. Ideally, the group at its previous meeting should decide the goal. So that everyone participating in the discussion has an idea of the topic. An identified group leader can help avoid any tendency to 'drift' from the mainstream discussion. He or she can keep the group's attention on the right track. Ideally each one in the group should get an opportunity to lead the group.

The following checklist should help organise group discussions in a meaningful way.

## **Checklist**

Does the group have a clear target?

Is this specific?

Is this manageable?

Has it been circulated in advance?

Do group members carry out preparatory work before this discussion session?

Is it clear who is responsible for helping the group to focus on the target?

Is sufficient time allowed at the end of the session to discuss how well the group met its target and what target to set for the next time?

## **The Next Step**

So far we have discussed various ways of effective learning. It is time for you to pause and take note of what you have learnt. One of the most critical aspects in the learning process is being evaluated. Almost all of us have the examination anxiety. In the next section we try to discuss strategies to overcome examination fear and how to prepare yourself for successful results in examination.

## Taking Term-End Examination

Whatever we may think of them, examinations are part of our way of life. In the existing system of education, career prospects primarily depend on how well or poorly we have fared in examinations. So, there is little wonder that many of us approach examinations with some anxiety and awe. While a certain amount of tension is unavoidable, we should not contact 'exam-fevers'?

What should we do to ensure that we are sufficiently prepared for the examination?

### Preparing for examinations

The surest way to success in examination is to conscientiously employ effective study techniques over a period of time. For example, if you follow the study techniques we have suggested in this handbook, your chances will improve enormously. If you follow them, you will certainly remember more, have a better understanding, and be able to organise your ideas quickly and effectively.

Revision of text materials plays a vital role in your preparation for examinations/tests. The following are the two good reasons for doing regular revisions **right from the start**:

- i) We may not have enough time to revise everything we have studied in a course/programme at the last minute.
- ii) We will find the later materials easier to study as we may have already had a firm understanding of what precedes them.

### How to revise

We have suggested a few guidelines for you to revise effectively what you may have learnt from the course materials.

#### *Section include:*

- **Preparing for TEE**
- **How to revise**
- **What to do before the exam day and on the day itself**

## TAKING TERM-END EXAMINATION

- prepare a revision time-table by making a list of topics that have to be revised; (you should also decide in what order they may be tackled) leaving a plenty of time for rest; devoting time to revise a variety of topics each day rather than sticking on to only one topic exclusively.
- put emphasis on recall rather than on re-reading
- try to reorganize your knowledge, form new associations of ideas, and look at things from different perspectives (i.e. in examination situations, you may not be required to display facts and ideas in the same form they were when you first came across them. instead, you may be called upon to re-combine what you may have studied.
- revise two or three related topics at the same time, although you may have studied them separately earlier. (This will help you find many common stands linking topics together)
- be critical in working through your own notes and essays. (After all you are older than you were when you wrote them first).
- recall and recognize the notes as these will be the general activities required of you in the examination
- try to get a set of question papers used in the previous examinations and analyse them (Note that you should not just browse through the papers assuring you can cope with such and such questions etc. You would not really know, unless you practise answering them in the form of outlines)

Besides, if you think certain questions are bound to appear in your examination paper, have bets with yourself. But, for no reason rely only on them and neglect other areas of the syllabus.

### **Day Before Examination**

The evening before the examination may be spent in a variety of ways depending on your temperament. Some believe in switching off all conscious thought of the examination and doing no work at all. For others, it is difficult to keep their minds off the examination. Whatever may be the case, you should remind yourself what you are doing is revision and not new learning. It is impossible to come across a person who indulges in 'new learning' on the eve of the examination.

If you do spend the last day revising, make sure you are completely relaxed. A fresh and alert mind will be far more useful the next day than a few extra bits of information crammed in.

How can we perform to the best of our ability on the day of the examination?

## **The Examination Day**

If you can, avoid doing a 'preview' on the way to the examination hall. Also, avoid talking about the prospects with your peers. At times, it will make you feel depressed at the thought of all the topics you should have paid attention to but haven't. The important thing is that you should be confident and tell yourself that you have done everything humanly possible. (If you haven't it is now too late to worry, any way).

So, at last the moment arrives. You perhaps are mildly tense, pepped-up to respond to the challenge, but you are certainly not in fear. For, you are prepared.

When you receive the question paper,

- read the instructions carefully
- read the question paper right through very carefully paying individual attention to each question. (Spend at least a few minutes in reading through and getting the feel of the paper, and don't jump at questions)
- be objective and don't misread the questions or don't try to twist the question to suit your convenience
- be sure what precisely the questions demand of you. (Look at the key verbs. They will tell you what kind of answer you are expected to give).
- budget your time (i.e. you should carefully allocate your time according to the weightage given to each question. If all the question carry equal weightage, divide up your time equally).
- plan your answer (if possible, even before you actually present it, try to have a logical well organised skeleton outline)
- form a sense of priority (i.e. you will begin answering your best question).

## **Generalities**

Consider the following:

- Watch the clock and stick firmly to the time limits you set for yourself. If you run out of time on a particular answer, stop writing. Perhaps, you can leave some space in case you find time to come back to the question, finish it off later.
- Many fail to fare well in examinations because they spend more time on their best questions. The other questions, therefore, suffer.

## **TAKING TERM-END EXAMINATION**

- Concentrate on saying what is worth saying the most (you can deduce it from the question itself).
- Write legibly and pay attention to spelling and grammar.
- Do not rush out of the examination hall (Save yourself a few minutes at the end to give all your answers a final check).

Of course, the suggestions presented above are of repeated. But many of us tend to ignore them.

### **Learning from Test**

Obviously the term 'test' is used here to refer to the terminal/periodical tests. It is worth remembering, therefore, that it is possible to learn from your performance in the periodical tests. Typically, many of us pay little attention to our performance once we appear in the test or once the results are declared. But very often they teach us a lot about how to prepare for the forthcoming exams in a better way. Once the results are out, we must ask ourselves:

- Where did I lose credit?
- Did I misinterpret any question?
- Were the questions badly planned or illogical?
- Did my memory let me down?
- How should I approach, if the question (s) come up again? etc.

By analysing the mistakes; we can easily unfold the drawbacks in our study technique and look for a remedy, before it is too late.

### **The Next Step**

Having read this section, are you confident now to perform better in examinations? You may not feel confident immediately. But there is a need to put the new learning to practice, and in the process you will see the results. This was the last section in this part. The next part has only one section, in which we shall discuss some ethical practise.

## Using and Acknowledging Sources

For preparation of your assignments and project report, you will normally use various kinds of sources of knowledge. A very common source is the library. Each study centre of IGNOU is equipped with some valuable books on the programmes activated at that centre. As a learner, you can make use of your study centre library during working hours of the study centre. Also, you can make use of your institutional library or any other library in your city/town. A library is a collection of documents in various formats (books, periodicals, audio and video cassettes, etc.) organised systematically for easy retrieval at the time of need. To find the required documents of your choice, you can search the catalogue/index of the library or browse the shelves. But to save your time, it is better to be systematic about your needs and search the catalogue first. You can search a document through any of the following:

*Section include:*

 **Using libraries**  
 **Plagiarism**  
 **Referencing**

- title of the document
- author(s) of the document
- subject of the document

However developments in computers and Internet technology has enabled us to search documents from anywhere in the world using the World Wide Web search engines. We would not like to go into details of searching a document here. But what is important is to acknowledge the source of the document, when you prepare assignments and/or project reports, there are two very important points, you must know in relation to acknowledging sources (i) not to plagiarise, and (ii) provide reference of the source correctly.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you take the ideas of a source and either do not acknowledge them or present them as your own. Most students become prey to copying the sections of learning materials for their assignments, and this is how they get poor grade. Most learners face these problems, and sometimes unknowingly become prey to plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism you can put the content/quotation in a quotation mark and give the source after the end of the quotation mark. You can also paraphrase the idea in the quotation and put the reference at the end of the sentence or paragraph. However, quoting at length from various sources without critical viewpoint of your own do not make your writing original. Therefore, it is essential that you present various viewpoints/facts taken from different sources within a critical and constructive story of your own.

## Acknowledging Source

For the *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, a research journal published by IGNOU, we provide few guidelines for citations and references, which can be used for any other similar purpose in preparing assignments and project reports. We reproduce below the guidelines.

**Citations** of other works should be limited to those strictly necessary for arguments. Short quotations should be included in the text within inverted commas ("...") and quotations of more than 30 words should be placed in a separate paragraph intended from the main body of the text. However, all the quotations should be accompanied by precise reference, in author date style.

**References** should be indicated in the text by giving the name of the author(s) with the year of publication in parentheses. If more than one paper by the same author(s) from the same year are cited, a,b,c etc. should be put after the year of publication. All references should be alphabetically listed at the end of the paper in the following standard format.

**Books:** Keegan,D.(1986) *Foundations of Distance Education*, London: Croom Helm

**Journal Articles:** Jedge, Olugbemiro J. (1995) Anxiety levels and factors which engender them among tertiary distance learners, *Indian Journal of Open Learning* 4(1), 1-6.

**Book Chapters:** Ram Reddy, G. (1988) 'Distance education: what, why and how' in Koul, B.N. et al (Eds) *Studies in Distance Education*, New Delhi: AIU& IGNOU.

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**Dissertations:** Singh, S.K. (1994) 'Problems of women pursuing university degree course through distance education in India', *MEd Dissertation, Banaras Hindu University, Varnasi.*

## **The Next Step**

Now you have come to the end of this handbook. We hope it was a useful learning experience for you to go through the various sections. We would like to hear from you about the utility of the handbook. Do write to us about your experiences, benefits that you reaped and limitations that you come across while using this handbook. *We wish you all the best in all your learning endeavours. Good Luck!*

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**“Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or know where we can find information upon it”.**  
-- Samuel Johnson