

MASTER OF ARTS (DISTANCE EDUCATION)
(MADE)

Term-End Examination

December, 2024

**MDE-413 : LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEMS
AND SERVICES**

Time : 3 Hours

Maximum Weightage : 75%

Note : Attempt all the **three** questions. All questions carry equal weightage.

1. Answer any **one** of the following questions in about **1200** words :
 - (a) Define 'Counselling'. Why is counselling important in distance education ? Differentiate between counselling and tutoring.
 - (b) Describe the role of support services in promoting self-directed learning. Discuss briefly about the components and different models of self-directed learning.
2. Answer any **four** of the following questions in about **300** words each :
 - (a) Explain any *three* types of support services available in an open and distance learning institution.
 - (b) Write a short note on the support services for the disabled learners which can be provided by an open and distance education institution.
 - (c) What is a study centre ? Describe its major functions.
 - (d) What is SWOT technique ? Discuss briefly the use of SWOT in problem solving with examples.

- (e) Discuss briefly about the tasks of a distance tutor.
- (f) What are the teaching type comments ? Describe briefly their impact on student learning.

3. Answer any **one** of the following :

- (a) Explain the meaning of assessment. Discuss different types of assessment in the context of open and distance learning system.
- (b) The following is an excerpt from an actual assignment-response (See Appendix-I). Write your marginal comments in the margin provided and global comments on the assessment sheet (enclosed). Award a grade on the assignment response on five-point scale, using letter grade A, B, C, D and E.

The national correlater of these letter grades respectively are :

Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory. After evaluation attach the evaluated script and the 'Assessment Sheet' with your examination answer-sheet. Award a grade in the box provided and also write the global comments on the assessment sheet.

**[NOTE : PLEASE TEAR OFF THIS APPENDIX (ASSIGNMENT-RESPONSE)
AND ATTACH TO YOUR ANSWER SHEET
WITH THE ASSESSMENT SHEET]**

Enrolment No. :

Grade :

APPENDIX-I

MDE-413 : Learner Support Systems and Services

Space for comments
Assignments-Response

Question :

“Course preparation in distance education requires systematic planning and involves many stages.” Discuss this statement with reference to the system approach with the help of an illustration.

Answer :

In distance education system, learners mostly by themselves use specially prepared self-learning materials. Self-learning materials are different from traditional pattern of learning materials. Hence, developing materials for different courses in distance education is also different. Preparation of courses in open learning system is a serious issue. It goes through various stages like; course planning, course development and course production. Production of audio and television programmes and audio/video cassettes also come under course preparation. Hence, course preparation needs a systematic planning.

Various stages of course preparation :

Course Planning : It is necessary to plan the writing of a course carefully and well in advance. In face-to-face teaching it is easy to make on the spot adjustments in teaching strategies which will suit the needs of different groups of learners, while, in distance teaching this is not possible. The teaching materials are prepared in advance and the distance learners don't have the teacher with them to help them interpret its content. So the suitability of the materials must be decided before they are written. For this reason systematic planning is essential in preparing self-learning materials.

The process of course planning comprises the following stages :

Assessment of Needs : The first stage of planning is the assessment of educational needs. Educational needs are assessed through surveys and formative evaluation. Various research techniques can be employed for this purpose. This is particularly true of rural areas where people may not be able to solve their problems in educational terms, i.e. a general desire for better health may indicate a need for health education but, the exact form of it should be determined through specially mounted studies. There are two general approaches which have proved useful in the assessment of educational needs. The first is similar to anthropological field work; the researcher stays with the community and observes their behavior. The second is the surveys undertaken to find out prevalent needs. Through individual or group interviews, the potential learners, their parents and/or other members of society are asked to answer certain questions.

Once the needs have been assessed, a clear and detailed plan for the project must be chalked out. This requires a description of the project/course, indicating the problems that are anticipated. We should know everything about the potential learners, such as their learning characteristics, their living, educational backgrounds, and their occupations, etc. at the planning stage; we must stress the importance of analyzing the entry behavior of the learners, i.e. what they already know, and what they can do at the start of a course. A detailed statement of the entry behavior helps to plan writing and to give guidelines to the course development team, which consists of the writer, the editor, etc.

Defining Objectives : The second step is to specify the objectives, i.e. to set down precisely what we wish to achieve. This definition of objectives should be the key document for course developers. It is a difficult but crucial part of the way process of developing materials, since later decisions will depend on the way the objectives have been defined and whether they relevant to the learner's context.

However, objectives should be expressed in behavioral terms, which can be tested and quantified.

Analyzing Resources and Constraints : Before planning in detail the course writer must have clear idea of the resources to depend on and also of the possible constraints.

In the first place we should keep in mind the budgetary provision for the course. All the expenditure must fall within the budget at our disposal and we must set our objectives accordingly. Secondly, we have to consider the availability of media. The third factor is the delivery and reception of teaching materials. These considerations have direct and important implications for course design.

Taking these entire factors into consideration, we may have to modify our priorities and the overall objectives we had originally set for ourselves.

Alternative Methods and Selection of Criteria : At the next stage comes the selection of alternative ways to meet the objectives. This includes :

- ⇒ Preparation of an outline of requirements e.g. media, administrative arrangements, etc.
- ⇒ Studying the forms of the materials and their relationship with each other (i.e. whether the audios and videos are integrated or supplementary or complementary).
- ⇒ Choosing of the evaluation procedures.
- ⇒ Selection of suitable strategies to achieve the objectives.
- ⇒ Defining the criteria by which to choose between alternatives, including learner preferences, educational effectiveness, cost, timing, risks, and policy.

Time Scheduling : While planning the course development important component is scheduling various activities like how much time is needed for developing the material, editing the material, production time and delivery etc. This time scheduling depends on the final date of launching of programme. Once that is clear, scheduling of these activities will be methodical and sticking to these schedules will be useful.

Course Development

The second stage in the process of course preparation is called course development, and it pertains to the actual writing of the course materials. The essential aspects of this process are : (i) arranging the topics, (ii) preparing unit outlines, (iii) writing the text, and (iv) developmental trails.

Arranging the topics : The first task in course writing is to arrange topic in a logical sequence, which should be based on the learner's present knowledge of the subject. Thus, a course should start at a point which all the learners who have opted for it be comfortable with it. So the opening sections should be of an elementary nature.

From this starting point, the subject-matter should proceed step by step. As a general principle all the topics of a course should be roughly similar in terms of content density, learner activities and length. For the sake of convenience we shall denote the textual body covering a topic by the expression study unit or simply 'unit'.

Preparing unit outlines : Having arranged the topics in a logical sequence, the next step is to prepare outlines for individual units. We need to plan and structure each unit in such a way that the learner experiences a minimal learning load while absorbing the content maximally.

Writing the text : The entire textual material of a study unit may be broadly divided into the following sections : opening section, the main body of the text and the ending of the unit.

Opening section : The opening section of a unit should help the learner approach the content, preferably on the basis of his/her previous knowledge or skill. This section includes (i) the title and the number of the unit, (ii) the unit structure, (iii) objectives, and (iv) introduction.

Main text/body : The main text comprises the actual thematic content of the unit, and is based on learning activities. It refers to other sources of information available. The relevant references include text-books, audio-video programmes, and earlier units and so on. In-between the text, the activities should be provided to enable the learners to perform various educational acts from thinking to carry out scientific experiments. They helped learners to comprehend and retain the information and knowledge obtained from the unit. Other important factors are language and style. Language should be simple and friendly and style should be conversational. Common words should be used in a straight forward way to avoid creating any confusion in the learner's mind. The insertion of illustrations and diagrams in the main body of the text makes content clear and comprehensible.

Ending : The last part of the unit should be summarized all that has been discussed in the unit, and supply feedback on all the activities carried out so far. Thus the learner is prompted to revise whatever is important in the text.

Assignments are given out at the end of a unit/block and learners are asked to send their responses to the tutor for marking. Tutor comments, which are sent back along with the evaluated responses, help learners to prepare for their final examinations besides improving their understanding of the units.

Developmental trials : It is obviously ideal to test a course as a pilot programme before it is finally printed. Even if it is not feasible to test all the self-learning materials in a pilot version, it may be possible to try out part of it on a small group of learners and to draw upon their reactions to improve the course materials.

After incorporating the modification suggested by the learners, the course may be given its final shape and sent for printing.

Course Production

This is the last stage in the process of the preparation of materials. It includes the production of both audio-visual and print materials. The course management group has a limited function now; it monitors the progress of production till the materials are delivered to the learners. Audio-video production is also undertaken along with the production of print materials. The multimedia package thus prepared is sent to the learners to be used in their own time.

Editing : Editing is one of the most important stages in the process of text production. Editing ensures the soundness of the text, including the density and correctness of content and prepares manuscripts for printing.

Layout : This includes consideration of the size and type of font to be used, the page size, the number of columns, the nature of margins, placement of pictures etc. in order to make each page of the unit attractive and learner friendly.

The other stages in the process are :

Assigning artwork to artists,

Typing the text, and

Proofreading.

ASSESSMENT SHEET

Enrolment No. _____ Programme _____ Assessment Grade _____

Student's Name _____ Course _____

Evaluator's Comments

If the space is not sufficient, please use back page

Please tick ☒ in the relevant box below

CONTENT					STRUCTURE & PRESENTATION					
Accurate Information	☐	☐	☐	☐	Inaccurate Information	Well Planned	☐	☐	☐	Inadequately Planned
Adequate Coverage	☐	☐	☐	☐	Inadequate Coverage	Concise	☐	☐	☐	Too Long or too Short
Good Conceptual Analysis	☐	☐	☐	☐	Poor Conceptual Analysis	Clearly Expressed	☐	☐	☐	Not Clearly Expressed

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