INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

REPORT ON THE FEEDBACK OF SUBJECT EXPERTS ON "INTEGRATION OF ICT IN ACADEMIC COUNSELLING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)"

1.0: PREAMBLE

Feedback is crucial to the success of any programme, especially in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), where continuous improvement relies on insights from all stakeholders. It enhances the teaching-learning experience and supports curriculum updates to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. A strong feedback mechanism ensures quality assurance across ODL systems.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly strengthened academic counselling, offering greater flexibility, accessibility, and engagement. Feedback from Subject Experts—key contributors to curriculum design and Self-Learning Material (SLM) development—is essential for assessing the effectiveness of ICT in academic support.

The shift to digital platforms, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the importance of tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Gyan Darshan, eGyanKosh, and the IGNOU eContent App. These platforms enabled uninterrupted learner support and have contributed to a more inclusive, blended counselling model. To evaluate these initiatives, the School of Agriculture (SOA), IGNOU collected structured feedback from Subject Experts involved in content development. This report analyses their responses to strengthen ICT-enabled academic counselling, ensure quality delivery, and promote learner-centric practices in ODL. This report analyses their responses with the aim of enhancing ICT integration in academic counselling, promoting quality assurance, and ensuring learner-centric delivery in ODL systems.

2.0 ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND EXPERTS INVOLVED

The School of Agriculture which came into existence during the year 2005 has so far developed 18 programmes ranging from Awareness to Master's level programes in Agriculture and Allied Areas. The programmes developed by the School of Agriculture till date include (FOUR) Awareness Programmes, (FIVE) Certificate Programmes, (SEVEN) Diploma Programmes, ONE Post Graduate Certificate program, THREE Post Graduate Diploma Programmes and TWO Master's-level programmes. The Programmes were conceptualized and planned by the School's In-house Faculty and the curriculum were designed and developed with the support of outside experts from different parts of the country cutting across the disciplines. The subject experts who are renowned in their specialization with vast experience in Teaching/Research/Extension mostly from Educational Institutions, ICAR Institutes, Universities/Colleges, Extension Organizations, Industry, Government/NGO Organizations etc. were involved in designing and development of curriculum.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The feedback study on the "Integration of ICT in Academic Counselling in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)" was conducted by the School of Agriculture, IGNOU, with support from the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA). A mixed-method approach was adopted for the study, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. An online Google Form was designed and hosted on the CIQA webpage of the University's official website. The form comprised three sections: General Information (such as name, gender, age group, educational qualification, institution, and number of years associated with IGNOU); Use of ICT Tools in Academic Counselling (which included Likert-scale and multiple-option items); and Suggestions for Improvement (with open-ended questions to capture qualitative responses). The survey was administered to all Subject Experts (teachers) from the School of Agriculture who were engaged in

curriculum design, academic counselling, and the development of Self-Learning Materials (SLMs). The quantitative responses were analysed statistically and presented in percentages to identify patterns and trends. The qualitative responses were thematically analysed and grouped under relevant categories such as alignment of instructional activities with learning outcomes, enhancement of critical thinking and employability skills, assessment practices, content suitability, and integration of ICT in the teaching-learning process. This methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas needing improvement in ICT-based academic counselling within the ODL system, based on the insights of experienced subject experts.

4.0 FEEDBACK ON "INTEGRATION OF ICT IN ACADEMIC COUNSELLING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)"

Feedback received from the Subject Experts on the design and development of curriculum, delivery of the programme and assessment of the learnersare depicted in graphical form:

GENERAL INFORMATION
The feedback response regarding the general information of the respondents are presented below:
a) Age of the respondents:
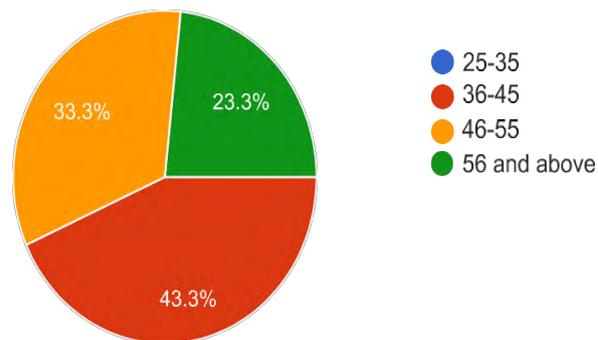
Fig 1. Age of the respondents

The data presented shows that majority of the respondents (43.3%) belong to middle age group of (36-45 years), followed by 33.3% of the respondents belong to 46-55 years age group , and 23.3% falls in 56 years and above category respectively from the fig 1.
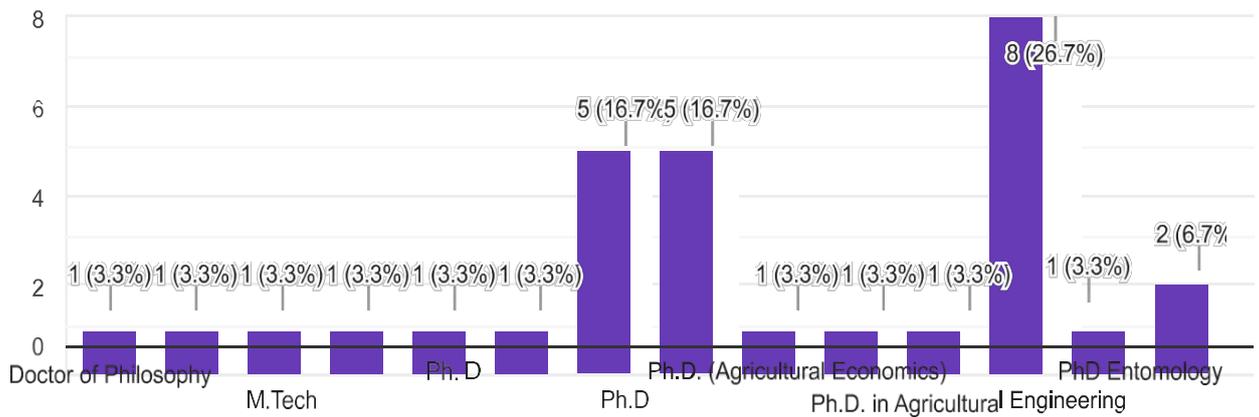
b) Gender of the respondents:
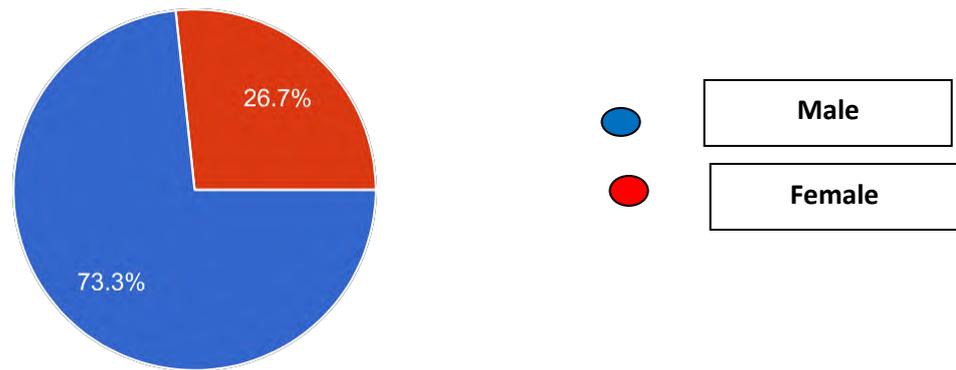
Fig. 2: Gender of the respondents

It is evident that a majority of the respondents (73.3%) were male, whereas 26.7% of the respondents were female.

c) Highest Educational Qualification of the respondents:

Fig. 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Educational Qualification

The analysis of the highest educational qualifications of the academic counsellors reveals that a majority of the respondents (68.6%) possess a Doctorate degree (Ph.D.), indicating their high level of academic expertise and subject mastery. Additionally the 22.9% of the respondents hold a Postgraduate (Master's) degree, while the remaining percentage may include professionals with M.Phil. or other advanced qualifications.

d) Number of years the respondents were associated with IGNOU:
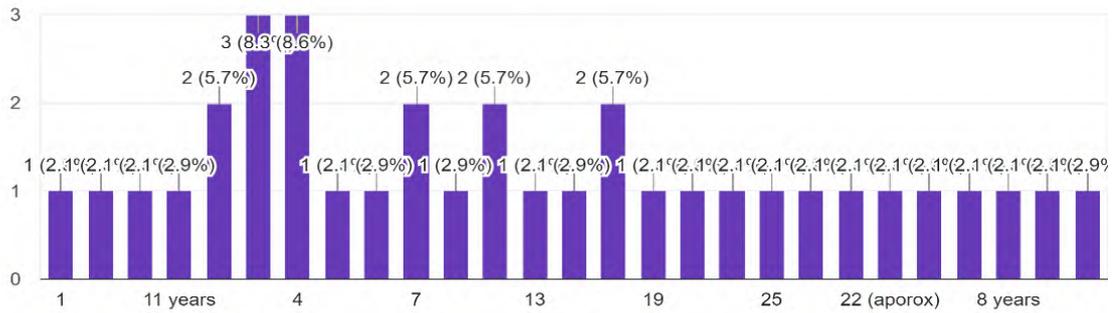
Fig. 4: Years of Association with IGNOU by the experts

The responses regarding the duration of association with IGNOU reveal a wide distribution across different years of involvement. The data shows that the majority of the respondents (8.6%) have been associated with IGNOU for approximately 4 years. This is followed by smaller yet consistent percentages (5.7%) of respondents who have been associated for 2, 7, and 19 years respectively. The remaining responses are distributed across a broad range, with each year accounting for around 2.1% to 2.9% of the total, indicating a mix of both recently associated and long-term academic experts.

e) Mode of academic counselling which is more useful in respondent's subject:
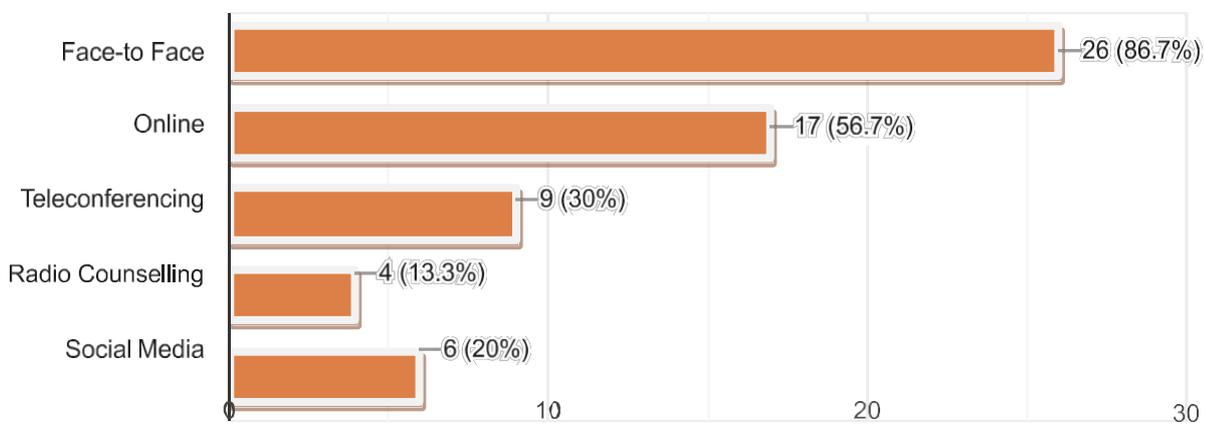
Fig 5: Mode of Academic Counselling

The analysis reveals that 86.7% of respondents found face-to-face counselling most useful, highlighting the value of direct interaction. Online counselling was the second most preferred mode at 56%, appreciated for its flexibility and accessibility. Teleconferencing (30%) and radio counselling (13.3%) were moderately favored, while social media (20%) emerged as a supportive informal tool. These findings suggest that a blended approach combining in-person and digital modes could enhance the overall effectiveness of academic counselling.

f) Academic counselling sessions provide opportunities for interaction and discussion
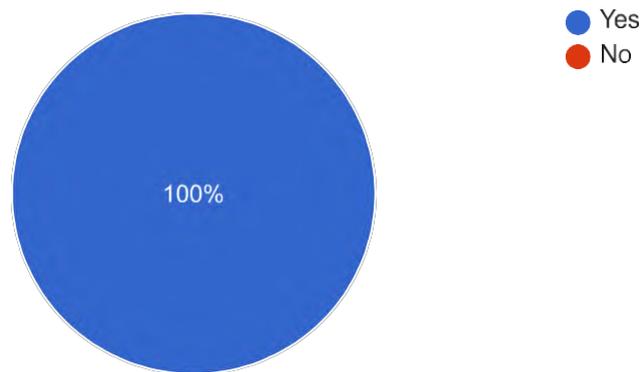
Fig 6. Response of Interaction via Counselling Sessions

The 100% respondents implies that the goal of academic counselling is providing full support, guidance for the students.

g) Usefulness of academic counselling in enhancing the learners subject knowledge and clarifying doubts:
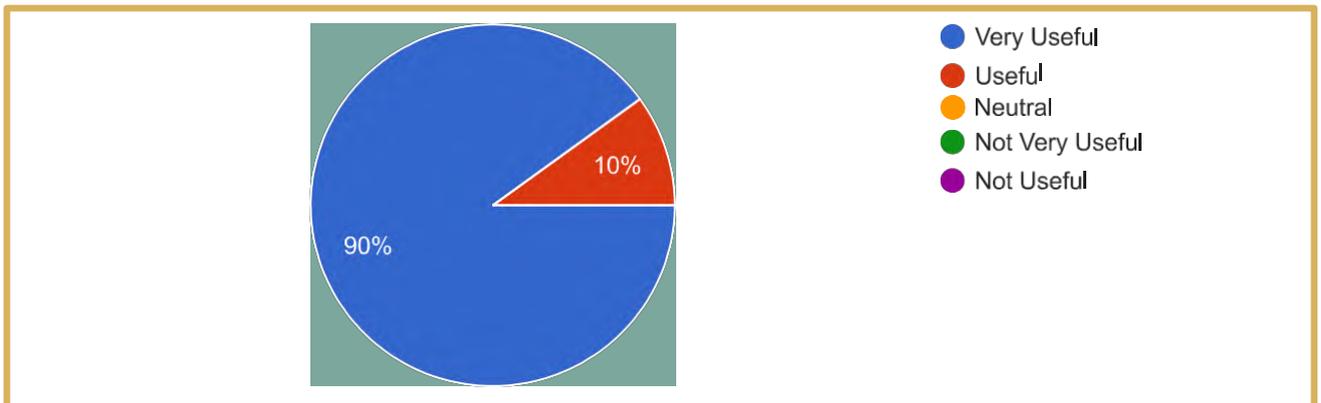
Fig 7. Distribution of respondents based on usefulness of academic counselling

A large majority (90%) of respondents found the sessions very useful, while the remaining 10% rated them as useful. This indicates that all participants had a positive experience, with no neutral or negative responses. Overall, academic counselling is seen as a valuable support tool for students.

h) ICT integration in Teaching Learning process
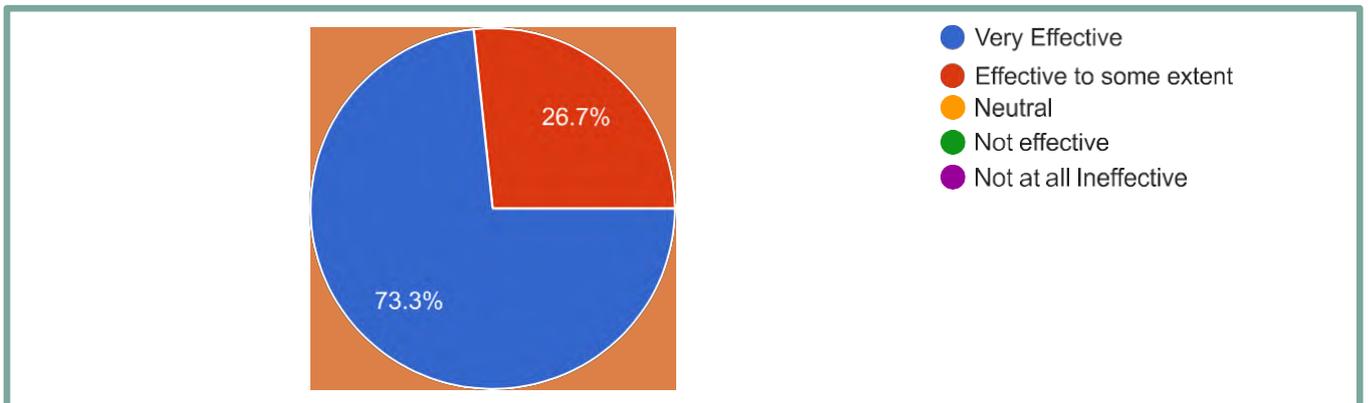
Fig 8. ICT integration in T-L Process

The above fig 8 shows the effectiveness of ICT integration in the teaching-learning process. According to the data, 73.3% of respondents found it very effective, while 26.7% considered it effective to some extent. This indicates that the majority of learners find ICT integration highly beneficial, enhancing engagement and understanding in the learning process.

i) ICT tools for academic couselling
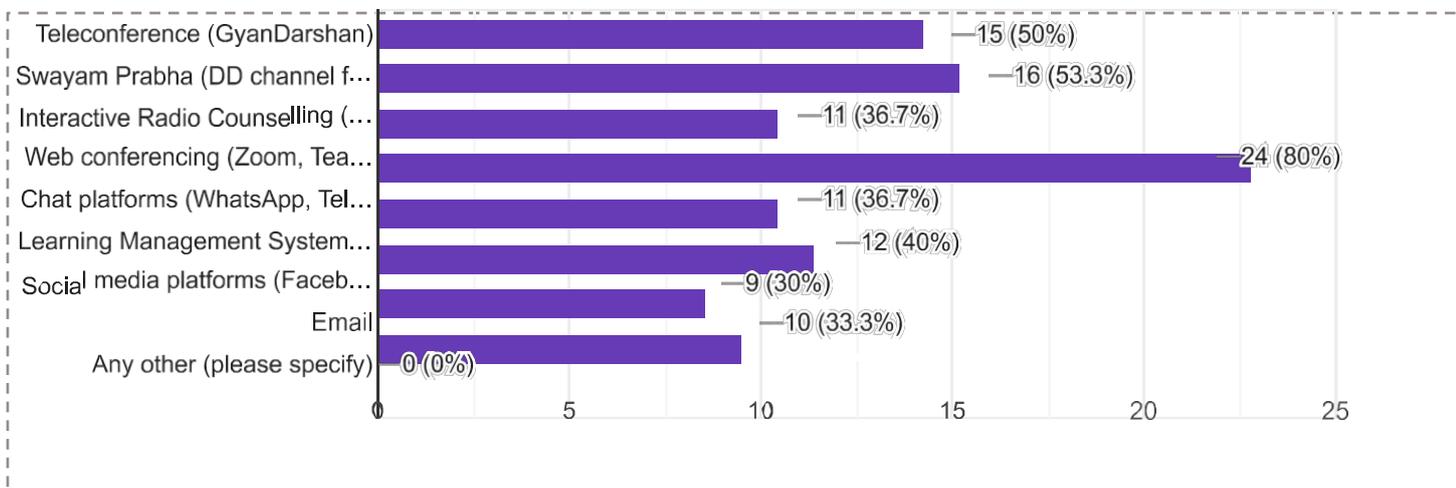
Fig 9. ICT tools for academic couselling

The analysis of the charts reveals the significant role of ICT in academic counselling, both in terms of platforms used and the benefits derived. Among the platforms, web conferencing tools like Zoom and Teams are the most commonly used, with 80% of respondents favoring them. This is followed by Swayam Prabha (53.3%), teleconferencing (50%), and Learning Management Systems (40%). Other platforms such as interactive radio, chat applications, and email are used by approximately 33% to 36.7% of participants, while social media platforms are the least utilized at 30%.

j) Benefits of ICT in academic counselling
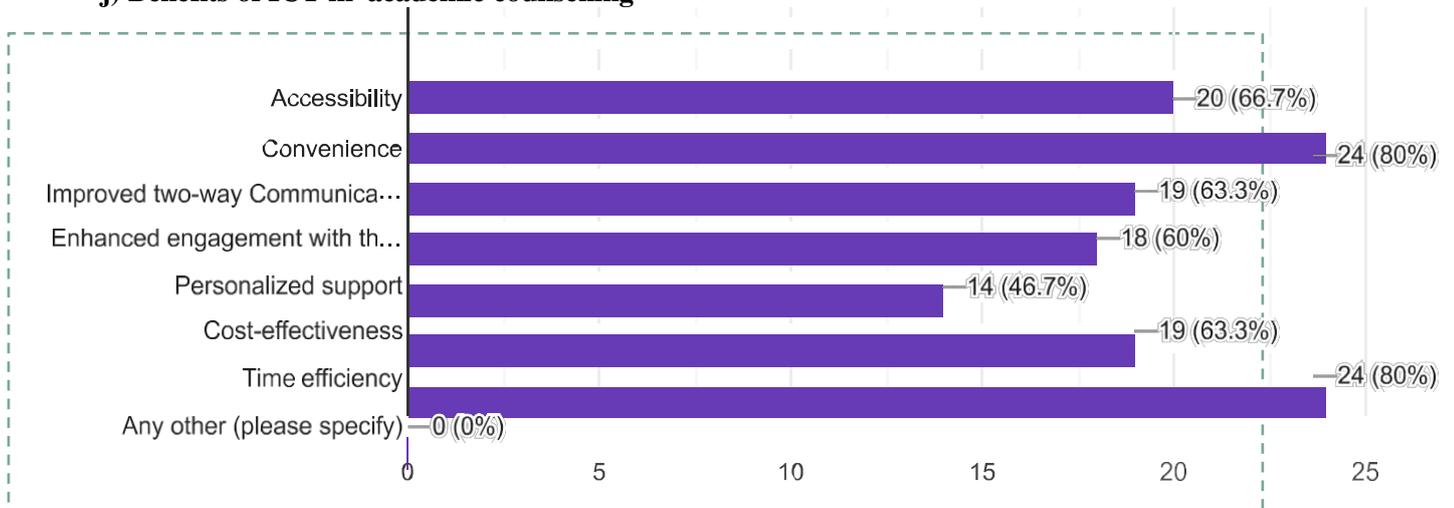
Fig 10. Benefits of ICT in Academic Counselling

Regarding the benefits, the top-rated advantages of ICT in academic counselling include convenience, time efficiency, and accessibility. These were recognized by 80% and 66.7% of respondents respectively, suggesting that ICT significantly improves the ease and flexibility of counselling sessions. Other notable benefits include improved two-way communication and cost-effectiveness (both 63.3%), as well as enhanced student engagement (60%). Personalized support, while slightly lower at 46.7%, still demonstrates the potential for tailored student guidance through ICT.

k) Frequency of using ICT tools for academic counselling for effective teaching and learning
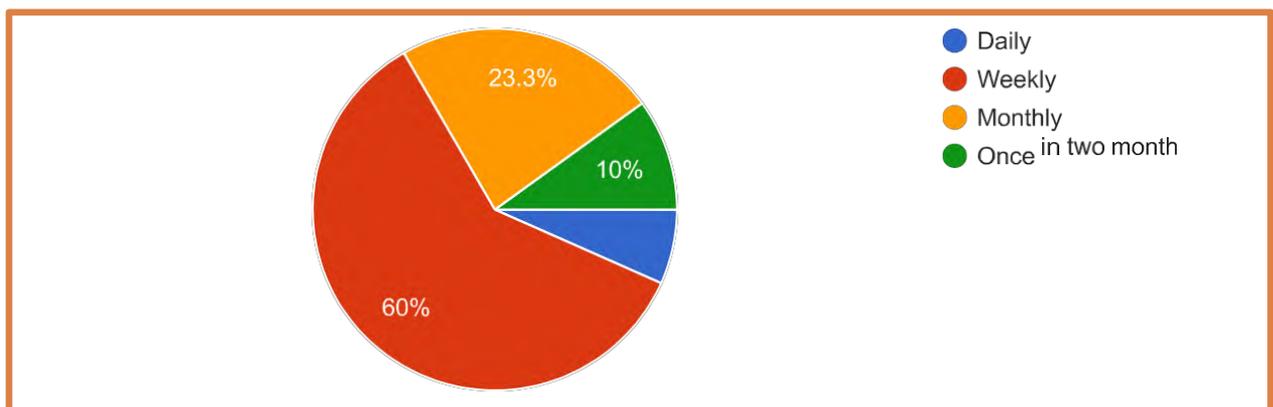
Fig 11. Frequency of ICT usage by the respondents

The pie chart on ICT tool usage for academic counselling shows that 60% of educators use them weekly, indicating regular integration. 23.3% use them monthly, 10% once in two months, and only 6.7% use them daily. This suggests a need to promote more frequent use through training and support to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness.

l) Other Suggestion given by the academic counsellors:

1. **ICT Infrastructure and Accessibility**
    a. Ensure precise and concise content suitable for digital platforms.
    b. Provide localization and multilingual support to cater to diverse learner backgrounds.
    c. Strengthen network connectivity and ICT infrastructure across regions.
    d. Supply basic ICT devices and tools to students for seamless participation.

2. **Session Planning**
    a. Increase the frequency of academic counselling sessions to maintain engagement.
    b. Opt for short-duration sessions to enhance impact and retention.
    c. Incorporate flexible communication modes including audio, video, and interactive dashboards.

3. **Language and Comprehension Support**
    a. Utilize visual aids and graphics to improve understanding.
    b. Implement AI-based translation tools for delivering content in regional languages.

4. **Student-Centric Approach**
    a. Track and monitor student participation and progress in counselling sessions.
    b. Form a panel of 2–3 members to holistically assess students' academic and personal needs.
    c. Encourage enthusiastic and honest communication between counsellors and students.

5. **Challenges in ODL Learning**
    a. Many learners enroll in ODL programs only for certification, not for meaningful learning.
    b. ICT tools can greatly benefit self-motivated, independent learners.
    c. Address key concerns such as cost and the equivalence of ODL programs with regular courses.
    d. This structured format ensures clarity and focus, making it ideal for presentations and policy discussions in the context of ICT-supported academic counselling.

ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK ON CURRICULUM DESIGN, PROGRAMME DELIVERY, AND LEARNER ASSESSMENT

The feedback received from academic counsellors and subject experts presents a comprehensive overview of key elements impacting the effectiveness of IGNOU's academic counselling and programme delivery, especially in the context of Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

1. General Profile of Respondents
- Age and Gender: The majority of respondents (43.3%) are in the 36–45 age group, with a dominant representation of males (73.3%). This indicates a relatively experienced and subject matter specialized group contributing to the feedback.
- Educational Qualification: Most respondents (68.6%) hold doctoral degrees, suggesting a high level of academic and subject expertise.
- Institutional Affiliation and Tenure: The responses show diverse affiliations and years of association with IGNOU, with many experts involved for over four years. This

2. Mode and Usefulness of Academic Counselling

- Preferred Mode: A significant 86.7% of respondents find face-to-face counselling most effective. However, digital platforms are gaining importance, with 56% favoring online modes.
- Interaction and Discussion: All respondents agreed that academic counselling provides essential opportunities for discussion, clarification, and academic support, showing its undeniable role in the learner support system.
- Usefulness in Learning: A vast majority (90%) found the sessions very useful in enhancing subject knowledge and clarifying doubts, underlining the importance of interactive, learner-focused counselling.

3. ICT Integration in Teaching-Learning

- Effectiveness of about 73.3% found ICT tools very effective, indicating strong support for integrating technology in academic support systems.
- ICT Platforms were Web conferencing tools (Zoom, Teams) are most popular (80%), followed by Swayam Prabha (53.3%) and teleconferencing (50%). Social media and email are less utilized but still present.
- Benefits received are Convenience, time-efficiency, and accessibility are the top benefits, supported by improved communication and cost-effectiveness.
- Usage Frequency: While 60% use ICT weekly, only 6.7% use it daily. This reflects good integration but leaves scope for increased adoption through capacity building.
- And also the Counsellors emphasized the need for: Better ICT infrastructure, localized content, and access to basic tools.
- Shorter, more frequent counselling sessions with varied modes of communication.
- Use of visuals and AI-based translation for better comprehension.
- A student-centric approach with tracking mechanisms and multiple counsellors to address learner needs.
- Addressing ODL challenges, such as low learner motivation, cost, and perceived lack of equivalency with regular programmes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The feedback confirms that academic counselling is crucial in supporting learners in the ODL system. While face-to-face interaction remains important, the growing reliance on ICT highlights its value in offering flexible, accessible support. However, variations in usage and access to digital tools suggest the need for targeted improvements. Experts agree on the effectiveness of counselling in enhancing learner understanding and motivation, and see ICT as a key enabler, provided digital gaps are addressed.

Based on the analysis, it is recommended to develop concise, ICT-friendly, and multilingual content; strengthen digital infrastructure and provide necessary devices to students; and offer training to academic counsellors. Counselling sessions should be more frequent, shorter, and blended in format. Visual aids and AI-based translation can enhance comprehension. Systems should be in place to track learner progress, involve expert panels, and foster an open learning environment. Lastly, efforts must be made to increase awareness of ODL's value, ensure parity with conventional education, and support self-directed learning through technology.

FORMAT OF SEEKING FEEDBACK FORM FOR SUBJECT EXPERTS

Section A: General Information
1. Name: _____
2. Gender: (Please √) 1) Male   2) Female   3) Third gender
3. Age Group (in years): (Please √) 1) 25 to 35   2) 36 to 45   3) 46 to 55   4) 56 and above
4. Highest Educational Qualification: _____

5. Institution you are/were employed: _____

6. Number of years you are associated with IGNOU: _____

Section B: Use of ICT Tools in Academic Counselling

7. Which mode of academic counselling you think is more useful in your subject: (Tick multiple options, if required)
- Face-to-Face
- Online
- Teleconferencing
- Radio Counselling
- Swayam Prabha
- Social Media

8. Do you think academic counselling sessions provide opportunities for interaction and discussion?
- Yes, a lot
- Yes, to some extent
- Neutral
- No, not much
- No, not at all

9. In your opinion how useful are academic counselling sessions in enhancing learners' subject knowledge and clarifying their doubts?
- Very Useful
- Useful
- Neutral
- Not Very Useful
- Not Useful

IGNOU SUBJECT EXPERT

10. Do you think the ICT integration is more effective in the teaching-learning process?
- Very Effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very Ineffective

11. In your opinion, which ICT tool(s) is more effective for academic counselling in your subject in ODL? (Tick multiple options, if required)

- Teleconference (GyanDarshan)
- SwayamPrabha
- Interactive Radio Counselling (GyanVani)
- Web conferencing (Zoom, Teams, etc.)
- Chat platforms (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.)
- Learning Management Systems (LMS)
- Social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, etc)
- Email
- Any other (please specify) _____

12. What are the key benefits of using ICT in academic counselling in your subject? (Tick multiple options, if required)

- Accessibility
- Convenience
- Improved two-way Communication
- Enhanced engagement with the course content
- Personalized support
- Cost-effectiveness
- Time efficiency
- Any other (please specify) _____

13. How frequently you think ICT-based academic counselling should be organised for effective teaching-learning?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Never

Section C: Suggestions for Improvement

14. What improvements would you suggest to enhance the effectiveness of ICT-based academic counselling in ODL?

15. Any additional comments: