

SUMMARY OF UGC ODL REGULATIONS, 2017

BACKGROUND

UGC, through an Extraordinary Gazette, made open the regulations for the Open and Distance Learning that shall be effective with immediate effect (23rd June 2017). The significant points to note in the said notification are:

DEFINITIONS (PART I)

(a) **“Academic session”** means duration of twelve months beginning either in January or in the month of July of every year;

(c) **“Centre for Internal Quality Assurance” (CIQA)** means a Centre **as specified in Annexure I** established by a Higher Educational Institution offering programmes in Open and Distance Learning mode for ensuring the quality of programmes offered by it through **internal quality monitoring mechanism in accordance with the guidelines as specified in Annexure II;**

(k) **“Learner Support Centre”** means a centre established, maintained or **recognised** by the Higher Educational Institution for advising, counselling, providing interface between the teachers and the learners, and rendering any academic and any other related service and assistance required by the learners;

(l) **“Learner Support Services”** means and includes such services as are provided by a Higher Educational Institution in order to facilitate the acquisition of teaching-learning experiences by the learner to the level prescribed by or on behalf of the Commission in respect of a programme of study;

(m) **“Open and Distance Learning” mode** means a mode of providing flexible learning opportunities by overcoming separation of teacher and learner using a variety of media, including print, **electronic, online** and occasional interactive face-to-face meetings with the presence of an Higher Educational Institution or Learner Support Services to deliver teaching-learning experiences, **including practical or work experiences.**

(r) **“Self-Learning Material”** means and includes contents in the form of course material, **whether print or non-print**, which is inter-alia self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed at the learner, and amenable to self-evaluation, and enables the learner to acquire the prescribed level of learning in a course of study, but does not include textbooks or guide-books;

GRANT OF RECOGNITION (PART II)

Key Takeaway under PART – II: A University will discontinue all ODL programs with immediate effect. A university intending to offer a ODL programmes for the academic session beginning from July 2017 and for subsequent academic sessions, will need to make an on-line application in the format specified by the Commission, and upload the same on the specified portal along with scanned copy of the documents specified therein, at least six months before the commencement of the academic session of the programme intended to be offered by such Higher Educational Institution.

Important Points to Note

- The notification shall apply to Universities for their UG and PG Degree Programs. All admission in degree, certificate, diploma and PG diploma prior to these regulations are not affected.
- All Universities need to reapply for grant of recognition under the new regulations. The application needs to be made Online in the prescribed manner. The UGC shall process the application as per mentioned timelines (Refer 3 (3))
- NAAC accreditation has been made mandatory for the applying Universities (except Open universities less than 5 years old)
- If found eligible, the University shall get the recognition for a period of 5 years
- No University should offer any program in the ODL mode unless the UGC grants the recognition under the new regulations
- Dual mode Universities can apply only for those programs that they run in the regular mode too
- Provisions for withdrawal of accreditation and appeals against the decision of UGC have been inserted

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE

Every University shall be expected to maintain its website with all relevant details:

- A copy of the application (for purposes of self disclosure)
- Copy of the establishing act/statutes
- Copies of letters of recognition
- Programs details including brochures and program guides
- Information on syllabus, suggested reading, contact point for counseling, program structure, program wise faculty details, list of supporting staff, list of study centers with their details
- Detail strategy for Online Program delivery (7(1)(vi))
- Feedback mechanism from students (7(1)(vii))
- Data of year wise enrolments and a compilation of FAQ's

MAINTENANCE OF QUALITY STANDARDS

Part III of the regulations speak of maintenance of quality standards by the University for the ODL programs. A few important and new clauses inserted are as follows:

- Universities are encouraged to offer e-learning programs and hence are suggested to work out a detailed strategy for Online Course delivery
- A lot of importance has been provided to collection of feedback of students
- Setting up of a question bank for self assessment of students and a facility to conduct virtual classrooms (7(1)(xi))
- The University needs to set up a Center for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA) within the next 12 months
- Universities shall be permitted to launch their own Certificate and Diploma Programs without the need for any special approval of the UGC (8(1)(v))
- Guidelines for SLM preparation (including Digital SLM) have been provided in detail. UGC has impressed upon Universities to provide digital SLM to students so that learners can provide their feedback (8(2))

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- Universities must take steps to blend ICT into the ODL programs for enhancing effectiveness of the Academic as well as the Administrative processes. The said systems must maintain updated information at all times regarding admissions, registrations, academic activities, Online Support for interactive learning, OER use, use of MOOCs, evaluation, certification and student support (10)
- University may allow up to 20% of the total courses through Online Courses/MOOC's as per UGC regulations, 2016

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLMENTS

- All students must be admitted directly by the University and all payments collected Online/DD in the name of the University. The University should be the final authority for approving admissions for students.
- Record Aadhaar details of all enrolling students
- All Universities must have a fee refund policy for students who want to withdraw themselves from the university (12(1)(j)) by refunding a part of the fee
- Study centers should not conduct admissions but may provide admission counselling to students. Admissions should be done directly on the website of the University
- University should enroll students only for the programs permitted by the UGC and for the number of seats approved

EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION (13)

- Conduct exams only in approved study centers (Govt Schools and Colleges)
- Term end exam shall have 70% weightage. Term end exams can be conducted only for those where the University have completed 75% of the course conduction (13(6))
- Exam centers shall have CCTV/Videography facility which shall be preserved for 10 years
- Biometric attendance of all examinees as per UIDAI records or as per UIN provided by the University
- All degrees / certificates must carry the mode of delivery, the UIN number or the Aadhaar number, the date of admission and the date of completion of the program. It will also contain the Learning Center and Examination Center names.

STUDY CENTERS/LEARNER SUPPORT CENTERS

- Study Centers can't be set up under any franchising arrangement
- Study Centers shall be headed by a Coordinator who shall be of the rank of Assistant Professor
- The University should have a SOP for operation of the Study Center

LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES (15(2))

The following services are recommended to be provided

- Pre-admission counselling to prospective learner
- Support to learner during admissions
- Study material provided to learner within a fortnight of admission compulsorily
- A Full-time helpdesk, well versed with the learner information data base to provide single window support
- A grievance redressal system to be implemented
- University should provide Online guidance and counselling facilities to learners
- University to create Online discussion forums for learners

ANNEXURES

- Annexure I – Establishment of CIQA
 - One of the important tasks of CIQA shall be to frame the Programme project report for each programme and monitor the implementation of the same
 - Oversee the integration of ICT
 - Suggest restructuring of the programs to make them relevant to the job markets
 - Submit annual report of the work done by CIQA
- Annexure II (b) – Every University must have a vision document with a professional focus which talks about creation of knowledge and innovation with practical application of knowledge to support business and professional community
- Annexure II (f) – University should provide learner support through a student portal and an e-learning platform and the content should be available on various devices
- Annexure II (C) stresses on the fact that the University should adopt a web based system for data analytics and MIS purposes
- Annexure Vi speaks about the physical infrastructure requirement and the manpower requirement at the University for its distance education programs
- Annexure VII speaks about the quality assurance guidelines for the various learner support resources
- Annexure VIII provides guidelines for preparation of SLM
 - (3) Universities may adopt or procure the learning material from expert agencies or consultants if that saves time and cost without compromising on the quality
 - (6) High quality e-learning content should be developed by skilled content and instructional design professionals
- Annexure IX – 2(g) – In case of Online Learning, the practical should be conducted and performed by applying Virtual reality methods
- Annexure X – all admissions must be done on directly by the University through its website and should not be outsourced to study centers
- Annexure X (8) (i) – Username and password should be provided to all learners so that they can see all relevant information as their studies progress and they should be able to provide feedback.