POLICY ON SYSTEMIC RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has been entrusted with the mandate to promote, coordinate and maintain standards in the ODL system including research. There is a need for research and empirical evidence to periodically review the functioning of the ODL system in general and the Open University in particular, with a view to improving the system and thereby enhancing its credibility.

System-based research is an important activity of the University for which mechanisms need to be developed that integrate research in the mainstream activities:

- as an instrument of continuing professional development;
- for development of ODL system as an innovative technology-enabled learner-centred system;
- addressing issues that refer to access, equity, quality and affordability;
- assessing the effectiveness of the pedagogy through integration of ICT;
- quality assurance of course design and development, curriculum transaction and learner support services; and
- impact of ICT on scalability of delivery of distance education programmes at the macro as well as micro levels.

Against this backdrop, the University encourages systemic research with the following objectives:

- Impact analysis of the functioning of the Open University *vis-a-vis* its mandate, vision and mission;

- Undertake in-depth studies for evaluation of distance education programmes, their impact and effectiveness with a view to undertake corrective measures in their implementation;

- Investigate specific problems with regard to the concepts and practices pertaining to the system and to find solutions to them; and

- Study the adoption of new technologies, such as Open Educational Resources (OERs), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and mobile devices and their application, etc. with the objective to reach out to large sections of the society, particularly to the disadvantaged, marginalized and *hitherto* unreached.

MACRO LEVEL:

Impact analysis of the functioning of the Open University

The University has adopted the practice of undertaking a comprehensive impact analysis of the system every ten years by a third party, with the following terms of reference:

- To review the impact of the OU in terms of its growth and development, increasing access to the disadvantaged, gender equality and use of innovative teaching and learning methods including the use of appropriate technologies; juxtaposing these against its mandate, vision and mission.

- To review the institutional preparedness and availability of infrastructure at the OU to meet the changing needs of the learners of the 21stcentury and improve the employable and entrepreneurship skills; and

- To analyze the issues related to standards of open and distance education, recognition, accreditation and quality assurance and

- To recommend steps to strengthen the credibility and brand value.

MICRO LEVEL:

Undertake in-depth studies for evaluation of distance education programmes

Quality learning materials is the most important ingredient in the teaching learning process of an ODL institution. Therefore the major focus of the

University is on programme evaluation focusing on the learning outcomes; course content; pedagogy; assessment and evaluation; employability; etc. for programmes on offer.

Investigate specific problems with regard to the concepts and practices pertaining to the system

The major sub-systems of the ODL system include: curriculum design; course design and development; teaching-learning methodology; learner characteristics and support; assessment and evaluation; use and integration of media technology; etc. that need to be periodically reviewed and feedback obtained needs to be ploughed back for the betterment of the system.

Study the adoption of new technologies, their application and potential

Being a technology-driven system, the use of ICT in various operations namely: educational administration, learner management, learner preparation for readiness, curriculum construction, instructional design, curriculum transaction, support services (pre-admission counselling, admission process, provision of study materials, counselling and tutoring, learner participation and engagement, e-learning, library services, laboratory support facilities, learner evaluation, academic career guidance, information services and grievance redressal among others) to facilitate the learning of the isolated and remote distance learners.

DEDICATED DIVISIONS FOR UNDERTAKING RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

a) Planning & Development Division (P&DD)

The Planning and Development Division is an important unit involved in framing short-term and long-term plans and policies to monitor and review performance of all schemes of the University and suggest measures to improve quality. The Division is given the responsibility of analyze need of the programmes, cost and workforce requirements for design and delivery of academic programmes. The Division is required to maintain a reliable database

of the programmes on offer. Impact analysis of the University's functioning is undertaken by P&DD periodically after every decade.

b) Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE)

Initially set up as a Division of Distance Education in 1986, later upgraded to Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) in 1993, is entrusted with the major responsibility of conducting staff development and programme evaluation for IGNOU. The *Indian Journal of Open Learning* (IJOL), operational since 1992, is a refereed peer-reviewed Journal in Social Sciences, to provide an opportunity to researchers and scholars to present the contributions about theory, practice and research in the field of ODL.

c) Library & Documentation Division (L&DD)

The Library functions as an information hub and a major resource centre for promoting research and development in the University. The holdings of the library collection including e-resources can be browsed and downloaded anytime anywhere through remote login and ip login. The library also has facilitates for plagiarism checking.

d) Research Unit

IGNOU has been set up exclusively for promoting discipline based and systemic research through selection and enrollment of M.Phil. and Ph.D. candidates.

Centre for Internal Quality Assurance

As per UGC (ODL) Regulations, 2017, the University has set up Centre for Quality Assurance (CIQA) for undertaking impact studies, longitudinal studies and action research projects to infuse quality in all practices and operations of the University. The Centre has the responsibility of obtaining feedback from all stakeholders and regularly prepares reports to be placed before statutory bodies for implementation; undertake academic audit in the form of Study Reports to be submitted to National Accreditation and Regulatory Bodies.