

### 4.3.3 Academic Counselling Sessions held

#### Response:


One of the major objectives of distance education is to exalt and stimulate substantive learning amongst learners. To develop the educational standards of learners and confer upon them a complete educational experience similar to that of the traditional system, the mechanism of Counselling sessions or personal contact programs plays a crucial role in distance learning, as it overbears the academic dissatisfaction of learners. In the Counselling sessions, learners come into direct contact with Counsellors and other learners. It is a good understanding that the skills and attributes are very important for the academic Counsellors and they have to be enlightened with the ideal information on ODL for effective discharge of their duties at the Counselling sessions. Keeping this aim in mind, comprehensive information is developed opposite the role of Counsellors, which is informing, advising, and counselling. The information system developed will help in the following ways:

- Creating quality culture in the delivery of programs.
- Effective conduct and disseminating information to learners.
- Helping the learner out of privacy and devote time to study.
- Obstruction which keeps the learners informed about the updates.
- Information and facilitating the learners through avoiding time and energy in contacting different officials, at PSSOU headquarters, or regional centers.
- To inculcate confidence in the minds of distance learners to undergo self-study with no hindrance.
- Contributing to enhancing the success rate among ODL learners.
- Playing a major role in the retention of distance learners to complete the study.
- Acting as the ambassadors of ODL system in the society as the counsellors.
- Possess required information and thereby strengthening the ODL system in the country.
- Creating a positive attitude among distance learners who get the expected satisfaction from the institution.
- At last, the information system improved the capacity building of the massive number of academic Counsellors in ODL system, especially in PSSOU, to build the link between the distance learners and the ODL institution.

#### Academic Counselling Policy in PSSOU:

Pandit Sunderlal Sharma (Open) University is offering programmes at various levels like Certificate, Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D. Degree. The University has developed Counselling design based on ODL norms for study hours. For instance, a learner has to work for 16 credits (1 credit =30 study hours) for six months' certificate programmes, whereas the workload for the study is 32 credits for programmes of one-year duration. In the case of programmes of over one-year duration, the study workload is in multiples of 32 credits (i.e.,  $3 \times 32 = 96$  for Bachelors' degree programmes). Hence, the learner has to complete 10% of the study hours out of the total study hours in terms of credits defined for a particular program through the face-to-face academic Counselling at the Learner Support Center. The

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remaining study hours are to be covered by the learners through self-study with the help of Self Learning Materials (SLM), writing assignments, getting multimedia support, etc.

### **Academic Counselling Structure of PSSOU:**

Academic Counselling sessions are the internal part of ODL. Keeping in view the local conditions, *i.e.*, remoteness, approachability, and lack of infrastructural facilities in the state, Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University has developed a unique network of support systems for the learners to provide counselling. Unlike teaching, academic counselling is basically learner and program-centric. So Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University is currently using the following formats for counselling.

#### **Face to Face Counselling:**

In this format, learners interact with counsellors directly in the classroom and discuss their problems. PSSOU attracts counsellors from the formal system of higher education, where proper faculties have specialization in pedagogy. It helps learners to clear their doubts and get motivated while interacting with their peer group.

#### **Counselling through Telephone:**

The learners may contact the counsellor over the phone at their study Center to discuss their doubts while making the assignments or for general queries. In Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University, Program Coordinators actively participate in this activity to guide learners.

#### **Counselling through Broadcasting (Community Arpa Radio):**

Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University's Community Arpa Radio plays a significant role in advising, guiding and counselling the learners. Discussion forums and interactive sessions are organized on designated topics and learners are encouraged to hear these broadcasts and post questions through telephone calls. A daily schedule of broadcasts is displayed on the website of PSSOU.

#### **Counselling Through Web Interaction:**

- Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University has developed a repository of pre-recorded video lectures. This instructional video tool can be accessed at any time. Every subject's e-content is available on the website of PSSOU, which every student can view and read by visiting the university website at his convenience.
- Online classes real-time face-to-face video interactive sessions are organized using Google meet or Zoom App, etc. Besides guest speakers, content experts, program coordinators, senior faculties from other universities visiting universities are also regulated to deliver lectures on special topics.

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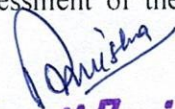
- Webinar or Web-based seminar is another media which is used for guidance of the learners. Here, the learner is encouraged to hear the guest speaker or interact with him.

#### **Counselling through Assignment:**

Writing assignment is another format through which Counselling is carried out by the teachers of PSSOU. Learners interact with their counsellors while preparing for assignments. Learners are asked to write assignments in their own handwriting. Program coordinators/supervisors interact and guide them in case of any difficulty or clarifications.

#### **Monitoring Mechanisms in PSSOU:**

There is a well-established monitoring system for the Regional Service Division and Study Centers in the Pandit Sunderlal Sharma (open), University. The day-to-day functioning of the Study Center and Regional Service Division is monitored by the Regional Services Directorate from the headquarters. Study Centers are asked to submit a monthly progress report on prescribed sheets and Regional Service Division submits a quarterly report on the activities carried out by the Study Center of their respective regions. The data of the progress report is also collected online so that it can be used for analysis and assessment of the institution to enhance academic quality.

  
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