
UNIT 4 ORGANISING COUNSELLING AND TUTORING SERVICES

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Learning Outcomes
- 4.2 Planning Counselling and Tutoring Services
 - 4.2.1 Counselling and Tutoring Services and the Institution
 - 4.2.2 Open University vs. Dual Mode University
 - 4.2.3 Tutoring and Counselling in Open Universities
 - 4.2.4 Tutoring and Counselling in Distance Learning of the Dual Mode Universities
- 4.3 How to Plan a Counselling/Tutoring Session?
- 4.4 Identification and Appointment of Academic Counsellors
- 4.5 Orientation and Training of Academic Counsellors
- 4.6 Scheduling of Counselling and Tutoring Sessions
- 4.7 Budgeting and Infrastructure Arrangement
- 4.8 Implementation
 - 4.8.1 Need Based Counselling
 - 4.8.2 One-to-one Counselling
 - 4.8.3 Face-to-face Counselling
 - 4.8.4 Group Counselling
 - 4.8.5 Online Counselling
- 4.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.10 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.11 References and Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Most of the Open universities and distance education institutions all over the world blend face-to-face contact programme with online counselling programmes. Those learners who are geographically and economically disadvantaged heavily rely on the face-to-face contact sessions because they are neither able to use audio-video disks sent to them in their learning activities nor can they study in isolation from their peer groups and counsellors/distance teachers.

In the previous unit, you have read and understood the various aspects of counselling and tutoring. By now, you must be familiar with the definition, importance, and other aspects of counselling and tutoring. You have also learnt how various media and technology are used in the counselling and tutoring services in distance education (DE) settings.

In this unit, you will know the organizational aspect of counselling and tutoring services of DE institutions/universities across the globe. If you

observe closely you may notice that face-to-face (F2F) counselling sessions often play a vital role for distance learners. Distance learners look forward to counselling next to printed learning materials. They eagerly wait for the face-to-face interaction (counselling) with their teachers. Majority of the learners even do not open the printed materials till they attend the face-to-face counselling session. This implies that learners look for an opportunity to meet other persons related to their study activities and the institution. The interaction with the fellow learners and tutors stimulate them for further learning. Though, study materials in distance education are self explanatory in nature still, face-to-face sessions provide an opportunity for social interaction viz. interaction with fellow learners and the teachers. Hence, it is prescribed that we need to pay special attention to the organizational aspects of face-to-face counselling and tutoring sessions.

In this unit, you will be explained the planning and organizational aspects of various forms of tutoring and counselling. Again, you will be explained the principal factors which influence organization of counselling and tutoring services, in other words, factors which are to be considered while organizing counselling and tutoring services.

4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working on the unit, you should able to:

- Discuss various issues connected to planning the counselling and tutoring services;
- Identify the factors for selecting the academic counsellors;
- Describe the process of organizing orientation programme for the counsellors;
- Define various factors connected to scheduling the counselling and tutoring sessions;
- List the items of budgeting and infrastructure arrangements for counselling session; and
- Explain the measures to be undertaken while implementing actual organization of various counselling sessions viz. need based counselling, one-to-one counselling, face-to-face counselling, group counselling, and on-line counselling.

4.2 PLANNING COUNSELLING AND TUTORING SERVICES

The planning for counselling and tutoring in a distance education institution largely depends on the nature of the institution itself. Since distance education is an “industrialized form of education” (Otto Peter, 1973), the organizational planning also resemble to an “industry”. Probably, because of this unique feature of distance education, management is the central issue here rather than pedagogy, which is central in a conventional educational institution.

4.2.1 Counselling and Tutoring Services and the Institution

Organising counselling for different learners mostly depend upon the nature of the institution. You are already aware that three different types of ODL institutions exist in today's world:

- 1) Open and distance leaning universities
- 2) Dual mode universities
- 3) Virtual universities (online platform)

These institutions follow various methodologies while organizing counselling and tutoring services. The methodologies adopted by the open universities are radically different from that of the Distance Education Institutes of the dual mode universities, counselling and tutoring services in both the institutions are managed by the people largely belonging to the conventional system.

4.2.2 Open University vs. Dual Mode University

Open and Distance Education (ODE) Universities mostly organize limited face-to-face session. These sessions are generally organized throughout the academic sessions; on weekends, or during holidays, or in the evening hours. But personal contact programmes are mostly organized by the distance education institutes during the end of the academic session in order to prepare the learners for the term end examinations.

The planning of counselling and tutoring depends upon the institutional support services. You are very much aware that in an Open University support services play a crucial role in teaching-learning activities. Counselling and tutoring usually take place at the Study Centres. Hence, the planning of counselling and tutoring is the responsibility of the coordinators and other officials of a Study Centre. Whereas, in a dual mode university the support services are mainly provided at the distance education units only Counselling and tutoring are organized both at the headquarters and the Study Centres. Hence, the planning of the counselling and tutoring sessions largely depend upon the distance education units. Though counselling and tutoring are organized at the Study Centres, the planning is done mostly by the units/centres. Study Centres are normally consulted to ascertain the availability of space and human resources.

4.2.3 Tutoring and Counselling in Open Universities

Most open universities in the world follow either two or three tier Learner Support Services system and organize counselling and tutoring at the Study Centres. It is often observed that most of the open universities in India following either the UK Open University, or Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, or Indira Gandhi National Open University model of support service with a modification the demand of respective institutions/universities. In the following paragraphs we shall briefly discuss the salient features of the counselling and tutoring services of UKOU, Dr. BRAOU, and IGNOU in order to give you some insights about organizing counselling services.

Alan Tait (2003) enumerated the basic characteristics of the counselling and tutoring services of the Open University, UK as follows:

- Each student had a personal tutor, in a group with no more than 25 or so other students in order to allow personal knowledge, support and understanding to grow up through the lifetime of a course.
- The tutor gave teaching feedback and the mark for work completed during the course, thus having a pivotal role in supporting student learning and progress (and which gave rise to the serious development of the teaching skill known now as correspondence teaching).
- All students were offered the opportunity but not the obligation to take part in face-to-face tutorials, and more recently computer-mediated tutorials, managed by their own tutor (online courses still only remain a tiny minority within the overall provision of the UKOU).
- A network of some 260 Study Centres were established throughout the UK in order to provide such tutorial opportunities, supported by 13 Regional Centres, thus ensuring that the student felt 'nearer' the university whose headquarters are in central England.
- A limited amount of residential school experience on a conventional campus was essential, at a minimum one week.
- From 1971-1997 all undergraduate students – i.e., the great majority, had access to a personal tutor-counsellor who offered them support and advice throughout their career with the university whatever course they were on, providing for what was called 'continuity of counselling' (Tait, 1998).

While there has been substantial revision of the UKOU system since the original blueprint, the core role of the tutor who works with a group of students of no more than 25 in number, and who teaches and grades their work, continues to be seen as at the heart of learner support.

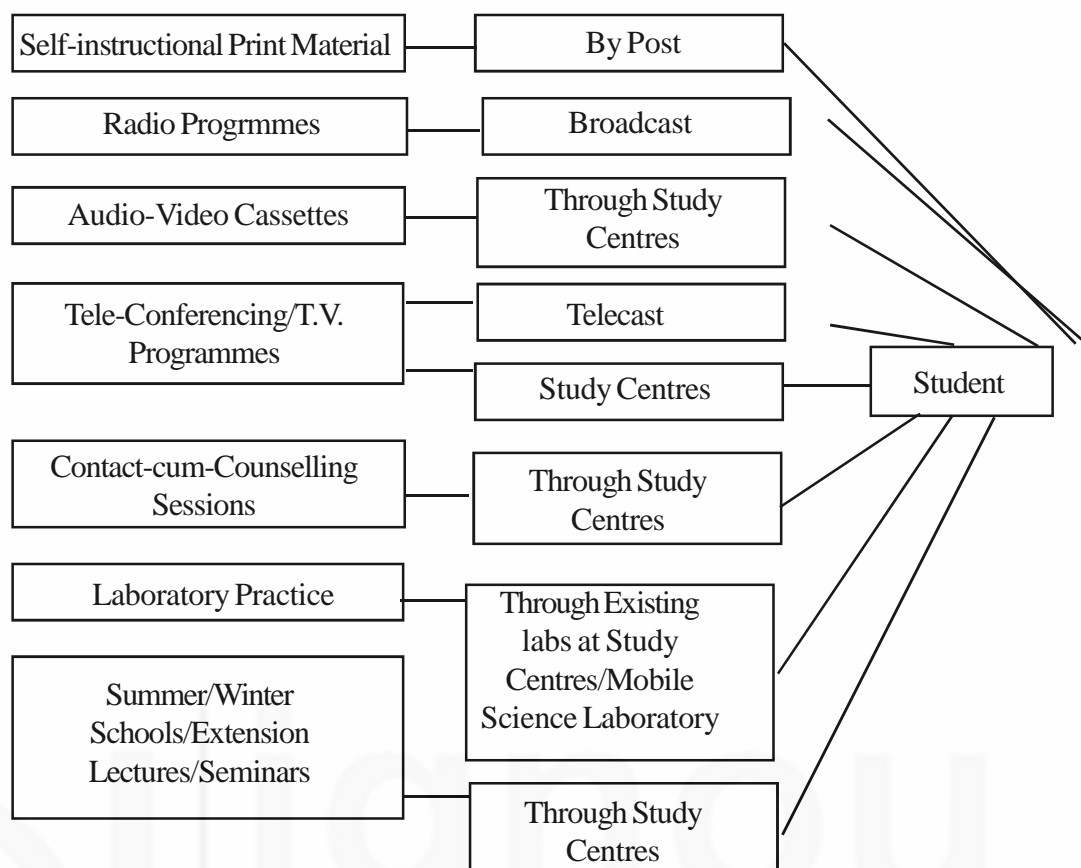
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU)

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University uses multimedia for its instructional purposes. Self-learning printed materials are supplemented by other media, which include, TV, Mana-TV, Audio, Video, Radio, Radio-phone-in programme, TV teleconference (Saptagiri Channel, DD-8) and Mana-TV teleconferences). Apart from these media, the University also organises, contact-cum-counselling classes, winter/summer classes, assignments, practical training programmes and project work. The multimedia instructional system of the university is shown in a schematic diagram given in Figure 4.1 (Reddy, 2008).

Contact-Cum-Counselling Classes

The most important component of the Dr. BRAOU counselling services are the face-to-face personal contact-cum-counselling classes. The face-to-face counselling and tutorial classes are arranged on Sundays at the Study Centers. The important point to be considered by the Study

Multi-Media Instructional System



Centre Coordinators while organizing these sessions is that the students get an opportunity to interact with academic counsellors and also with their fellow students. Apart from contact-cum-counselling classes, the Study Centre Coordinators and Coordinators of Regional Centres also organize guidance and advisory support services (Reddy, 2008).

Model structure of a 02 hour Contact-cum-Counselling Session of the Dr. BRAOU (Reddy, 2008):

Matter for Discussion	Time (in minutes)
1) Introducing the topic	5
2) Asking the students to identify the problems/cases/concepts/doubts which need discussion/explanation in the session	10
3) The subject matter under discussions may be divided into 4 or 5 sub-units, and for each Sub-unit there should be a presentation for 15 to 20 minutes and opportunities for students to raise questions/doubts for about 6 to 7 minutes	90 (60 explanation 30 discussions)
4) Discussion related to probable questions in Examination and their answers	10
5) Summing up of the discussion and indication of areas for discussion in the next session	5
	120 Minutes

The Counselling and tutoring services of IGNOU are organized through its network of Regional Centres, Study Centres and Partner Institutions. Various media are used for counseling distance learners, viz.: face to face sessions at Study Centres, tele- counselling through teleconferencing, phone-in-radio counselling, TV counselling through Gyan Darshan, FM Radio counseling through Gyan Vani, e-mail, chat mode on internet. The latest addition to these services is the IGNOU flexi-learning at www.ignouflexilearn.ac.in

Face-to-Face Counselling Sessions

The face-to-face counselling sessions form an important component of the Counselling services of IGNOU. The face-to-face sessions, mostly in the form of tutorials are organized at study centres on weekends and holidays and sometimes even on weekdays but after office hours. Teachers from the host institution where the Study Centre is located or from neighboring educational institutions and professionals working in various sectors form the core group of Academic Counsellors for the tutorial sessions.

The Regional Centres provide necessary guidance to Study Centres in preparation of the counselling schedule and periodically monitor the conduct of counselling sessions. The Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator of the Study Centre organizes the face-to-face counselling and tutoring sessions as per guidelines provided by the various Schools of the University. The Study Centres need to submit monthly reports to the Regional Centre.

Tele Counselling

IGNOU provides telecounselling to students through teleconferencing at receiving stations at Regional Centres and Study Centres through Edusat. The exclusive Education TV Channel Gyan Darshan also provides counselling to students.

Phone-in Radio Counselling

FM radio station *Gyan Vani* is now widely spread all over the country to provide phone-in radio counselling to IGNOU students.

Science Practical Sessions

The Study Centres organize the practical component of the science and computer programmes. The Coordinator/Programme in-Charge arranges practical sessions in the premises of the host institution or any other designated practical laboratory. It is the duty of Coordinator/Programme-in-Charge to arrange for practical counselling and hands on work practice in the course during the academic session. The Coordinator/Programme-in-Charge prepares a schedule in the prescribed format and learners are informed well in advance. Laboratory courses are also organized during vacations for employed/ in-service learners.

IGNOU Flexi Learn

The IGNOUFLEXILEARN facilitates informed learning by providing free access to anyone who wants to learn. The platform provides a self learning environment with option interact with Academic counsellors/ advisors through Discussion Board, Blogs, wikis, podcasting, RSS feeds etc.

Banner of IGNOU Flexi Learn

The FlexiLearn website (www.ignouflexilearn.ac.in) gives free access to the university courses. This is a personal learning space where free learning resources are integrated with learning management system for anyone who wants to learn, whatever their educational needs and experience.

FlexiLearn facilitates informed learning wherein, anyone can register and explore courses free of cost to gain knowledge and skill in a particular area of interest. Certification for courses will be based on payment of the requisite fees. This provides an alternative way of awarding degrees and diplomas. The FlexiLearn platform offers courses in a complete open and flexible environment with following features:

Banner of IGNOU Flexi learn

- ❖ Any visitor to the FlexiLearn site has the option to register for any particular course or a full length academic programme. A modular approach is followed wherein a registered learner can combine course credits to obtain a diploma or degree of their own choice.
- ❖ The platform provides self learning environment with a list of Academic Advisors/ Course Guides to act as mentors. The Personal Learning Environment (PLE) will have interactive tools like Discussion Board, Blogs, wikis, podcasting, RSS feeds etc.
- ❖ Each course will have the option for both online assessment as well as offline one as per the choice of the learner wherein a learner can take their exams 'on demand'.
- ❖ A complete tracking mechanism is integrated in the platform through the e-portfolios of individual learners. E-portfolio will keep a formal record of all formal and informal studies carried out by the registered learner. Certification of the course will be based on stipulated time spent on a course and completion of all learning activities identified by the faculty.

Check Your Progress 1

- Notes:* a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Describe the counselling and tutoring services of IGNOU and BRAOU.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.2.4 Tutoring and Counselling in Distance Learning of the Dual Mode Universities

We have already discussed that most of the **Distance Education Institutes/universities** organize counselling and tutoring in the form of Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs) at their headquarters. Some dual mode universities also follow a two/three tier Learner Support Systems for providing counselling and tutoring services to their learners.

To give you some insights regarding organization of Counselling and Tutoring services, let us look at the systems practiced at different open universities and DEIs.

The DEI of the **University of Mumbai**, which offers both undergraduate and post graduate programmes organizes counselling and tutoring in selected Study Centres and also at the HQ. As declared in the prospectus, the Institute follows a different methodology of instructions from that of the conventional University/College. It is claimed to be more learner-oriented and the learner is an active participant in the teaching learning process. It follows the multimedia approach in instruction. Face-to-face interaction with teachers at PCP centres and Counselling at the institute are conducted by the Co-ordinator, between the times 03:00 p.m. to 05:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Personal Contact Programme (Guidance Lectures and practicals) are also organized for the benefit of students, in the evening from 6.00 to 8.00 p.m. from Monday to Friday and practicals are held on Saturday, Sundays/Holidays in Mumbai only. **Attendance of about 75% lectures and Practical are compulsory.** It is an attempt to provide guidance to students in solving their academic difficulties. Personal Contact Programmes are organised for a period of 03 months in a year towards the end of the course and just before the commencement of the examination. PCPs are organised in the constituent colleges and the faculty of the colleges are the resource persons. The main aim of PCPs is to formally teach the content to the students through face-to-face classroom teaching. PCPs are aimed at helping the learners to supplement the study materials and preparing them for the examination. Normally six to seven lectures are arranged in each course (Harichandan, 2005).

The Institute of Distance and Open Learning (IDOL), Gauhati University which offers mainly post graduate programmes conducts counselling and tutoring at both HQ and Study Centres. The counselling and tutoring sessions are organized at the selected Personal Contact Programme centres and at the University campus. The PCP centres are located in the affiliated colleges of the University. Senior faculty members of the colleges act as counsellor-tutors. Normally, two PCP sessions are organised for each academic year. These sessions are of two-three weeks duration. The IDOL management prepares the counselling schedules and plan counselling services in consultation with the Study Centres. Availability of class rooms, relatively flexible period in the regular class-schedule of the college teachers etc. are taken into account while finalising the counselling schedule. The counselling sessions at the headquarters are conducted throughout the year. There are

provisions of regular tutorial classes on the weekdays and also during weekends. The Institute has also introduced walk-in and telephone counselling and tutoring. Learners can walk-in during the scheduled day and timings either to the HQ or to the designated Study Centres for counselling. The learners can also seek counselling through telephone by sending SMS through short code messaging services. The time limit for such telephone counselling is ten minutes. Upon receiving the SMS from learners, the telephone numbers of the learners seeking counselling are forwarded to the concerned tutor-counsellor. Tutor-counsellors call up the learner and provide necessary counselling, if the allotted time limit of ten minutes is not sufficient, the learner is advised to meet the tutor-counsellor personally either at the HQ or at the Study Centre. Attendance at these counselling-tutoring sessions is not compulsory.

Madurai Kamraj University, Tamil Nadu organises Contact Seminar programmes for its learners in several rounds. These face-to-face sessions are organized at the designated centres. The contact seminar classes for the undergraduate and post graduate students are arranged for the benefit of the participants and participants are advised to utilize this opportunity of interacting with the faculty members from various reputed Academic Institutions. Students are expected to improve their performance in the University examinations by attending the contact seminar programme regularly. The seminar contact programmes are organized in various rounds and are designed to cover different portions of the syllabus. Notifications are issued declaring the schedule and venues for these sessions well in advance and students have an option to attend classes at any one of the centres of their choice. If the students have no classes at a particular centre, they can attend the classes in any other centre. Students have to look at the Notice Board put up in the seminar venue for room arrangements of the programme. If the strength of the students in a class is less than FIVE in a particular centre the particular class is suspended for the subsequent rounds. Students can make a written representation to the Director/Deputy Director (Seminar), Head of the Department about the problems relating to class teaching, non-coverage of the prescribed syllabus and such other hardships they face in the classes.

International Centre for Distance Education and Open Learning (ICDEOL), Himachal Pradesh University conducts counselling services in the form of Personal Contact programmes. During these Personal Contact Programmes, the services of internal faculty and eminent teachers from outside are especially requisitioned for enriching the quality of academic programmes. Attendance in the personal contact programme and Practical Training is compulsory for M.Ed., B.Ed., BA/MA (Music), PGDCA/APGDIT courses. The University prepares the schedule well in advance and students are communicated by post. The Personal Contact Programmes for other courses are organized for a period of 7 to 25 days. The Personal Contact Programme Centres for the UG/PG are either at the HQ i.e at Shimla or outside the state, also as per the concentration of the students strength. The University takes decision regarding conduct of the Personal Contact Programme at various centres on the basis of density of student-enrolment and availability of the qualified staff. The students have been given option to choose the centres for their Personal Contact Programme.

4.3 HOW TO PLAN A COUNSELLING/ TUTORING SESSION?

Experiences of both dual mode and open universities prompt that we must plan the counselling and tutoring services well in advance preferably at the beginning of each academic session. The planning part remains important for Study Centres as well as for Headquarters. Most open universities in India have their fixed schedule for counselling. For example counselling and tutoring in IGNOU take place on Sundays. The dual mode universities organize face-to-face counselling sessions mainly in the form personal contact programmes where attendance is not compulsory. Though many dual mode universities conduct these sessions at the HQ as well as at Study Centres, these are planned and scheduled centrally by the University, whereas the counselling and tutoring services in most of the open universities are decentralized.

4.4 IDENTIFICATION AND APPOINTMENT OF ACADEMIC COUNSELLORS

How to identify counsellors?

As we have already discussed that open universities conduct counselling and tutoring in the Study Centres, so identification of counsellors in a particular Study Centre mostly depends on the availability of qualified persons in and around the location of the Study Centre. Since the universities depend mostly on the bio-data submitted by the Study Centres, it is in fact the Study Centres that play the most crucial role in identification of the counsellors.

In most ideal situation, the Study Centre officials try to engage the best available resources in their own institution and in the town. While doing so Study Centres are expected to invite applications from interested and qualified persons who are prepared to undergo necessary training and orientation. But the actual picture in a typical Indian Study Centre may tell you a different story. Identification of counsellors or resource persons for conducting Personal Contact Programmes in the dual mode universities largely depends upon the HQs. Since, majority of these sessions are actually held at the HQs, the DEIs select those personnel based on their availability in a particular location.

While identifying a counsellor for a particular course apart from general aptitude of the person in the concerned subject, the other humanly qualities such as tolerance, democratic temperament, patience, pleasant personality etc. should be taken into consideration. These qualities are essential for a good counsellor-tutor, who not only provide necessary academic back up to the learner, but also inculcate the culture of self learning in the learners.

Factors which may influence the process of identification of counsellors

Imagine a typical Study Centre of an open university. The Study Centre officials find it difficult to identify many resource persons, so they opt for the usual short cut. Instead of taking a long process of inviting applications from interested persons, only friends and acquaintances are identified as counsellors and tutors.

There are also other human factors which eventually may influence while identifying counsellors. Even if there are interested and qualified persons in an institution where Study Centre is located they may not be engaged as counsellors if they do not have good relations with the Study Centre coordinator/assistant coordinator. Therefore, proper monitoring of the selection of counsellors by the Study Centre should be a regular concern of the Regional Centre.

4.5 ORIENTATION AND TRAINING OF ACADEMIC COUNSELLORS

As counsellors are identified and engaged by the Study Centres in case of most of the open universities in India, the Study Centre organizes regular orientation and training of the people engaged. The counsellors are expected to receive orientation and training in the field of Distance Education, various learning theories and also the concerned subject wherever possible. Since, majority of them belong to the conventional educational institution, a long term strategy must be drawn to train them to cope with heterogeneous learners. Experience shows that most of the academic counsellors chose to lecture rather counselling and try to cover the syllabus. While conducting Personal Contact Programme in dual mode universities many academic counsellors often complain that the learners turn up without prior reading of the study materials. However, the academic counsellors must be oriented to face a situation where a learner may turn up for a contact programme without even opening the packet of study materials he or she received from the university.

Proper orientation should be given to the academic counsellors to behave similar to that of a personal tutor assigned to a group of learners at the UK Open University, where a group with no more than 25 or so other students are attached to tutor in order to allow personal knowledge, support and understanding to grow up through the lifetime of a course.

Sensitizing the Counsellors to the Need and Philosophy of ODL System

Counselling and tutoring services in different ODL institutions are effectively managed by the people largely belonging to the conventional system. Hence they carry the baggage of teacher oriented approach to ODL counselling too. Often they tend to “teach” and cover the syllabus within the limited stipulated time rather than counselling. Various researchers have demonstrated that these people even consider the counselling inferior to lecturing. Therefore academic counsellors must be sensitized to the needs of distance learners.

4.6 SCHEDULING OF COUNSELLING AND TUTORING SESSIONS

Availability of physical space, human resources, learner convenience and local climatic conditions—these are the few important factors that must be considered while scheduling the counselling and tutoring sessions.

It is advisable that learners are informed about the schedule well in advance, if possible at the time of enrollment. A comprehensive

academic calendar which includes the detailed schedules of counselling sessions and examinations should be worked out at the beginning of each academic session by all ODL institutions. Many open universities and DEIs have their strict academic calendar, which contain schedule for counselling sessions.

Study Centres are the ideal places to conduct face-to-face sessions. The distance learners are informed well in advance about the specific period and place where the face-to-face sessions are to be held. The distance education institutes/open universities differ widely with respect to the number of face-to-face sessions organised by them for each course during the academic session. They also differ on the frequency of face-to-face sessions in the time and interval with which they are organised. The DEIs and open universities adopt different policies in regard to organizing counselling sessions. Open universities mostly organise limited face-to-face sessions throughout the academic session on weekends or holidays in the evening hours. The dual mode universities schedule the Personal Contact Programmes mostly during the end of the academic sessions, in order to prepare the learners for examinations.

4.7 BUDGETING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ARRANGEMENT

Timely budgeting and arrangement of physical infrastructure are most crucial for successful implementation of counselling. Obtaining financial sanction from higher authorities for timely payment to counsellors is extremely important. It is often complained in India that academic counsellors do not receive their remuneration in time. The delay in payment of remuneration to various personnel engaged in counselling also happens largely because of the lack of proper budgeting. The Study Centre coordinators should take adequate measures in arranging physical infrastructure for the counselling sessions.

4.8 IMPLEMENTATION

The following points such as Need Based Counselling, One to One Counselling, Face to Face Counselling, Group Counselling and Online Counselling should be emphasized in accordance to the needs.

4.8.1 Need Based Counselling

The ODL institutions must take special measures for organizing need based counselling for its learners. One of such important measures is to organize counselling for differently able learners. Many open universities like IGNOU and OUHK takes special measures to cater to the needs of its learners with disabilities. A range of services including counselling advice, special course materials, suitable tutorial venues, special examination arrangements and the loan of learning equipment is provided to facilitate their learning. Visually and hearing impaired learners are provided with special equipment and special disabled learners centres are set up for this purpose.

Many open universities also have provisions for organizing special need based counselling sessions for slow learners. IGNOU organizes special remedial tutorial sessions for many of its learners.

4.8.2 One-to-one Counselling

Many open universities and few DEIs follow the system of one-to-one counselling by various means. Telephone counselling is one of such system where one-to-one counselling may be provided to learners. In this case a learner calls the designated number and receives required counselling. Many universities outsource services of the Call Centres to provide such counselling. Gauhati University introduced a system of one-to-one walk-in or telephone counselling for its learners. A definite day of the week is normally assigned for a particular course, when learners can either walk in to meet the individual counsellor or call up a particular number to receive required counselling. Experience shows that learners feel much comfortable during such counselling and after overcoming the initial hesitation they actively participate in discussing various problems.

4.8.3 Face-to-face Counselling

By now you are already acquainted with various aspects of organizing counselling and tutoring sessions for distance learners. We have found that both in open universities and DEIs of dual mode universities face-to-face contact session play a crucial role. However, there are two opposite views on face-to-face session for open and distance learners. One considers face-to-face sessions as a mere hangover of the conventional system and seeks to reject it straight. The other view accepts the crucial role played by the face-to-face sessions for distance learners. It opposes the view that it represents interference, disturbing the individual self study, rather it believes that face-to-face sessions are essential in converting a common learner into a self learner. Another section opines that face-to-face contact dilutes the very concept of an independent learner in distance education.

Holmberg (1986) and Keegan (1989) suggest some important views on aims and purposes that face-to-face sessions serve in distance education. According to Keegan, "Occasional face-to-face sessions are organised for both didactic and socialisation purposes unlike the conventional system, where it is a major teaching medium" (Keegan, 1989). Holmberg (1986) also holds similar view that they are useful as opportunities to consult subject specialists and to exchange views with tutors and fellow learners as well as to benefit from tutors' expositions and criticism of work done.

4.8.4 Group Counselling

As most of you are the product of the conventional university system, you must be aware of situations where teaching-learning takes place in groups. Group counselling is common in distance learning both in Open University and dual mode university systems. The most important factor to be taken into consideration while organizing group counselling is the composition of the group formed. For maximum learning to occur in group counselling, the group must share a common goal for learning, a reasonable degree of cohesiveness. Unlike permanent groups, where these ingredients may already be present, the distance learning counselling groups are not cohesive since they meet for short periods spread over weeks or months. It is the duty of the organizers to create and develop the required cohesiveness and structure of the group. The good structured group helps learners to get motivated for better learning.

4.8.5 Online Counselling

Many open universities and DEIs offer online counselling to their learners through internet. Learners actively use e-mails, blogs, chats etc. to interact with the teachers as well as with the fellow learners. The learners are allowed to submit their assignment and receive tutor-comments online. The entire communication between tutors and fellow learners is done through internet.

E-learning portals are used to create an environment where academic advisers/course guides act as mentors and provide online counselling. Interactive online tools like Discussion forum, Blogs, Chat rooms are used to create a virtual class room where learners freely participate in actual learning process..

Check Your Progress 2

- Notes: a) *Space is given below for your answer.*
b) *Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.*

Explain 'Need based Counselling' in your own words.

.....
.....
.....
.....

4.9 LET US SUM UP

Distance education system is an “industrialized form of education”, hence the planning for counselling and tutoring in a distance education institution bear characteristic of industrial planning. Success of counselling and tutoring sessions depends upon proper planning and implementation.

Organization of counselling for distance education institution depend on the nature of the institution. The open university methodology in organizing counselling differs from the DEIs in the dual mode universities. The methodology followed by UK Open university, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University and IGNOU radically differs from that of University of Mumbai, Gauhati University, Madurai Kamraj University and Himachal Pradesh University.

Open Universities organize face-to-face counselling and tutoring sessions throughout the academic sessions whereas distance education institutes of the dual mode universities organize face-to-face personal contact programme/seminar contact programme during the end of the academic sessions, in order to prepare the learners for examination.

The planning of counselling and tutoring services in open universities are largely affairs of the Regional Centre and Study Centres, whereas in dual mode universities counselling and tutoring are planned and implemented by the HQ. Study Centres/PCP centres mainly play the role of providing venue and resource persons.

4.10 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University uses multimedia for its instructional purposes. Self-learning printed materials are supplemented by other media, which include, TV, Mana-TV, Audio, Video, Radio, Radio-phone-in programme, TV teleconference (Saptagiri Channel, DD-8) and Mana-TV teleconferences. Apart from these media, the University also organises, contact-cum-counselling classes, winter/summer classes, assignments, practical training programmes and project work.

The counselling and tutoring services of IGNOU are organized through its network of Regional Centres, Study Centres and Partner institutions. Various media are used for counselling distance learners, viz. face-to-face sessions at Study Centres, tele-counselling through teleconferencing, phone-in-radio counselling, TV counselling through Gyan Darshan, FM Radio counselling through Gyan Vani, e-mail, chat mode on internet. The latest addition to these services is the IGNOU flexi-learning.

Check Your Progress 2

The ODL institutions must take special measures for organizing need based counselling for its learners. One of such important measures is to organize counselling for differently-abled learners. Many open universities like IGNOU and OUHK take special measures to cater to the needs of its learners with disabilities. A range of services including counselling advice, special course materials, suitable tutorial venues, special examination arrangements and the loan of learning equipment is provided to facilitate their learning. Visually and hearing impaired learners are provided with special equipment and special disabled learners centres are set up for this purpose.

Many open universities also have provisions for organizing special need based counselling sessions for slow learners. IGNOU organizes special remedial tutorial sessions for many of its learners.

4.11 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

- Harichandan, D. (2005) Organistaion and Management of Learner Support Systems in Dual Mode Universities of India. ICDE International Conference, November 19-23, 2005, New Delhi.
- Murahari, Bucherla & Kumar, V. Vijaya. (2008) Student Support Services in Distance Education: Quality Control-revisited. Paper presented at the 14th annual conference of the Indian Distance Education Association, Guwahati.
- Reddy, V. & Santosh, P. (2008) Academic Counselling: Some Institutional Models & Models of Counselling. Paper presented at the 14th annual conference of the Indian Distance Education Association, Guwahati.
- Sharma, Hemant Lata. (2002) Student Support Services in Distance Learning System: A case study of DDE, Maharshi Dayanand University. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE*. October 2002, 3(4).
- Tait, A. (2003) Reflections on student support in open and distance learning. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 4(1).