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REIMAGINING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT IGNOU (2020-2025)



Indira Gandhi National Open University
New Delhi - 110068

"शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है आज के युग में तो यह लोकतन्त्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।"

– इन्दिरा गाँधी

"Education is liberating force, and in our age it is also democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances."

- Indira Gandhi

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INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU)
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Foreword



It gives me great pleasure to present this comprehensive document on "Reimagining Vocational Education at IGNOU", an initiative that reflects the University's commitment to advancing inclusive, flexible, and future-ready education for learners across the nation. As India undergoes rapid socio-economic and technological transformation, the role of vocational education has become central to national development. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a future where vocational learning is seamlessly integrated into the higher education system, accessible to all, and aligned with emerging employment landscapes. In this context, IGNOU, with its vast reach and statutory mandate, is uniquely positioned to lead a new era of skill development through open, distance and digital learning (ODDL).

This document articulates a forward-looking vision for strengthening IGNOU's vocational education ecosystem by aligning programmes with the NSQF, the NCrF, and the aspirations of a dynamic workforce. It lays out a strategic roadmap for curriculum redesign, pedagogy, industry collaboration, technology-enabled learning, and robust quality assurance mechanisms. Together, these elements create a holistic framework that will not only enhance the employability and entrepreneurial capabilities of our learners but also support their long-term educational and professional mobility.

As the world of workplace continues to evolve, IGNOU stands ready to empower diverse learner communities such as youth, women, workers, rural populations, and marginalized groups with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities needed to thrive in a changing economy. Through this reimagined framework, we reaffirm our mission of democratizing education and strengthening national capacity in line with India's development priorities.

I am confident that this document will serve as a guiding blueprint for sustained institutional innovation and excellence in vocational education. I extend my appreciation to all contributors and look forward to the successful implementation of this transformative vision.

Prof. Uma Kanjilal
Vice Chancellor
Indira Gandhi National Open University

Acknowledgment



In alignment with the strategic objectives of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and in view of its continued commitment to institutional excellence, the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) undertook the task of developing a comprehensive calendar of activities to guide and support preparations for the second cycle of NAAC accreditation and the NIRF 2026 ranking process. These activities were designed to address critical domains, including NAAC-related documentation and data validation, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 implementation, data capturing and analysis for the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), policy documents and best practices to streamline internal processes and ensure compliance with national quality benchmarks.

To accomplish this multifaceted undertaking in a time-bound and systematic manner, the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor constituted a series of committees comprising academic and administrative professionals from across the University. Each committee was entrusted with a specific thematic area, with the responsibility of planning, preparing, and reviewing documentation and institutional practices in accordance with the evolving frameworks of quality assurance and regulatory expectations.

The Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) sincerely acknowledges and appreciates the outstanding commitment, scholarly engagement, and collaborative spirit demonstrated by all committee members and contributors. Their meticulous attention to detail, academic rigour, and deep understanding of the institutional processes were critical to the successful preparation of comprehensive and credible documentation in support of the University's goals. The committee members and contributors undertook additional responsibilities beyond their regular duties, working diligently to collate data, contribute to narrative reports, validate evidence, and ensure alignment with national quality parameters.

The committees' collective efforts have greatly strengthened the University's internal quality systems and have contributed meaningfully to projecting IGNOU's distinct status as a national resource in the field of open, distance and digital education. Their work reflects not only professional excellence but also a shared vision of advancing IGNOU's mission of inclusive and quality higher education across the country and beyond. CIQA acknowledges the contribution of the Schools for of Studies in providing the necessary information which helped in completing the document.

CIQA places on record its deep gratitude to the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor for her support, insightful leadership and guidance. Above all, CIQA extends its heartfelt thanks to each member of the preparation team for their valuable contributions, without which the timely completion of this critical institutional endeavour would not have been possible.

Prof. Vijayakumar P.
Director, CIQA
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

India's socio-economic landscape is undergoing rapid transformation driven by technological advancements, demographic shifts, and evolving labour market demands. With a young population and a growing need for skilled manpower, vocational education has emerged as a critical priority for national development. Traditional education systems alone cannot meet the scale, diversity, and flexibility required for skilling millions of young people across varied regions and socio-economic backgrounds.

IGNOU, as the largest open university in the country with a national jurisdiction, has a unique responsibility to address this challenge through inclusive, accessible, and flexible modes of education. The shift towards a knowledge-driven and skill-intensive economy demands new approaches that integrate vocational training with academic progression, lifelong learning, and widespread accessibility. Reimagining vocational education at IGNOU is, therefore, essential to strengthen employability, promote entrepreneurship, and contribute to national development goals.

1.2 Importance of Vocational Education in the National Skills Ecosystem

Vocational education plays a central role in bridging the gap between education and employment by equipping learners with practical skills, industry-oriented competencies, and work-readiness. It supports a broad range of national priorities, including:

- Implementation of NEP 2020, which emphasises achieving at least 50% gross enrolment in higher education by 2035 and integrating skills across all levels of education.
- Alignment with NSQF and NCrF, enabling credit-based progression, recognition of prior learning, and seamless mobility between vocational, academic and professional pathways.
- Strengthening the National Skill Development Mission, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), and collaborations with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- Enhancing employability in emerging areas such as digital services, green technologies, healthcare, logistics, tourism, and creative industries.
- Promoting entrepreneurship, self-employment, and gig-economy opportunities, particularly for rural youth, women, and other marginalised groups.

A robust vocational ecosystem is indispensable for achieving sustainable development, economic competitiveness, and social equity. IGNOU's reach, credibility, and educational model place it in a pivotal position to contribute significantly to this ecosystem.

1.3 Role of Open, Distance and Digital Learning (ODDL) in Vocational Skilling

Open, Distance and Digital Learning (ODDL) and the emerging online integrated models provide the scalability, flexibility, and learner-centred approach needed to deliver vocational education effectively across the country. These modalities offer several unique advantages such as: flexibility of time, place, and pace; cost-effectiveness; use of multimedia and digital learning

resources; ability to reach underserved regions; integration of industry-led training; and capacity for large-scale enrolment.

ODDL thus offers an ideal educational architecture for a nationally scalable, technology-enabled, and flexible vocational education system. IGNOU, with decades of experience in this domain, can leverage these strengths to reimagine vocational skilling for the future.

1.4 IGNOU's Mandate and Commitment to Democratising Skill-Based Education

The IGNOU Act mandates the University to "advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means," particularly through open and distance modes. This statutory mandate inherently positions IGNOU as a champion of democratized and equitable access to higher education and skill development. The following dimensions place the University on the strong footing to fulfil this mandate:

- **Inclusive access**: Reaching learners across socio-economic backgrounds, including youth from rural and remote regions, working adults, women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities.
- **Skill-integrated programmes**: Offering a range of skill-based certificates, diplomas, degrees, and continuing education programmes aligned with national skill frameworks.
- **Nationwide network**: A multi-tier system of Schools of Studies, Regional Centres, Learner Support Centres, vocational training hubs, and community-level partners.
- **Technology-enabled learning**: Continuous adoption of ICT, digital platforms, online support services, and innovative pedagogical tools for skill-based learning.
- **Collaboration and recognition**: Partnerships with ministries, skill councils, government departments, industries, and international bodies to strengthen the credibility and reach of IGNOU's vocational offerings.

As the national open university, IGNOU has both an institutional responsibility and an unparalleled opportunity to redefine vocational education by combining flexibility with quality, scale with innovation, and access with employability.



2. CONTEXT AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Vocationalisation of Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a paradigm shift in India's educational landscape, placing unprecedented emphasis on integrating vocational education into mainstream academic structures. The policy envisions that at least 50% of learners will have exposure to vocational education by 2035, reflecting a national commitment to bridging the gap between education and employability.

NEP 2020 calls for the seamless blending of academic learning with practical, skill-based experiences through:

- Introducing vocational exposure from upper primary levels and expanding it at secondary and higher education levels.
- Promoting multidisciplinarity and flexible pathways to enable learners to combine vocational courses with general education.
- Strengthening industry linkages, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.
- Encouraging HEIs, especially open universities like IGNOU, to offer short-term certificates, diplomas, and full-fledged degrees aligned with national skills needs.
- Increasing focus on emerging sectors such as AI, robotics, green technologies, 3D printing, digital literacy, and creative industries.

For IGNOU, NEP 2020 provides a strategic opportunity to position vocational education as a central pillar of lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways.

2.2 National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and Alignment Requirements

The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), a competency-based framework organizes qualifications according to the levels of knowledge, skills, and aptitude, ranging from Level 1 (basic skills) to Level 10 (doctoral level). It promotes transparent, comparable, and industry-aligned standards across vocational, technical, and academic domains. The NSQF outlines several key alignment requirements that are particularly relevant for IGNOU. These include:

- Designing outcome-based curricula to ensure that every qualification corresponds to the competency descriptors defined for its respective NSQF level.
- Clearly mapping theoretical and practical components**,** with credits appropriately aligned to the nature, depth, and intensity of the skills being imparted.
- Aligning programmes with Qualification Packs (QPs) and National Occupational Standards (NOS) formulated by the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) to ensure industry relevance.
- Establishing transparent pathways for vertical mobility**,** allowing learners to seamlessly progress from certificate to diploma to degree programmes.
- Implementing competency-focused assessment and certification, where learners are evaluated on demonstrated skills and performance rather than solely on theoretical knowledge.

The alignment of vocational programmes to NSQF ensures national recognition, industry relevance, and enhanced employability for IGNOU learners.

2.3 National Credit Framework (NCrF) and Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) provides an integrated structure that unifies credits earned across school education, vocational training, and higher education. Under NCrF, one credit equals 30 hours of learning, inclusive of classroom, ODL, laboratory, field, and work-based components. The vocational credits earned at any stage are fully portable and can be accumulated in the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). The NCrF supports multiple entry-multiple exit, short-term skilling, and credit transfer between institutions. Vocational education is not isolated but embedded within an ecosystem that supports continuous upskilling and lifelong learning.

The framework provides to offer modular, flexible, and stackable programmes; facilitate credit accumulation, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and learner mobility; ensure that all vocational qualifications have national portability and industry recognition.

2.4 UGC and MoE Guidelines Relevant to Vocational Education and Flexible Learning Pathways

The University Grants Commission (UGC) and Ministry of Education (MoE) have issued various guidelines that strengthen the structure and quality of vocational education. Key directives include:

- UGC Guidelines on Vocational Education (2021 onwards), recommending that HEIs introduce vocational courses at the certificate, diploma, and degree levels aligned with NSQF.
- ODL and Online Programme Regulations (2020), enabling HEIs like IGNOU to offer skill-based programmes through blended and technology-enabled modalities.
- Multiple Entry–Multiple Exit (MEME) provisions under NEP, enabling learners to re-enter academic pathways after upskilling or work experience.
- National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), which links academic qualifications and vocational competencies within a unified structure.
- Internship and Apprenticeship Guidelines, emphasising industry engagement, practical training, and experiential learning.

These guidelines provide IGNOU with a robust regulatory environment to innovate and expand its vocational portfolio within national standards.

2.5 Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) Ecosystem

Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), supported by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), play a pivotal role in designing and implementing industry-led vocational standards in India. There are over 30 SSCs covering sectors such as IT-ITeS, Healthcare, Retail, Tourism & Hospitality, Agriculture, Logistics, and Media.

Sector Skill Councils contribute through:

- Development of Qualification Packs (QPs) and National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- Validation of curricula and assessment practices.
- Certification of vocational skills aligned to industry requirements.
- Supporting apprenticeships, internships, and placement linkages.
- Providing technical expertise for upgradation of training infrastructure.

IGNOU can strengthen its vocational programmes through:

- Co-branding and co-certification arrangements with SSCs.
- Embedding QPs/NOS into curricula.
- Establishing skill hubs, labs, and training centres in collaboration with industry partners.

The NCVET ecosystem thus, forms the backbone of the national skilling landscape and offers multiple opportunities for IGNOU to enhance credibility and employability outcomes. The University has been recognised as the Assessing and Awarding Body by NCVET. Thus, the current position of the University provides it with insights to reimagine its vocational offerings in ways that align with global best practices while meeting India's local and national needs.

3. CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT IGNOU

3.1 Schools offering Vocational Education programmes

IGNOU has developed a diverse portfolio of vocational programmes across multiple sectors, reflecting national and regional skill requirements. These programmes range from short-term Certificate and Awareness Programmes to Diploma and Degree-level offerings with a strong skill component. Many of these programmes have been designed with clear vocational outcomes, focusing on job roles that are in demand in both the organized and unorganized sectors. In addition to stand-alone vocational programmes, IGNOU has embedded skill components in several conventional academic programmes, thereby integrating vocational learning into broader disciplinary studies. The cumulative effect is a multi-level vocational ecosystem within IGNOU that caters to fresh school leavers, reskilling and upskilling needs of working adults, self-employed individuals, and learners seeking second careers or livelihood enhancement.

The Schools of Studies at IGNOU offering Vocational Education programmes reflect the University's strong commitment to skill-based, employment-oriented, and industry-relevant education across disciplines. As indicated in the uploaded document, vocational programmes are offered at UG Degree, PG Diploma, Diploma, and Certificate levels by multiple Schools namely School of Agriculture (SOA), School of Continuing Education (SOCE), School of Engineering and Technology (SOET), School of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies (SOITS), School of Vocational Education and Training (SOVET), School of Humanities (SOH), School of Management Studies (SOMS), School of Performing and Visual Arts (SOPVA), School of Health Sciences (SOHS), School of Sciences (SOS), School of Journalism and New Media Studies (SOJNMS), School of Tourism and Hospitality Services Management (SOTHSM), School of Social Sciences (SOSS), School of Extension and Development Studies (SOEDS) and School of Law (SOL).

These Schools cover diverse domains to enhance employability and self-employment opportunities. Overall, IGNOU's vocational education framework demonstrates a multi-disciplinary and multi-level approach aligned with national priorities, skill development initiatives, and sectoral workforce requirements, thereby strengthening the University's mandate of providing accessible, flexible, and career-oriented education.

3.2 Overview of Existing Vocational Education Programmes

The existing vocational programmes of the University present a comprehensive and vertically integrated academic framework designed to strengthen employability, entrepreneurship, and professional competence across sectors. Offered at undergraduate, diploma, and certificate levels, these programmes span diverse domains including agriculture, food safety, food processing, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, renewable energy, industrial safety, health and community care, counselling, office management, disaster management, fashion, retail, tourism and hospitality, media, entrepreneurship, information security, MSME development, legal support services, and applied languages. The programmes integrate practical training, industry exposure,

entrepreneurship development, and professional competencies to enhance employability and self-employment opportunities.

The programmes combine theoretical foundations with hands-on skill development, regulatory awareness, and sector-specific technical training. Many offerings are aligned with emerging areas such as cybersecurity, waste management, climate action, smart city development, and pharmaceutical sales, reflecting responsiveness to contemporary workforce needs. A strong emphasis is placed on self-employment, grassroots entrepreneurship, and capacity building for in-service professionals.

Through multidisciplinary design, the vocational portfolio supports lifelong learning and academic progression while contributing significantly to workforce development, community empowerment, and national skill enhancement. The level-wise analysis of the programmes is presented below:

Undergraduate Degree Programmes

The undergraduate vocational programmes demonstrate a balanced integration of foundational knowledge and applied skills. Areas such as Tourism Management, Facility and Services Management, MSME Development, Applied Skills (including programmes for Agniveers), Food Safety, and Applied Languages focus on operational competencies, service-sector skills, and entrepreneurship development.

This level emphasizes employability at entry and mid-level positions, managerial exposure, and practical industry engagement. It also provides pathways for academic progression to postgraduate studies. The programmes support skill-based workforce entry while strengthening managerial and entrepreneurial capabilities among youth.

Postgraduate Diploma Programmes

The Postgraduate Diplomas are highly practice-oriented and sector-specific. They cater both to fresh graduates and in-service professionals seeking specialization. Areas such as Industrial Safety, Waste Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, Pharmaceutical Sales Management, Animal Welfare, Audio Programme Production, and Counselling reflect direct alignment with industry and public sector needs.

These programmes enhance professional competence, upgrade existing workforce skills, and provide lateral career mobility. The focus is on applied knowledge, technical standards, field-based competencies, and regulatory frameworks, making them immediately employment-oriented.

Diploma Programmes

Diploma programmes represent strong grassroots and industry-linked vocational engagement. Sectors include Dairy Technology, Meat Technology, Horticulture, Watershed Management, Paralegal Practice, Retailing, Event Management, Smart City Development, Fashion Design, Modern Office Practice, and BPO–Finance & Accounting.

The orientation here is largely skill-intensive, operational, and entrepreneurship-driven. Many programmes directly support self-employment, micro-enterprise development, and

sectoral workforce requirements. They cater significantly to rural, semi-urban, and service-sector employment ecosystems.

Certificate Programmes

Certificate programmes demonstrate the widest outreach and community engagement. With offerings in organic farming, sericulture, poultry farming, beekeeping, early childhood education (including special education), geriatric care, laboratory techniques, community radio, IT skills, energy management, and performing arts, this level focuses on short-term, skill-based training.

These programmes enhance entry-level employability, provide livelihood opportunities, and support capacity building for in-service personnel. They are particularly relevant for self-employment, local entrepreneurship, and community-based development initiatives.

3.3 Collaborations with Industries and Government Bodies

IGNOU's vocational education programmes are strengthened through meaningful collaborations with industries, government bodies, regulatory authorities, and sectoral organizations. These collaborations ensure that programme design, curriculum content, and skill components remain aligned with current industry standards, technological advancements, and national development priorities.

Several programmes are closely linked with regulatory and statutory frameworks, such as food safety, industrial safety, environmental management, animal welfare, early childhood education, disaster management, and information security. Engagement with government departments, pollution control boards, disaster management authorities, municipal bodies, and sector-specific agencies enhances the practical relevance of these programmes and facilitates field exposure, internships, and project-based learning.

Industry partnerships contribute to curriculum enrichment, guest lectures, practical training, case studies, and skill-based certification components. In areas such as tourism, renewable energy, pharmaceutical sales management, fashion and retail, media production, MSMEs, and BPO operations, collaboration with corporate entities and professional bodies strengthens employability outcomes and entrepreneurial opportunities.

In alignment with the national vision of skill development, youth empowerment, and lifelong learning, IGNOU has extended academic collaboration to support the educational and professional advancement of *Agniveers* under the *Agnipath* Scheme. Recognizing the need to provide structured higher education pathways to defence personnel during and after their service tenure, the University has designed flexible, skill-oriented programmes tailored to their requirements.

Table 1: IGNOU Programmes developed and offered through Collaboration

Sl. No.	Name of the Programme	Name of the collaborating agency	Nature of the activity
1	Certificate in Community Health	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW), GOI	To design and develop the programme on Bridge Course in Community Health for Nurses
2	Certificate in Health Care Waste Management	World Health Organization (WHO)	For revision of Certificate in Health Care Waste Management CHCWM Programme
3	Diploma in Retailing	Retailers Association of India (RAI), Mumbai	Provide sponsored candidates for Diploma in Retailing Programme
4	(i) Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (ii) Bachelor of Commerce (Applied Skills) (iii) Bachelor of Arts (Vocational Studies) (Tourism Management). (iv) Bachelor of Science (Applied Skills)	Indian Air Force	To facilitate skill-based degree to Indian Air Force personnel, as per the terms and conditions mentioned in MOU
5	(i) Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (ii) Bachelor of Commerce (Applied skills) (iii) Bachelor of Arts (Vocational Studies) (Tourism Management) (iv) Bachelor of Science (Applied Skills)	Indian Army	To facilitate skill-based degree to Indian Army personnel, as per the terms and conditions mentioned in MOU
6	(i) Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (ii) Bachelor of Commerce (Applied skills) (iii) Bachelor of Arts (Vocational Studies) (Tourism Management) (iv) Bachelor of Science (Applied Skills)	Indian Navy	To facilitate skill-based degree to Indian Navy personnel, as per the terms and conditions mentioned in MOU
7	(i) PG Diploma in Food Safety and Quality Management (ii) Certificate in Organic Farming (COF)	Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)	Development of Two Programmes (Two)
8	(i) Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Visual Impairment (ii) Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Intellectual Disability (iii) Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Hearing Impairment	Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)	To make joint efforts for promoting and implementing training programmes for teachers and other stakeholders for empowerment of PwD within their jurisdiction.
9	(i) Diploma in Paralegal Practice (ii) Certificate in Paralegal Practice	Department of Justice, GOI	Jointly undertaking revision and development of an ODL programmes and organising series of Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness activities beneficial for common citizens.

Sl. No.	Name of the Programme	Name of the collaborating agency	Nature of the activity
10	Diploma in Watershed Management (DWM)	Dept of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, GOI	Development of DWM Programme
11	(i) Diploma in Value Added Products from Fruits and Vegetables (DVAPFV) (ii) Diploma in Dairy Technology (DDT) (iii) Diploma in Meat Technology (DMT)	Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MOFPI)	Development of educational programs for human resource development
12	Certificate in Sericulture (CIS)	Central Silk Board (CSB), Ministry of Textiles, GOI	Development of CIS programme
13	Diploma in Horticulture (DHORT)	National Horticultural Mission, GOI	Development of DHORT programme
14	Diploma in Agricultural Cost Management (DACM)	Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI)	Development of DACM programme
15	Awareness Programme on Dairy Farming (APDF)	Ministry of Rural Development (MORD), GOI	Development of APDF programme

These collaborations ensure industry relevance, regulatory alignment, professional standards, and enhanced employability of learners. The partnerships span government ministries, statutory bodies, international organizations, defence establishments, and sectoral industry associations.

One of the significant collaborations has been with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) for the Bridge Programme in Community Health for Nurses. Initiated in 2016, this collaboration enabled IGNOU to design and develop a structured programme to train nurses as Mid-Level Health Care Providers under the National Health Mission. This initiative strengthened primary healthcare delivery at Health & Wellness Centres nationwide.

In the health sector, IGNOU has also collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO) for the revision of the Certificate in Health Care Waste Management, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with global standards and biomedical waste management protocols.

To enhance employability in the retail sector, IGNOU signed an MoU with the Retailers Association of India for the Diploma in Retailing. This collaboration facilitates sponsored candidates, industry exposure, and sector-aligned skill training, strengthening workforce readiness in India's expanding retail industry.

IGNOU has also entered into Memoranda of Understanding with defence establishments including the Indian Air Force, Indian Army, and Indian Navy to facilitate skill-based undergraduate degree programmes for service personnel. These collaborations support capacity building and post-service employability by integrating vocational education with defence training structures.

In the domain of food safety, IGNOU renewed and amended its MoU with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to strengthen regulatory alignment, professional standards,

and industry-recognized competencies in food safety and compliance.

For inclusive education, IGNOU partnered with the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) to promote special education programmes, including certificates in Early Childhood Special Education. This ensures statutory recognition and professional validation for learners working in disability and inclusive education sectors.

Additionally, IGNOU collaborated with the Department of Justice for the revision and development of programmes such as the Diploma in Paralegal Practice. This initiative strengthens legal literacy, access to justice, and community-based legal support services.

Overall, these collaborations demonstrate IGNOU's strategic engagement with external agencies to ensure curriculum relevance, regulatory compliance, skill enhancement, and national capacity building. By integrating academic expertise with industry, government, and international standards, IGNOU's vocational programmes remain responsive to evolving workforce demands and national development priorities.

4. NEED FOR REIMAGINING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT IGNOU

As the global world of work undergoes unprecedented transformation driven by technological advancements, economic restructuring, and evolving societal needs, IGNOU must re-envision its vocational education ecosystem to remain relevant and future-ready. The emergence of new job roles, the rapid digitalization of traditional occupations, and the growing demand for flexible and affordable skill pathways have made open and distance learning a vital mode for large-scale skilling in India. Learners today require future-ready competencies such as digital literacy, green skills, AI-assisted capabilities, and strong soft skills to stay competitive in a dynamic labour market. At the same time, employers seek workers who can perform in technology-enabled environments and adapt to continuous workplace change. Reimagining IGNOU's vocational education is therefore essential not only for enhancing employability, entrepreneurship, and upward mobility, but also for strengthening industry relevance, real-world applicability, and national recognition of IGNOU's qualifications. Through responsive, modernized, and flexible vocational programmes, IGNOU can play a pivotal role in shaping India's evolving skill ecosystem.

The need for transformation is discussed in detail below:

4.1 Responding to the Changing Nature of Work and Emerging Job Roles

The nature of work is shifting rapidly due to automation, artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and new economic models. Traditional linear career paths are giving way to dynamic, multi-skilled, and technology-enabled employment trajectories. Automation and AI are increasingly replacing repetitive and low-skilled tasks, prompting a shift toward roles that require adaptability, problem-solving, and the ability to work with technology. Meanwhile, the platform-based and gig economy, comprising e-commerce delivery, digital marketing, content creation, virtual assistance, remote freelancing, and teleconsulting, is expanding at an unprecedented pace. Hybrid workplaces now demand that employees combine domain expertise with digital communication and collaboration skills.

New opportunities are emerging in fields such as cybersecurity, digital logistics, renewable energy, telehealth, data annotation, and social care. Even traditional sectors such as agriculture, retail, healthcare, and manufacturing are rapidly adopting technologies like IoT devices, automation tools, and digital service platforms. Many of IGNOU's existing vocational programmes were conceptualized decades ago and must now be transformed to address the demands of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0. The University must transition from conventional vocational roles to modern, technology-enabled, and future-oriented programmes that reflect current and emerging labour market realities.

4.2 Meeting the Need for Future-Ready Skills: Digital, Green, AI-Based, and Soft Skills

Tomorrow's workforce requires multi-dimensional skills that extend far beyond traditional

technical competencies. Digital literacy has become a universal requirement across all employment sectors, with learners needing proficiency in computer operations, internet-based communication, productivity apps, online collaboration tools, and mobile-based service platforms. As India advances towards sustainable and environmentally responsible development, green skills are witnessing increasing demand. This includes competencies related to renewable energy technologies, sustainable agriculture, waste management, recycling, water conservation, and green construction.

AI-assisted and technology-augmented skills are also becoming essential across job categories, as workers increasingly interact with AI-based applications, virtual assistants, automated customer service tools, basic analytics software, and IoT devices used in agriculture, logistics, and manufacturing. Soft skills *viz*. communication, teamwork, time management, customer interaction, ethics, and adaptability, remain central to employability and workplace success. Employers frequently emphasize that behavioural and employability competencies are equally, if not more, important than technical abilities. For this reason, IGNOU must embed structured training in soft skills, digital capabilities, and sustainability practices across all vocational curricula so that learners graduate with a holistic, future-ready skill set.

4.3 Addressing the Demand for Flexible, Affordable, and Modular Skill Training

India's workforce is highly diverse, mobile, and characterized by varying levels of educational attainment. Many individuals cannot participate in long-duration, campus-based programmes due to family responsibilities, work commitments, economic limitations, or geographical isolation. Millions of aspiring learners need skill training that is flexible, modular, affordable, and compatible with their daily lives. Short-term modular courses and micro-credentials allow learners to acquire skills incrementally without long-term time commitments. Stackable qualifications enable learners to progress gradually from Certificates to Diplomas and eventually to Degrees through NSQF/ NCrF-aligned modules.

The demand for anytime, anywhere learning has grown significantly, especially among working youth who rely on distance or online delivery modes that allow them to learn beyond standard hours. IGNOU's affordable fee structure positions it uniquely to support learners from economically weaker backgrounds. To respond to these needs, IGNOU must redesign its vocational programmes to offer modular, credit-based progression, embedded flexibility, and seamless mobility through the Academic Bank of Credits. Such restructuring would democratize access to vocational education and make learning opportunities more inclusive and equitable.

4.4 Enhancing Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Upward Mobility

For vocational education to be transformative, it must extend beyond short-term employment outcomes and contribute to learners' long-term economic and social mobility. Employability depends not only on sector-specific technical skills but also on communication abilities, digital competence, workplace behaviour, and adaptability. IGNOU must integrate these essential dimensions across programmes so that graduates can participate effectively in both local and national labour markets.

Entrepreneurship is an increasingly important pathway for livelihood creation in India. With the growth of micro-enterprises, self-employment opportunities, and digital commerce, vocational education must empower learners to initiate and manage small businesses, understand financial management, and leverage online platforms for marketing and service delivery. Knowledge of legal requirements and government schemes such as PMEGP, MUDRA, and NRLM can further support entrepreneurial aspirations. Reimagined vocational programmes must also strengthen pathways to higher education by allowing learners to accumulate credits through NCrF and transition into higher-level IGNOU programmes. This vertical mobility is especially critical for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who seek long-term career progression.

4.5 Ensuring Industry Relevance and Real-World Applicability

To maintain credibility and ensure meaningful outcomes, vocational education must be closely aligned with labour market demands. This requires continuous consultation with industry stakeholders, regular curriculum updates in response to technological and sectoral changes, and strong integration with SSCs and NSDC. Alignment with Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards ensures that IGNOU programmes equip learners with industry-required competencies. Real-world applicability must be strengthened through apprenticeships, internships, workplace projects, and community-based learning. IGNOU also needs to map vocational programmes to specific job roles, detailing required skills, career progression pathways, expected salaries, and sectoral growth prospects. Given India's regional diversity, IGNOU should tailor vocational offerings to local labour market needs such as tourism in the Northeast, dairy in Gujarat, logistics in Maharashtra, and renewable energy in Rajasthan. Such relevance will greatly enhance learner confidence, employer trust, and placement outcomes.

4.6 Strengthening the Credibility and Recognition of IGNOU's Vocational Programmes

As vocational education expands nationwide, strengthening the credibility, visibility, and recognition of IGNOU's programmes becomes paramount. Full alignment with NSQF and NCrF is essential for national comparability and acceptance. Co-certification models with SSCs and industry bodies can further enhance employability and employer confidence. Standardized and transparent assessment systems particularly competency-based practical assessments will ensure consistency across centres. Enhanced visibility, through dissemination of success stories, alumni achievements, and employer testimonials, can significantly elevate the brand image of IGNOU's vocational portfolio. Strengthening monitoring systems including audits of training centres, trainer qualifications, infrastructure, and learner outcomes will contribute to continuous quality enhancement. International benchmarking with frameworks such as AQF and EQF can further expand opportunities for global mobility and recognition. Together, these measures will reinforce IGNOU's leadership in providing credible, future-ready vocational education.

5. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR REIMAGINING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT IGNOU

Reimagining vocational education at IGNOU calls for a comprehensive and multi-dimensional transformation grounded in innovation, inclusivity, and national relevance. The strategic framework outlined here proposes a systemic shift in curriculum design, pedagogy, industry partnerships, technology integration, and quality assurance. This framework aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the NSQF and NCrF mandates, and global trends in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). It aims to modernize IGNOU's vocational ecosystem and position the University as a national leader in flexible, accessible, and industry-aligned skills education.

5.1 Curriculum Redesign for a Flexible, Competency-Based System

A modern, future-oriented vocational curriculum must be modular, stackable, and competency-based, enabling learners to acquire skills progressively and flexibly. IGNOU's programmes must be redesigned to break courses into micro-modules, each focused on a specific skill set or competency, enabling learners to learn at their own pace and combine modules to earn higher-level qualifications. Competency-based learning outcomes should clearly describe what learners can *do*, not merely what they *know*, ensuring alignment with real job roles. These redesigned modules should also form the basis for micro-credentials that accumulate toward Certificates, Diplomas, and Degrees. Integration of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will allow experienced learners to enter the progression ladder at an appropriate point. This flexible structure is particularly essential for working professionals, informal-sector workers, and learners with interrupted educational pathways.

A critical feature of curriculum redesign is strong alignment with the NSQF and NCrF to ensure national recognition and seamless academic progression. IGNOU must map all vocational programmes to relevant NSQF levels, align them with Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards, and structure them according to NCrF credit norms. Clear, transparent pathways must guide learners from Certificate (NSQF Level 3/4) to Diploma (Level 4/5), Advanced Diploma (Level 5/6), and ultimately Degree (Level 6/7). Credits accumulated through modular learning must be deposited in the Academic Bank of Credits so that mobility within and across institutions becomes frictionless. This alignment will significantly enhance learner mobility, workplace acceptance, and national portability of IGNOU qualifications.

Curriculum redesign must also embed crucial employability and entrepreneurship skills across all programmes. Workplace English, communication skills, digital literacy, customer service, and essential soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, ethics, and time management should form integral components of every vocational offering. Entrepreneurship development must be strengthened through modules on business planning, financial literacy, digital marketing, market linkage strategies, and government schemes that support micro-enterprise development. By embedding these cross-cutting competencies, IGNOU will ensure that its learners possess both technical and non-technical skills needed for success in diverse work environments.

Finally, IGNOU must integrate digital and emerging technologies into vocational curricula to prepare learners for a rapidly evolving labour market. Training should encompass AI tools used in service, agricultural, and retail sectors; IoT applications in manufacturing and home technologies; green technologies in energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture; and digital platforms increasingly used in healthcare, education, tourism, and entrepreneurship. This integration ensures that IGNOU's graduates remain future-ready and competitive in technology-enabled workplaces.

5.2 Pedagogy and Learning Design for Scalable, Practical Training

IGNOU's pedagogy must balance flexibility with hands-on skill development through a blended ODL/ODDL model. Self-learning materials whether print or digital will support conceptual understanding, while online platforms such as the LMS, SWAYAM, and eGyanKosh will facilitate quizzes, interactive activities, and peer learning. Hands-on training must occur at Learner Support Centres, community sites, and workplaces, ensuring that practical learning remains central to vocational education. Scheduled practical sessions, mentoring, and community-based practice will reinforce skill acquisition while preserving flexibility for learners across regions.

To overcome geographical barriers and variability in infrastructure, IGNOU must expand multimedia-based instructional content. Demonstration videos covering every practical skill, simulations for health procedures or retail interactions, virtual labs for IT and manufacturing-related trades, and AR/VR modules for immersive learning will collectively enhance the quality and scalability of practical training. These tools will make skill demonstrations uniform, accessible, and replicable across the country.

Work-integrated learning (WIL) must become a structured, mandatory component across most vocational programmes. Learners should be required to engage in internships, apprenticeships, fieldwork, or workplace projects evaluated through competency-based assessments. Industry mentors can support learners as coaches or co-instructors, ensuring the authenticity of workplace-based training. A well-defined WIL framework specifying duration, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and credit allocation will ensure consistency and quality.

IGNOU's unique national presence allows it to incorporate local resources and community-based learning into vocational pedagogy. Learning sites may include local industries, farms, community health centres, and artisan clusters, enabling contextually relevant training. Community-based projects such as nutrition awareness camps, waste management initiatives, rural tourism activities, and livelihood interventions will enrich learning while contributing to local development. On-the-job training for employed learners will further strengthen the relevance of IGNOU's programmes.

5.3 Industry Collaboration and Partnerships for Workforce Relevance

Industry collaboration is fundamental to the success of vocational education, and IGNOU must institutionalize deep, structured partnerships with SSCs, NSDC, industry associations, employers, and specialized training providers. Such collaboration will ensure alignment with Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards (NOS), support resource mobilization, expand skill hub integration, and enable joint initiatives under national skilling missions. Curriculum should

be co-created with industry experts and SSC representatives, who can also contribute to assessment design and periodic review processes.

Joint certification models co-branded programmes with SSCs or industry partners, will greatly enhance the credibility and acceptance of IGNOU's qualifications among employers. Industry co-branding also strengthens the signalling value of vocational credentials in the labour market. In addition, IGNOU must establish a structured apprenticeship ecosystem through partnerships under NAPS and related frameworks. IGNOU Regional Centres should maintain databases of employers willing to host apprentices and coordinate short-term internships, workplace visits, and project-based learning.

The University must also work with industry partners to establish Centres of Excellence and sector-specific skill labs equipped with industry-grade machinery and simulation environments. These centres will model best practices in practical training, serve as hubs for innovation, and support trainer development programmes. Through such strong industry partnerships, IGNOU can anchor its vocational initiatives firmly in the needs and realities of India's workforce.

5.4 Technology-Enabled Vocational Education for Scale and Innovation

Technology will be a transformative force in IGNOU's vocational education framework. Virtual labs and digital simulations can expand access to practical learning and reduce disparities in infrastructure across regions. Gamified modules and scenario-based simulations in healthcare, tourism, retail, agriculture, and IT will make learning more interactive and engaging.

AI-enabled systems can support personalised learning pathways by recommending courses, micro-credentials, and career options based on learner profiles. AI tools can provide automated feedback on assignments, guide learners toward relevant job opportunities, and offer chatbot-based academic support. Given IGNOU's large rural footprint, mobile-first solutions such as offline learning modules, voice-based content, and WhatsApp/SMS micro-learning, will ensure that learners with limited connectivity or low digital literacy can meaningfully participate.

A modern online assessment framework must complement these innovations. IGNOU must adopt online proctored examinations for theory components, video-based practical assessments where learners demonstrate skills remotely, and digital portfolios documenting practical tasks, workplace projects, and community-based assignments. AI-assisted evaluation tools can further improve the efficiency and reliability of practical assessments.

5.5 Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Sustained Excellence

Quality assurance must be embedded throughout IGNOU's vocational system. CIQA must lead the development of quality benchmarks for curriculum design, programme delivery, assessment, and certification. This includes standards for infrastructure, trainer qualifications, learning resources, and competency-based assessment tools. Continuous monitoring and evaluation must be institutionalized through academic audits, surprise inspections of training centres, analysis of learner and employer feedback, and regular review of trainer performance.

Robust feedback loops involving learners, industry, and training partners will ensure that IGNOU's vocational programmes remain responsive to evolving needs. Learner satisfaction surveys, industry advisory panels, partner review meetings, and alumni tracking systems must all feed into curriculum updates and programme improvement processes. By integrating these mechanisms into a coherent quality ecosystem, IGNOU can ensure excellence, transparency, and long-term credibility in its vocational offerings.

6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

6.1 Laying the Foundation for a Reimagined Vocational Ecosystem

The successful implementation of a reimagined vocational education ecosystem at IGNOU requires a carefully structured, multi-phase plan that integrates curriculum redesign, faculty and trainer capacity building, infrastructure expansion, industry partnerships, and administrative alignment with both IGNOU's mandate and national policy frameworks. In the immediate term, the University must initiate short-term actions that strengthen foundational systems and introduce rapid improvements across priority areas. These efforts begin with a comprehensive curriculum audit and mapping exercise, during which all existing vocational programmes are reviewed for relevance, quality, and alignment with NSQF and NCrF frameworks. Through this process, programmes are mapped to specific NSQF levels and National Occupational Standards (NOS), and non-aligned or obsolete offerings are identified for revision or discontinuation. To drive curriculum transformation across sectors, IGNOU must also constitute sector-specific working groups comprising faculty, SSC representatives, industry experts, and instructional designers who will guide redesign efforts and ensure academic and industry coherence.

Short-term improvements must also include enhancement of learning materials and digital content. Updated print materials, video demonstrations, and interactive learning components must be incorporated into revised curricula, with all content made available on the University's digital platforms, including the LMS and eGyanKosh. Strengthening practical training arrangements will be essential, requiring the identification and empanelment of high-quality partner institutions with adequate infrastructure, qualified trainers, and clearly defined responsibilities. IGNOU should begin pilot testing redesigned models: modular, blended, and competency-based, in selected programmes across key sectors. Complementing these initiatives, mobile-based learning support, including basic modules and WhatsApp/SMS-based communication, should be introduced to reach remote learners. Immediate faculty and counsellor orientation programmes must also be conducted to familiarize instructional staff with new pedagogical approaches and competency-based assessment practices. Finally, initial consultations with SSCs, NSDC, and industry bodies will ensure that all short-term reforms are grounded in industry realities.

While these measures build the foundation for reform, IGNOU must simultaneously work toward long-term actions that transform the vocational system over the next five years. Central to long-term implementation will be a complete redesign of curricula across all vocational sectors into modular and stackable NSQF-aligned structures that embed digital literacy, entrepreneurship, soft skills, and sector-specific competencies. IGNOU must invest significantly in advanced digital infrastructure, including virtual labs, simulation centres, AI-enabled learning pathways, and online assessment systems capable of supporting large-scale competency-based evaluation. Establishing Centres of Excellence in sectors such as health, agriculture, IT, renewable energy, and hospitality will provide model training environments equipped with industry-grade machinery, tools, and trainers. Scaling apprenticeships and work-integrated learning arrangements will be another major priority, requiring formal agreements with employers and coordinated frameworks across Regional Centres.

Placement and career services must be strengthened through the creation of a central placement portal, employer outreach initiatives, job fairs, and alumni networks to support vocational learners. Equally important will be the development of monitoring and evaluation systems, including annual curriculum review cycles, audits of partner institutions, and dashboards for learner outcomes. Over the long term, IGNOU should also pursue international collaborations with TVET institutions across Asia, Africa, and Europe, benchmarking its programmes against global frameworks such as EQF and AQF to enhance recognition and alignment with global standards.

6.2 Developing a Phased Roadmap for Scaling and Transformation

To ensure systematic implementation, IGNOU must follow a phased roadmap that provides coherence, sequencing, and clarity. The foundation-setting phase in the first year should focus on curriculum audits, stakeholder consultations, pilot redesigns, ICT upgrades, and preliminary training for teachers, academics and academic counsellors. This phase builds institutional readiness for large-scale reform. During the second phase, spanning one to two years, IGNOU should expand redesign processes to high-demand programmes, introduce virtual labs and digital simulations, launch modular micro-credentials, and strengthen IGNOU Regional Centres as skill hubs. This period must also prioritize building industry partnerships for co-certification and internships.

The third phase, covering years two to four, must focus on modernization and institutionalization, including scaling redesigned programmes across sectors, operationalizing Centres of Excellence, integrating AI-based learner tracking systems, expanding work-integrated learning pathways, and transitioning assessments to digital formats. In the fourth phase, IGNOU should pursue innovation and globalization, aligning programmes with global standards, launching internationally recognized micro-credentials, fostering cross-border collaborations, and securing long-term funding and policy support to ensure sustainability.

6.3 Building Capacity of Teachers, Academics and Academic Counsellors

The quality of vocational education ultimately depends on the competence of the Teachers, Academics and Academic Counsellors responsible for curriculum design and development, curriculum delivery and learner support and engagement. IGNOU must therefore invest in systematic capacity-building programmes across all categories of human resources. Capacity building must focus on orientation to NSQF, NCrF, and NOS/QP frameworks, training in competency-based curriculum design, exposure to emerging industry trends, hands-on training in digital pedagogy, and certification in blended learning methodologies. Annual refresher programmes will help maintain academic currency and quality.

Similarly, academic counsellors require specialized skill-specific training aligned with SSC and industry standards. Their development must include practical facilitation techniques, soft skills mentoring strategies, learner assessment methodologies, and safety and quality protocols. Strengthening partner institutions is equally important, requiring guidelines for minimum infrastructure, trainer qualifications, periodic audits, performance evaluations, and incentive mechanisms for high-performing centres. Through these capacity-building efforts, IGNOU can ensure consistency, quality, and standardization across its vast vocational network.

6.4 Enhancing Digital and Physical Infrastructure to Support Scale

To enable large-scale vocational delivery, IGNOU must invest simultaneously in digital and physical infrastructure. The digital ecosystem should include a robust Learning Management System with interactive tools, mobile applications with offline capabilities, virtual labs for selected trades, and video-based practical modules that increase accessibility for remote learners. Online assessment tools and proctored examination systems must support scalable competency-based evaluations. AI-driven learner support tools including chatbots, personalized dashboards, and analytics systems, will further strengthen learner engagement and tracking.

Physical infrastructure must also be enhanced through the development of skill labs at LSCs and partner institutions, upgraded equipment for priority sectors, establishment of IGNOU Centres of Excellence, and creation of model demonstration units that showcase best practices. Dedicated units for coordinating apprenticeships and work-integrated learning must also be established to support industry collaboration and learner placement.

6.5 Mobilizing Resources and Strengthening Administrative Systems

The success of IGNOU's implementation plan depends on effective resource mobilization and a supportive administrative environment. Financial resources must be drawn not only from internal IGNOU budget allocations but also from external sources such as the Ministry of Education, NSDC and Sector Skill Councils, CSR collaborations, and international agencies including UNESCO, ILO, and UNICEF. Administrative mechanisms must be strengthened through the establishment of a dedicated Vocational Education Coordination Cell (VECC), streamlined MoU processes for industry collaboration, efficient programme approval workflows, and strong coordination between Schools of Studies, Regional Centres, and CIQA. Annual review meetings involving senior leadership will ensure alignment with institutional priorities.

7. ASSESSMENT, CERTIFICATION, AND RECOGNITION

7.1 Importance of Robust Assessment and Certification Systems

Assessment, certification, and recognition form the backbone of a credible and robust vocational education ecosystem, particularly in an open and distance learning institution like IGNOU that serves a highly diverse and geographically dispersed learner base. To ensure quality, transparency, and national acceptance, IGNOU must adopt assessment systems that are flexible, competency-based, and closely aligned with national qualification frameworks such as the NSQF and NCrF. Strengthening these mechanisms is essential not only for improving employability and workforce readiness but also for ensuring portability of qualifications and opportunities for academic and professional progression. A renewed focus on competency-based assessment will help IGNOU evaluate not just what learners know theoretically, but what they can effectively perform in real-world occupational contexts.

7.2 Implementing Competency-Based Assessment Frameworks

A comprehensive competency-based assessment framework is central to this transformation. It must emphasize skill demonstrations and practical tasks where learners perform job-related activities in supervised or real workplace environments. Standardized assessment checklists capturing precision, speed, safety, and professional behaviour must align with National Occupational Standards to ensure industry relevance. In addition, portfolio-based assessments should be institutionalized, enabling learners to compile evidence of practical tasks, fieldwork, projects, apprenticeships, and work-integrated learning activities. Portfolios are especially valuable for working learners who may acquire skills informally or through ongoing employment. Project work and case studies should mirror real-life scenarios, enabling the assessment of problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and teamwork. For employed learners or those undergoing apprenticeships, workplace-based assessments conducted jointly by industry mentors and IGNOU assessors can validate competencies in authentic settings. Uniform assessment tools such as rubrics, scoring templates, logs, and observation formats must be implemented across all regions, and video-based assessments can enhance scalability and transparency. Theory examinations must complement practical evaluations by assessing conceptual clarity and understanding. This balanced approach ensures that IGNOU's certification is valid, reliable, and recognized across industries.

7.3 Integrating Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

As India seeks to formalize and upgrade the skills of its vast informal workforce, the integration of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) into IGNOU's vocational ecosystem becomes an urgent necessity. IGNOU, with its mandate for democratizing education, is well-positioned to mainstream RPL through Regional Centres and partner institutions, allowing skilled workers to receive formal recognition for abilities gained through experience. Establishing dedicated RPL centres at Regional Centres will enable the University to identify skilled individuals and conduct structured evaluations

supported by trained assessors and appropriate infrastructure. RPL assessments must align with NSQF descriptors and Qualification Packs to ensure that certifications hold industry value. Learners who do not fully meet competency standards must be offered flexible bridging modules delivered through online, blended, or self-paced formats. Evidence of skills, whether through videos, employer testimonials, work samples, or supervised task demonstrations, must be collected using standardized formats to enhance fairness and consistency. RPL-certified learners must also earn NCrF compliant credits that can be deposited into the Academic Bank of Credits, enabling them to accumulate credits toward certificates, diplomas, and degrees. This system of integrating informal skills into formal learning pathways significantly expands access, equity, and employability.

7.4 Advancing Digital Credentialing and ABC Integration

Digital Credentialing and the integration of credits into the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) form another critical dimension of IGNOU's modernized assessment and certification framework. In today's digital-first labour market, learners require secure, verifiable, and portable credentials that can be easily shared with employers and educational institutions. IGNOU must provide digital certificates equipped with QR codes to ensure authenticity and instant verification. The introduction of micro-credentials and digital badges will enable learners to demonstrate specific skill sets, especially those earned through short-term or modular learning. Full integration with the ABC is essential so that vocational credits earned by learners are securely stored, facilitating seamless mobility across institutions and programmes. Each credit must include NCrF-compliant metadata detailing competencies, learning hours, assessment methods, and NSQF level alignment. Furthermore, employer-friendly digital profiles will allow learners to present verified certifications, demonstrated skills, work experience, and soft skills badges creating a comprehensive digital portfolio that enhances employability.

7.5 Creating Seamless Pathways for Vertical Mobility

A defining strength of IGNOU's vocational system is its capacity to provide seamless academic mobility pathways, ensuring that vocational learning is not a terminal route but a stepping stone to higher qualifications. Strengthening vertical mobility requires clear NSQF/NCrF-aligned progression routes that enable learners to move from certificate to diploma to advanced diploma and degree programmes. The Academic Bank of Credits must function as a mobility gateway, allowing learners to pause and resume education without losing accumulated credits. IGNOU's vocational qualifications can lead to multiple academic programmes, including tourism studies, food and nutrition, rural development, social work, and management of services, along with future multidisciplinary degrees envisioned under NEP 2020. Bridging courses in communication, foundational academic skills, quantitative reasoning, and digital literacy will support smooth transitions. Vocational pathways must also enable progression into technical and professional certifications, including SSC Level 5–7 qualifications and licensure examinations. Learners entering the workforce should have opportunities to re-enter education through distance or online modes and through micro-credential accumulation. These pathways ensure that vocational education becomes a dynamic, empowering lifelong learning system.

8. THE WAY FORWARD

Reimagining vocational education at IGNOU requires a transformative and future-oriented approach that strengthens academic rigour, deepens industry relevance, expands inclusivity, and harnesses the power of technology. As India advances toward a skill-intensive economy in line with NEP 2020 and global workforce trends, IGNOU must position itself as a national leader in flexible, accessible, and future-ready vocational education. The University now has the opportunity to build a comprehensive vocational ecosystem that is modular, stackable, and fully aligned with NSQF and NCrF, enabling learners to progress smoothly from certificate to diploma to degree levels. This ecosystem must integrate competency-based learning outcomes, digital literacy, soft skills, and entrepreneurship across all sectors, while establishing sector-specific programme clusters in areas such as healthcare, digital services, tourism, renewable energy, logistics, agriculture, and community development. Regular curriculum revision based on emerging technologies, labour market intelligence, and industry feedback will ensure that IGNOU's vocational programmes remain responsive to rapidly evolving job roles.

Strengthening both digital and physical infrastructure will be central to this transformation. IGNOU must invest in virtual labs, simulations, and AR/VR-enabled tools to support high-quality practical learning and deploy AI-driven systems for personalised learning pathways, predictive analytics, and academic support. Expanding mobile-first platforms including offline access and multi-language content will improve outreach to rural and remote learners. Upgrading physical facilities through well-equipped skill labs, model training centres, and Centres of Excellence will ensure that learners across the country have equitable access to hands-on training. Parallel to this, deepening industry engagement is essential for ensuring employability and relevance. Institutionalized partnerships with SSCs, NSDC, industry associations, MSMEs, hospitals, farms, and service enterprises will enhance curriculum quality, facilitate joint certification, and expand opportunities for apprenticeships, internships, and work-integrated learning. Industry-led skill hubs and Centres of Excellence will serve as catalysts for bridging the gap between academia and the workforce.

Consistent with IGNOU's mandate of promoting inclusive education, the future of vocational education must prioritise equitable access for women, rural and tribal youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. This requires expanding flexible learning options, community-based training, mobile units, and targeted interventions supported by local language content and region-specific skill hubs. Enhanced learner support mechanisms including a centralized career and placement service, structured counselling, job-readiness training, and integration of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will ensure that learners can seamlessly transition into employment or continue their education through Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and higher-level programmes.

To sustain this transformation, IGNOU must reinforce governance and quality assurance through CIQA-led benchmarks covering curriculum design, training delivery, assessment, and certification. Regular audits, tracer studies, and monitoring of Regional Centres and partner institutions will ensure consistent quality across the system. Statutory bodies must periodically review programmes to maintain alignment with NEP 2020, NSQF, NCrF, and ODL guidelines. Establishing a centralized



Vocational Education Coordination Cell (VECC) will enhance institutional coordination, streamline partnerships, and support resource mobilization.

Looking ahead, IGNOU's revitalized vocational ecosystem will significantly contribute to national missions including Skill India, Digital India, Green India, NRLM, and PMKVY, while advancing global commitments under the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to quality education, gender equality, decent work, and reduced inequalities. Benchmarking IGNOU's programmes with global TVET frameworks will further strengthen international mobility and recognition. Ultimately, the way forward calls for a coordinated, phased, and innovative approach that integrates curriculum reform, technological advancement, industry collaboration, inclusivity, learner support, and robust governance. With its national mandate, expansive reach, and established credibility, IGNOU is uniquely positioned to lead a nationwide transformation in vocational education and create a skilled, empowered, and future-ready workforce fully aligned with the University's mission of democratising education for all.

Appendix 1

Programmes offered by IGNOU having Vocational Component

A) UG Degree programmes: 13 UG degree programmes offered by four Schools of Studies

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOA	Bachelor of Science (Food Safety and Quality Management) (BSCFFSQM)	Advanced understanding of food safety laws, biotechnology, risk analysis, auditing, research methods, and novel food technologies.	Graduates are eligible as Food safety team leader/ Supervisor/ Manager in Food industry/ hospitality institutions; Technical Officer in Quality Control department; Food safety officer/ inspector in Regulatory bodies, Food Safety Department etc.; Food Safety Auditor in certification and inspection bodies; Trainer/ Counsellor in training/counselling bodies; Member of supply chain management team in retail chain/ industry; Self-Employment as certifying professionals, counsellor, trainer, auditor.
SOTHSM	Bachelor of Arts (Vocational Studies) (Tourism Management) (BAFVTM)	Vocational training in tourism industry functions, including management, services, marketing, and operations.	Graduates of the Bachelor of Arts (Vocational Studies) in Tourism Management (BAFVTM) can pursue careers as tourism executives, travel consultants, tour coordinators, and hospitality managers. Opportunities are available in travel agencies, tour operations companies, airlines, hotels, resorts, event management firms, and government tourism departments. They may also work in destination marketing, customer services, and tourism entrepreneurship.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOTHSM	Bachelor of Arts (Facility and Services Management) (BAFFSM)	Training in management of facilities and support services in organizational settings, covering operations, maintenance, and quality control.	Graduates may opt for employment in the Facility Management Companies (Assistant in Facilities, Facility Managers, Services Providers for facility management companies, etc.) or start his/her own business in the area of Facility Management like housekeeping service providers, security service provider, to various companies and helping them to concentrate on their core areas. In order to pursue academic excellence, one may take up further studies and go for higher studies like post-graduation and doctoral studies in Facility Management.
SOTHSM	Bachelor of Tourism and Travel Management (BFTTM)	Focus on comprehensive tourism and travel industry training with emphasis on business, marketing, and operational management.	Graduates are eligible for jobs in Travel agency, Tour Operation, Guiding/Escorting, NGO, Government Sector, University, College, Schools, Research Organisation, Shopping, Accommodation, Transportation.
SOVET	Bachelor of Arts (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) (BAMSME)	Develops Entrepreneurial skills for managing and developing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).	Prepares graduates for diverse roles in entrepreneurship, business management, and consulting within the MSME sector. It offers strong career prospects as business development executives, consultants, or operations managers in SMEs, startups, and NGOs, with a focus on self-employment and skill-based roles.
SOVET	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (Tourism Management) (BTMAPS) for Agniveer Defence Forces	Introducing the learners to the main themes and topics in the area of Tourism and Hospitality Services; Provide the learners with the information and skills necessary to understand and analyse their world; and Enable the learners to work towards ability and skill enhancement through exposure to different job roles.	Prepares graduates for diverse careers in the travel and hospitality sectors, including roles like travel consultants, tour operators, event managers, and airline ground staff. The program emphasizes practical skills for roles in tourism departments, hotels, and cruise lines.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOVET	Bachelor of Science (Applied Skills) (BSCAPS) for Agniveer Defence Forces	Introduce the learners to the main themes and topics of disciplines in Humanities and Social Sciences; Provide the learners with the information and skills necessary to understand and analyse their world; and Enable the learners to work towards ability and skill enhancement through exposure to different job roles.	The programme aims to provide opportunities for higher education leading to the award of B.A. (Applied Skills) degree to the Agniveers that would help them in post-service employment and further professional development.
SOVET	Bachelor of Commerce (Applied Skills) (BCOMAPS) for Agniveer Defence Forces	The programme will provide the opportunities to the youth/ trainees/ Agniveers to enhance their knowledge by acquiring higher education in Commerce discipline. Study through ODL mode will facilitate the learners to avail the benefits of various Governments schemes. The programme aims to provide opportunities for higher education leading to the award of B. Com (Applied Skills) degree to the Agniveers that would help them in post-service employment and further in their professional development.	The programme aims to provide opportunities for higher education leading to the award of B.A (Applied Skills) degree to the Agniveers that would help them in post-service employment and further professional development.
SOVET	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (BAAPS) for Agniveer Defence Forces	The programme aims to provide opportunities for higher education leading to the award of B.A (Applied Skills) degree to the Agniveers that would help them in post-service employment and further professional development.	The programme aims to provide opportunities for higher education leading to the award of B.A (Applied Skills) degree to the Agniveers that would help them in post-service employment and further professional development.
SOVET	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Skills) (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) (BAMSAPS) for Agniveer Defence Forces	• Studying Market demand before initiating a new venture • Facilitating successful and profitable operation of a business enterprise • Inculcating managerial skills and enhancing interpersonal and leadership skills for empowerment of self and others • Providing Innovative and competency-based approach in the area of entrepreneurship	Prepares graduates for diverse careers in management and operation of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), business planning, entrepreneurship, finance, marketing, legal and digital skills for MSMEs

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOH	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Urdu) (BAAUD)	• Strengthening proficiency in Urdu reading, writing, and comprehension, • Introducing learners to classical and modern Urdu literature, • Exploring the functional and applied aspects of Urdu in contemporary society, • Encouraging creative and critical thinking through literary and linguistic analysis, and • Preparing learners for careers in education, journalism, translation, and cultural institutions.	Graduates have wide-ranging career opportunities in both traditional and emerging fields. They can pursue careers as teachers, translators, interpreters, editors, content writers, journalists, and media professionals in print, electronic, and digital platforms. The programme's applied components also prepare learners for roles in advertising, public relations, publishing, and cultural organizations. With its multidisciplinary foundation, graduates can further explore opportunities in administrative services, corporate communication, and higher education or research. The blend of language proficiency and applied skills ensures employability across academic, professional, and creative sectors.
SOH	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Sanskrit) (BAASK)	The objective of this programme is to provide high quality education to the students for their holistic development and development of multidimensional talent as per the National Education Policy-2020.	This programme aims to connect Sanskrit learners with the mainstream and provide them with new employment opportunities in line with the needs of modern times. Therefore, this programme emphasizes skill development through courses in mathematics, media, and e-commerce, along with ancient knowledge traditions such as Sanskrit language, grammar, Vedas, and philosophy, as well as skills relevant to contemporary needs.
SOH	Bachelor of Arts (Applied Hindi) (BAAHD)	The objective of this programme is to provide students with high-quality Hindi education, in accordance with the National Education Policy 2020, and to familiarize and equip them with skills in applied Hindi and other multi-disciplinary subjects. This programme aims to provide Hindi learners with a variety of new employment opportunities tailored to current needs.	The programme emphasizes skill development through skill-focused courses in Hindi traditional literature as well as translation, newspaper and feature writing, radio writing, television writing, mathematics, and e-commerce. Giving opportunities to seek employment in the above areas.

ii) PG Diploma--10 PG Diploma programmes offered by eight Schools of Studies

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOA	Post Graduate Diploma in Food Safety and Quality Management (PGDFSQM)	Preparation for food safety audits, implementation and monitoring of food safety standards, quality assurance in food industry.	Learners can seek employment as Quality Control Officer or Quality Assurance / Food Safety and Quality Management professionals in food/ hospitality/retail industry and laboratories; Food Safety Officer in the regulatory bodies; Food Auditor in Certification and Inspection bodies; Trainer/Counsellor in Food Safety & Quality Management Systems; Food certifying/auditing professional for Food Safety & Quality Management Systems (FSQMS).
SOCE	Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Family Therapy (PGDCFT)	Application of counselling principles, mental health promotion, and family therapy skills in educational and professional settings.	Graduates of the Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Family Therapy (PGDCFT) can work as counsellors, family therapy practitioners, and mental health facilitators in schools, colleges, hospitals, NGOs, and community organizations. They may engage in guidance and counselling services, crisis intervention, family support programmes, and mental health awareness initiatives in educational and professional settings**.**
SOCE	Post Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood and Foundational Stage Education (PGDECFE)	Pedagogy for preschool years and early primary grades (class 1 and 2), planning learning experiences for the children up to 8 years of age, care-giving, child educator training by enhancing the knowledge base and competencies of professionals and educators who engage with children from birth to eight years in preschools, pre-primary sections, early primary sections (Classes 1 and 2) and ECCE centres, as visualized in the National Education Policy, 2020.	The programme empowers the learner to seek career opportunities in various roles such as Teacher educators, Supervisors, Curriculum developers, Caregivers at crèches, preschools, preschools, pre-primary classes, nursery schools, *anganwadis* and *balwadis*. The Programme is of special relevance for functionaries already working without adequate training in the sector of ECCE and foundational stage education and have the potential to act as training tool for In-service teachers in preschools and early primary grades.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOEDS	Post Graduate Diploma in Animal Welfare (PGDAW)	Animal ethics, welfare auditing, and legislation for humane management of animals across sectors.	Learners will be equipped to serve various Government and non-government organizations (NGOs) dealing with animal welfare activities. Fresh graduates who complete this programme will be the potential candidates suitable for employment at the grassroots, supervisory and other middle level positions in the animal welfare organizations. The programme also strengthens the efficiency and effectiveness of in-service personnel working in government and NGOs, private or corporate sectors and handling various projects and programmes in animal welfare. In-service professionals with PGDAW will be more potential candidates suitable for higher level positions in the animal welfare filed. In addition, they can act as more resourceful persons in the field. The PGDAW also provides scope for those interested in establishing a local voluntary organization / NGO / animal rescue centre as part of their self-employment and greater involvement in welfare of animals.
SOET	Post Graduate Diploma in Industrial Safety (PGDINDS)	Industrial safety standards, occupational health, hazard assessment, and risk prevention in industrial setups.	The PGDINDS programme prepares learners for careers in industrial safety, health, and environmental management. Graduates can work as Safety Officers, Safety Supervisors, HSE Auditors, Advisors, and Consultants in manufacturing, construction, mining, power, and process industries. The diploma also provides opportunities for higher studies, research, and career advancement in safety, health, and environment- related fields across public and private sectors.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOITS	Post Graduate Diploma in Waste Management (PGDWAM)	Impart skills on waste management covering social, financial, institutional, legal, and environmental aspects; emphasis on sustainable and efficient waste handling, entrepreneurship in waste management, policy framework, and emerging technologies.	Pass-out learners can work as waste management officers, environmental consultants, sustainability coordinators, and project executives in municipal bodies, pollution control agencies, NGOs, and private environmental firms. They may engage in solid waste management planning, recycling and resource recovery initiatives, policy implementation, environmental compliance, and green entrepreneurship ventures.
SOJNMS	Post Graduate Diploma in Audio Programme Production (PGDAPP)	Audio content creation, production management, and technical training for radio/podcast industries.	Job opportunities are available in Broadcasting Industry: Radio Jockeys (RJs), sound editors, audio producers, and programme coordinators in FM and AM stations; Podcasting and Digital Media: Podcast producers, audio editors, and content creators for online platforms; Community & Commercial Radio: Programme management, scripting, and presenting for community and private radio stations; Entertainment Industry: Audio design, music programming, and drama production; Freelance Audio Producers: Independent audio production for advertising, audio books, and educational content; Education Sector: Trainers or faculty in audio production courses and workshops.
SOSS	Post Graduate Diploma in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (PGDDRRM)	Disaster preparedness, mitigation, community resilience, and emergency response planning.	Pass-out learners can join: Academia (Universities, Colleges, and think tanks like NITI Aayog); Government Organisations (NDMA, NIDM, SDMA, DDMA, District level Agencies, etc.); Non-Governmental Organisations working in the field of Disaster Management; International Organisations; Corporate sector; Media sector; Defence.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOVET	Post Graduate Diploma in Pharmaceutical Sales Management (PGDPSM)	For capacity building of Medical Representatives. The programme is especially designed for those seeking career as a Medical Representative or for the capacity building of those already in this profession. Science and non-science graduates can take admission in the programme.	Strong career prospects in the pharmaceutical sector, specifically targeting roles like Medical Representatives (MR), sales managers, and product managers. Graduates are equipped to handle pharmaceutical sales, marketing, and distribution.
SOVET	Post Graduate Diploma in Information Security (PGDIS)	Develops the skills and techniques needed for providing protection and security to our information and provide security to personal data	The learners should be able to identify suitable employment opportunities in the area of Information Security like Chief Information Security officer, Information Security Analyst, Network Security Engineer, Security Architect, Cyber Security Manager, Information Security Officer, Security Software Developer, Security Consultant, Computer Forensics Analysts, Penetration Tester, IT Security Consultant, Security Systems Administrator or independently undertake research and development in the area of Information Security.

iii) Diploma Programmes-18 Diploma programmes offered by eight Schools of Studies

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOA	Diploma in Value Added Products from Fruits & Vegetables (DVAPFV)	Postharvest management, food preservation, and entrepreneurship in food processing.	Learners can work as technician, supervisor, Self-entrepreneur, Procurer and supplier: in procurement, handling, postharvest management, processing, manufacturing value added products, quality control and marketing functions of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables.
SOA	Diploma in Dairy Technology (DDT)	Milk procurement, dairy processing, quality control, packaging and entrepreneurship development.	Job opportunities for the pass outs of this programme include: Secretary dairy cooperative society, Milk procurement supervisor, Milk tester, Dairy plant operator/ technician/ supervisor, Product technician (ice cream/ cheese/ butter/ indigenous dairy products) unit, Dairy assistant, Chilling centre supervisor, Quality control assistant, Packaging assistant, Marketing assistant, distribution assistant, retail supervisor, Store assistant, Extension assistant, trainer, and Self entrepreneur as milk contractor, transporter, dairy products manufacturer (indigenous and western), owner- milk parlour/milk booth/ ice cream parlour, wholesale distributor, retailer and exporter of milk and milk products.
SOA	Diploma in Meat Technology (DMT)	Meat and poultry processing, quality assurance, food safety and by-product utilization.	Learners can seek employment as animal procurement supervisor, meat processing technician, laboratory assistant, byproduct plant technician, poultry processing technician, technician in egg industry, meat and egg grader, packaging supervisor, technician in leather industry, marketing assistant, distribution assistant, store assistant and self-entrepreneur as manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer and exporter of fresh meat, meat products and egg products, byproducts handler like leather producer, casing producer, blood meal and bone meal producer.
SOA	Diploma in Watershed Management (DWM)	Soil and water conservation, watershed planning, and community-based natural resource management.	The programme intends to address the workforce requirement of the watershed management and focus on upgrading the knowledge and skills of existing personnel in the watershed development.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOA	Diploma in Horticulture (DHORT)	Production of fruits, vegetables, nursery management and urban horticulture.	Learners can work as gardener, grafting expert, nursery manager, garden supervisor, etc.
SOCE	Diploma in Apparel Merchandising (DAPMER)	Textile and garment production, apparel marketing, export logistics and supply chain coordination.	The learners can seek employment in the following areas: Merchandising in garment and fabric export houses, Buying agencies and apparel manufacturing unit; Visual Merchandiser in area of fashion retail; Fabric checkers in textile laboratories; Enterprise development/ startup
SOCE	Diploma in Event Management (DEVMT)	Planning, marketing, execution and evaluation of business and cultural events.	Prepares learners for various sub-sectors in the event industry such as Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions, Activations, Brand promotions, IPs, managed Events, Weddings, Destination Weddings, Other business events, Digital and Rural Events, Sports, Entertainment, Fund-raising Events, and many more. Opportunities are vast for diverse job roles such as Event Planner, Wedding Planner, Corporate Event Manager, Venue Manager, Corporate Event Coordinator, etc with growing opportunities in Weddings; Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE); Sports, and Entertainment sectors. Specialised roles also exist as venue manager, catering manager and production manager. The demand for skilled professionals in the events sector is high, and career paths can lead to entrepreneurship or consultancy roles, with salaries ranging from entry-level to high-level positions depending on experience and the scale of events managed.
SOCE	Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (DECE)	Early childhood pedagogy, care-giving, child welfare and educator training.	The learners can work as efficient cadre of functionaries to serve in the field of ECCE like teachers and other functionaries working with children in the birth to six age group in diverse settings, such as creches, preschools, pre-primary classes, nursery schools, Anganwadi's, *balvatikas* and *balwadis*. Employment opportunities is contingent on the employing authority recognizing the qualification. The Programme assures to be of great use to those wishing to set up early childhood care and education centres or managing such centres.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOCE	Diploma in Nutrition & Health Education (DNHE)	Nutrition counselling, diet planning and public health education.	The learners can work in either Government programmes or in the vast NGO (Non-governmental organizations) sector.
SOVET	Diploma in Apparel Merchandising – Applied (DAPMERA)	NSDC-partnered programme aimed at training professionals for roles in garment export houses, retail, and manufacturing.	The learners may seek employment as Assistant Merchandisers, Quality Control Inspectors, and Retail Store Managers, with opportunities for entrepreneurship in the fashion sector.
SOET	Diploma in Smart City Development and Management (DSCDM)	Urban infrastructure, e-governance and smart technology applications.	The learners may get the promotion at the existing jobs, work at Smart Cities offices and Smart Cities Commission Offices, Municipal Corporations Housing and urban development offices etc.
SOL	Diploma in Paralegal Practice (DIPP)	Paralegal skills, legal procedures, case documentation and citizen legal aid support.	The learners can get engaged by lawyers and law firms to assist them in various ways such as legal research drafting interviewing the clients etc. Various NGOs right based NGOs also employ them in their organization.
SOMS	Diploma in Retailing (DIRIL)	Store operations, customer service, merchandising and retail communication.	The learners can get role as strong career prospects for entry-level and supervisory roles in India's fast-growing retail sector. It is a vocational programme that equips students with skills in retail operations, customer service, and supply chain management. Graduates can find work in traditional and e-commerce retail.
SOPVA	Diploma in Theatre Arts (DTH)	Acting, production design, direction, and stage performance.	The learners may seek employment in the schools and theatres.
SOS	Diploma in Aquaculture (DAQ)	Aquatic farming, fish breeding, water management and aquaculture enterprise.	Aquaculture employs large number of people either directly in fish farming activities such as fishing, pond/pen, cage operation, care-taking, construction work, harvesting, and in related ancillary industries such as net manufacturing, boat making, fry gathering, and bamboo supplying.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOVET	Diploma in Business Process Outsourcing – Finance and Accounting (DBPOFA)	Accounting & Finance, Communication & IT Skills in BPO process operations.	The learners can seek employment in financial management, analysis, and reporting. Moreover, they develop proficiency in using industry-standard computer applications to perform various business tasks efficiently. By combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical skills, our diploma course in finance and accounting prepares individuals for diverse career opportunities in finance, accounting, and BPO sectors.
SOVET	Diploma in Modern Office Practice (DMOP)	Office administration, Computer operations, Communication, and Stenography.	The learners can seek employment as Personal Assistant Private Secretary, Stenographers, Office Managers, Office Executives, Executive Assistants, Front End Executives, Data Entry Operators, Computer Operators, Self-Employment, etc.
SOVET	Diploma in Fashion Design and Retail (DFDR)	Fashion theory, apparel design, garment construction, and retail management.	The learners can seek employment as fashion Designing and Product Professionals, Art and Graphic designers, Costume Designers, Shoe Designer, Accessories Designer, Embroidery designer, Assistant Fashion Designer: Coordinates meetings assist design with cutting, pattern making, making prototypes, coloring and sketching Fashion Marketing/ Merchandising Professionals: Market Researcher, Fashion merchandiser, fashion journalist, Fashion marketing and management, boutique owner, fashion house manager Fashion media and Promotion Professionals: Fashion photographer, Costume designer, fashion editor, digital media and advertising coordinator, Online merchandise coordinator or e- commerce.

iv) Certificate Programme - 33 Certificate programmes offered by 10 schools of studies

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOA	Certificate in Sericulture (CIS)	Silkworm rearing, disease management, mulberry cultivation, and silk production.	The learners can work as self-entrepreneurs in egg production, reeling and weaving units, placements at corporate sericulture offices, entrepreneurs engaged in production of sericulture related products, large scale farmers under state and central development projects and schemes, State Dept of Sericulture, marketing division of sericulture products, textile industries etc., laboratory assistant and placements in grainures, sales counters, reelers, weavers and quality assessment centres.
SOA	Certificate in Organic Farming (COF)	Sustainable soil fertility, crop rotation, composting, and organic certification.	The learners can seek employment opportunities as Self-employments in Input Producers, Group Farming, Managers Counselor, Trainer, Market Facilitator
SOA	Certificate in Water Harvesting & Management (CWHM)	Rainwater harvesting, watershed techniques, and water-use efficiency	The learners may seek employment in Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) dealing with water harvesting projects, Urban Housing Boards, Private Real Estate Builders, Soil Conservation Departments and Ground Water Boards as Water Harvesting Assistants.
SOA	Certificate in Poultry Farming (CPF)	Commercial and backyard poultry rearing, feed, and disease management.	The learners may get employed as Skilled labour in Poultry Farms/ Hatcheries, Self-Employment
SOA	Certificate in Beekeeping (CIB)	Beehive management, honey processing, and small-scale apiculture business.	The learners may seek employment as beekeeper, honey processor, market manager
SOA	Awareness Programme on Dairy Farming (APDF)	Introduces basic knowledge on dairy farming, animal management, clean milk production, fodder cultivation, and dairy-based entrepreneurship; designed for farmers and rural youth.	The learners may seek employment in Dairy Farm worker, Entrepreneur.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOCE	Certificate in Apparel Merchandising (CAPMER)	apparel and textile merchandising, including product planning, marketing, and retail operations.	Programme has various job opportunities in area of Fashion, Textiles and Home Furnishing. Merchandising in garment and fabric export houses, Buying agencies and apparel manufacturing unit. Visual Merchandiser in area of fashion retail Fabric checkers in textile laboratories, Enterprise development/ startup.
SOCE	Certificate in Event Management (CEVMT)	Event planning, logistics, branding, and execution for professional and social events.	The learners may work as event management professionals through entry level opportunities in various sub-sectors of event industry. Employability at entry level helps learners to plan and design events, market and promote events and prepare them for different sectors.
SOCE	Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Visual Impairment (CESEIVI)	Working with children with intellectual disability as early educators, special educators, social workers, or other professionals who care about inclusive practices. Making education inclusive, accessible, and flexible for learners from diverse social, regional, and economic backgrounds. The Programme is approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).	The learners may work as Trained professionals to work as a special educator with children with disability in early childhood intervention and education settings, Early interventionists, or resource teachers in inclusive schools, specialized institutions, and early childhood centers. Opportunities to work with NGOs, rehabilitation centers, and government initiatives focused on disability inclusion.
SOCE	Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Intellectual Disability (CESEIID)	Working with children with visual impairment as early educators, special educators, social workers, or other professionals who care about inclusive practices. Making education inclusive, accessible, and flexible for learners from diverse social, regional, and economic backgrounds. The Programme is approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).	The learners may seek employment as special educators with children with disability in early childhood intervention and education settings, Early interventionists, or resource teachers in inclusive schools, specialized institutions, and early childhood centers. Opportunities to work with NGOs, rehabilitation centers, and government initiatives focused on disability inclusion.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOCE	Certificate in Early Childhood Special Education Enabling Inclusion Hearing Impairment (CESEIHI)	Working with children with hearing impairment as early educators, special educators, social workers, or other professionals who care about inclusive practices. Making education inclusive, accessible, and flexible for learners from diverse social, regional, and economic backgrounds. The Programme is approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).	The learners may work as Trained professionals to work as a special educator with children with disability in early childhood intervention and education settings, Early interventionists, or resource teachers in inclusive schools, specialized institutions, and early childhood centers, Opportunities to work with NGOs, rehabilitation centers, and government initiatives focused on disability inclusion.
SOCIS	Certificate in Mobile Application Development (CMAD)	App design, coding fundamentals, Android/iOS development basics.	The learners may seek employment as Mobile Application Developer, Cross-platform App Developer, Mobile UI/ UX Designer, App Tester, Backend Developer (App Integration with APIs, Databases, Cloud Services), Game Developer (Mobile-focused), Freelance App Developer (project-based work for clients worldwide), Mobile Application Support Engineer, Junior Software Developer in IT companies/start-ups etc. To pursue academic excellence, one may pursue further studies and go for BCA, MCA in Information Technology.
SOHS	Certificate in Home Based Health Care (CHBHC)	Home-based health care of bed ridden people, meeting nutrition, and elimination needs. Rehabilitation etc.	The learners may work in Corporate Hospitals and as per need at Home of Dependent Patients.
SOHS	Certificate in First Aid (CFAID)	Basic life support, CPR, and emergency medical care at workplace and community.	The learners may develop knowledge and skills about first aid to provide first aid in various emergency situations.
SOHS	Certificate in Geriatric Health and Care (CGHC)	Health promotion, prevention and providing care and support to the older persons	Prepares learners for roles as trained geriatric care providers, offering strong job prospects in the growing healthcare sector.
SOHS	Certificate in Health Care Waste Management (CHCWM)	Proper handling, segregation, and disposal of medical waste per legal standards.	The programme is targeted at in service personnel for improving the biomedical waste management practices of the institutions. However, candidate can be employed in any health care institution or in Hospital.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOHS	Certificate Programme in Yoga (CPY)	Yoga philosophy, Fundamentals of Yoga, asanas, pranayama, and meditation for personal practice.	This programme is designed for mass awareness of Yoga. The learners may work as self development and self practices as per guidelines of Yoga.
SOMS	Certificate in Business Skills (CBS)	Communication, teamwork, interpersonal, and entrepreneurial basics.	The learners may seek employability at entry-level positions, particularly in small businesses, NGOs, or through self-employment, catering to school leavers and entrepreneurs.
SOMS	Certificate in NGO Management (CNM)	NGO administration, project planning, fundraising, and community outreach.	The learners may establish NGOs and seek employment in international organizations and self-help groups.
SOPVA	Certificate in Visual Arts – Painting (CVAP)	Drawing, colour composition, and contemporary visual art practices.	The learners may seek employment in the schools and art and craft centres.
SOPVA	Certificate in Visual Arts – Applied Art (CVAA)	Applied artistic techniques for design, advertising, and creative media.	The learners may seek employment in the schools, and Applied Art Centres.
SOPVA	Certificate in Performing Arts – Theatre Arts (CPATHA)	Acting, body movement, stage performance, and script interpretation.	The learners may seek employment in theatre and event management.
SOPVA	Certificate in Performing Arts Hindustani Music (CPAHM)	Hindustani vocal and instrumental music fundamentals and performance.	The learners may seek employment in the schools and work as music performer, etc.
SOPVA	Certificate in Performing Arts Karnatak Music (CPAKM)	Carnatic classical music theory, practice, and stage performance.	The learners may seek employment in the schools, music performer, start teaching basics of Karnatak Music.
SOPVA	Certificate in Performing Arts Bharatanatyam (CPABN)	Classical dance technique, gestures, expressions, and choreography basics.	The learners may go for employment in the Elementary Dance schools, join dance troupe as entry level dance-performer, start teaching basics of dance through tuitions or begin by establishing private dance schools. In order to pursue academic/ practice excellence, one may take up further studies and go for BA, MPA in Dance.
SOS	Certificate Programme in Laboratory Techniques (CPLT)	Lab safety, instrumentation handling, sample preparation, and experiment documentation.	The learners may get opportunities to get employment in the Science Labs in the School / College Labs or work in Capacity Building Programme in enhancing skills for all those who are employed.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOVET	Certificate in Communication and IT Skills (CCITSK)	Computer fundamentals, professional communication, and basic IT operations.	The programme prepares candidates for entry-level job roles, enhances prospects for professional growth, and supports career progression in various domains where communication and IT competencies are essential.
SOVET	Certificate in Fashion Design (CFDE)	Fashion concepts, creative design, garment construction, and colour theory.	The programme will help the learners to develop basic knowledge and skill in pattern making and sewing techniques. The learners may seek employment in fashion photography, pattern making, tailoring, garment construction, accessory designing, make-up artists, modelling, textile research and development and manufacturing so on. In addition, programme creates job opportunities in different segments of the retail sector.
SOVET	Advanced Certificate in Information Security (ACISE)	Cybersecurity tools, ethical hacking, and data protection schemes.	The learners may seek employment in Information Security sector.
SOJNMS	Certificate in Community Radio (CCR)	It is a comprehensive programme offering information on all aspects of community radio, from set-up technology to understanding community participatory broadcasting styles.	The learners may seek employment in Community Radio Stations (CRS): Programme production, presenting, scripting, and station management roles; Development Sector: Media and communication officer roles in NGOs, government projects, and community initiatives; Freelance Audio Producers: Content development for community media, social advocacy, and grassroots campaigns; Education & Training: Trainers for community radio initiatives, capacity-building workshops, and media literacy programme; Content Creators: Designing localized programmes for regional radio networks and social awareness initiatives.

School	Programme Name	Key focus	Job/ Future Prospects
SOET	Certificate in Energy Technology and Management (CETM)	Programme equips students with skills in energy resources, auditing, and conservation, focusing on practical applications in energy efficiency.	It prepares learners for entry-level roles as energy assistants or auditors in the power sector and related industries.
SOET	Certificate of Competency in Power Distribution (Electrical Technicians) (CCPD)	This programme addresses the general concerns and issues in the electricity distribution sector, and inculcate awareness and exchange good practices amongst the workforce engaged in power distribution companies, specifically the electrical technicians and equivalent manpower.	The learners can work as Technicians /Equivalent tradesman or manpower working in Electricity /Power Sector. Technicians having or pursuing trade certificate in electrician or related trade; Technician having license for Foreman/ Lineman/Wireman or license in relevant area of expertise; Candidates having electrician apprenticeship.
SOET	Certificate in Solid Waste Treatment Techniques (CSWATT)	Programme aims to develop skilled human resources in the field of Solid Wastes Management and Technology at the Local, Regional and National levels. It seeks to build competencies and professional skills to avail enhanced employment opportunities in organizations. It aims to upgrade the knowledge and skills of those working in an organization without a formal training.	The learners may seek employment in Solid Wastes Treatment Techniques sector are strong and growing, driven by increasing urbanization, environmental concerns, and stricter government regulations like India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The field offers a diverse range of career opportunities across private companies, government agencies, and consulting firms.

Appendix 2

Notification of the Committee

CENTRE FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (CIQA)
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY
MAIDAN GARHI, NEW DELHI-110068

F. NO. CIQA/1/NEP Act. Committ./2025/478
Date: 20th March 2025

NOTIFICATION No. 16

With the approval of the competent authority, a committee has been constituted for documentation of implementation of NEP, 2020 on **"Reimagining Vocational Education"** for ensuring smooth coordination and timely completion of tasks for **2nd cycle of NAAC accreditation** and **NIRF 2026 ranking** of the University.

The committee comprises the following members:

1.	Prof. RSP Singh, Director, SOVET	–	Chairperson
2.	Prof. Anita Priyadarshini, Director, STRIDE	–	Member
3.	Prof. A.K. Gaba, SOVET	–	Member
4.	Dr. V.P. Rupam, Director, CPC/Add. Director, RSD	–	Member
5.	Prof. Vijayakumar P., Director, CIQA	–	Member
6.	Dr. Laxmi, Associate Professor, SOHS	–	Convenor

The task needs to be completed on or before 31st May 2025.

This notification is issued with the approval of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor.

(Prof. Vijayakumar P.)
Director, CIQA

Appendix 3

Minutes of the Meeting

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON "REIMAGINING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION" ON 23rd SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 12 NOON IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM, CIQA, IGNOU, MAIDAN GARHI, NEW DELHI-110 068.

The following members attended the meeting:

- Prof. R.S.P Singh, SOVET, Chairperson
- Prof. Vijayakumar, P., Director, CIQA, Member
- Prof. Neerja Sood, Director, SOHS, Member
- Dr. Deeksha Dave, Associate Professor, SOITS, Member

Prof. Manjulika Srivastava, Dr. V.P. Rupam, Prof. Anita Priyadarshini, Prof. AK. Gaba and Dr. Laxmi could not attend the meeting.

Proceedings of the Meeting

At the outset, Prof. R.S.P. Singh, Chairperson welcomed all the members and presented an overview of the historical background and the concept of vocational education in line with NEP 2020. Prof. Vijayakumar, P., Director, CIQA elaborated on the various components of the vocational education at IGNOU. The members expressed that IGNOU offers number of programmes and courses which must form part of the report. The testimonials received from the learners and the successful case studies must also be included in the report.

Tentative Structure and Allocation of Sections

After detailed deliberations the following structure was decided and responsibilities for drafting specific sections were allocated as under:

Structure and Responsibilities

1. Introduction (Prof. R.S. P Singh)

- Covering the mandate and the vision of IGNOU with respect to Vocational Education

2. NEP and Vocational Education (Prof. R.S. P Singh and Prof. Neerja Sood)

- Skilling Environment in the country emphasis on main policies and the major initiatives of the Government.
- Highlights of NEP with regards to Skill Education

3. Vocational Education at IGNOU (Prof. AK. Gaba)

- Historical background of the Vocational Education at IGNOU.
- Perspective of the landmark programmes and courses of IGNOU

- Establishment of SOVET
- Collaborations with other institutions and organisations

4. Programmes and Courses offered by IGNOU (Prof. Vijayakumar and Dr. Deeksha Dave)

- Description of the various skill based, vocational and professional courses offered by IGNOU (Highlighting the Programme Objectives and the Job Opportunities)
- Listing of the various skill based, vocational and professional courses offered by IGNOU

5. Skill Based Courses offered by IGNOU (Prof. Neerja Sood)

6. NSQF Compliant Courses (Prof. Anita Priyadarshini and Dr. Laxmi)

7. The Way Forward (Dr. V.P. Rupam)

Timeline and Next Steps

It was decided that the list of the programmes and courses will be sent to the schools for their feedback by next week. It was decided to meet in the second week of October and review the work done so far.

Chairperson of the committee


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