

**MASTER OF ARTS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION
MA(DE)**

Term-End Examination

December, 2016

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

Time : 3 hours

Maximum Weightage : 75%

Note : (i) Attempt all the three questions.

(ii) All three questions carry equal weightage.

1. Answer **any one** of the following questions in about **1200** words :
 - (a) What are learner support services ? Identify the need of support services in distance education. Explain diagrammatically any one model of learner support in Distance Education.
 - (b) What is academic counselling ? Why is academic counselling important in Distance Education ? Discuss the qualities and skills required to become an effective academic counsellor.

2. Answer **any four** of the following questions in about **300** words each :
 - (a) Discuss briefly the components of self-directed learning.
 - (b) What is life-long learning ? Discuss this concept in the context of Open Distance Education.

- (c) What do you mean by supplemental communication ? Discuss its pedagogical purposes.
- (d) What is SWOT technique ? Discuss the use of SWOT in problem solving, with examples.
- (e) Discuss the role and major functions of a Regional Centre in open and Distance Education System.
- (f) Discuss different measures to reduce Student's attrition in Distance Education System.

3. Answer **any one** of the following in about **1200** words :

- (a) Explain the importance of tutor comments. Discuss how these comments are helpful, for the learners ?

OR

- (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 correlates of these letter grade 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]

Your Roll No. :

Grade :

APPENDIX I

MDE-413 : Learner Support Services and Systems

Space for Comments

Assignment - 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 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 material.

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 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 behaviour. The second is the surveys undertaken to find out present 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 behaviour 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 behaviour 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 behavioural terms, which can be tested and quantified.

- **Analyzing Resources and Constrains :**

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 preference, 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,
- (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 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 state 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 out a course as a pilot programme before it is finally printed. Even it is not feasible to out 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 modifications suggested by the learners, the course may be given its final shape and send it 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 art work to artists
- Typing the text and
- Proof reading

- **Printing and Dispatch :**

printing is an elaborate industrial process. After printing the materials it is stored in the institutes warehouse from where it is dispatched to learners at the scheduled time. Thus in distance education course preparation is a challenging task. The various stages in it need a systematic planning based upon the systematic approach. They go through certain stages. Though the stages of course preparation have been discussed above in detail based upon the system approach in a systematic manner for more clarity we can mention it in brief and study it from the figure as shown in the Block 2, Unit 1 of ES 312. The order of the events given here is not always followed strictly and in practice some stages occur simultaneously or overlap with each other.

ASSESSMENT SHEET

(To be filled in Duplicate)*

Enrolment No. _____ Programme _____ Assessment

Student's Name _____ Course _____ Grade

Assignment No. _____

Study Centre Code No. _____

Evaluator's Comments

If the space is not sufficient, please use back paper.

Please tick ✓ in the relevant box below	
CONTENT	STRUCTURE AND PRESENTATION
Accurate Information <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inaccurate Information	Well Planned <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequately Planned
Adequate Coverage <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate Coverage	Concise <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Too long or Too short
Good Conceptual Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Conceptual Analysis	Clearly Expressed <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Not Clearly Expressed