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Guidelines for

**KKHSOU Learners
Mentoring Services**



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1.1

Introduction

Distance education is a method teaching learning at a distance where as open learning is a philosophy. The main concept that operates this open learning is learner-centeredness. The learner is the real stakeholder of the entire open and distance education (ODL). In other word, learner is the purpose and beginning and end for the open and distance education. As such, ODL adapts itself to the needs of different types learners with diverse backgrounds. It does not distinguish between a young learners and an old learner between a slow learner and a quick learner, but provides all of them with a possibility that permits them to proceed in their specific course of study smoothly.

Keeping in view the broad philosophy of open learning and its top most priority on addressing learners' diverse needs, there are many learner support services (LSS) offered to the learners of open and distance learners. The goal of LSS is to minimize the negative effects of isolation by providing counselling to overcome the personal difficulties and identifies the problem faced by learner as isolation and alienation (Craft, 1991). Learner Mentoring is one of the major emerging learner support services in ODL system.

1.2

What is meant by Mentoring?

Mentor can be considered “a trusted counsellor” or “a guide”. In some specific situation, the word mentor can be used for anyone who has a positive or a guiding influence on another person in his life. The definitions of the term “mentor” are manifold. Thus, as recorded by Wai-Packard “Mentoring is a term generally used to describe a relationship between a less experienced individual, called a mentee or protégé, and a more experienced individual known as a mentor”. Mentoring is a trusted relationship and a meaningful commitment. The relationship that forms between mentors and mentee is friendly, open and cooperative. Whether the relationship is deemed formal or informal, the goal of mentoring is to provide advice or guidance for both academic and personal enrichment of the mentee. In the context of open and distance learning, we may define a mentoring quite close relationship (between teacher and learner) as helping and supporting learners to manage their own learning in order to maximize their potentialities and achieve the goals they set for themselves for their academic and personal life.

The concept of Mentoring is defined by many experts, out of which two relevant definitions are quoted from the Training Journal (Source: <https://www.trainingjournal.com/blog/16-mentoring-definitions>) as mentioned below:

“Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to benefit from this exchange, to enrich their professional journey”. - **Suzanne Faure**

Mentoring is “A mutual relationship with an intentional agenda designed to convey specific content along with life wisdom from one individual to another. Mentoring does not happen by accident, nor do its benefits come quickly. It is relationally based, but it is more than a good friendship...mentoring is not two people who just spend time together sharing”. - **Thomas Addington and Stephen Graves**

1.3

Need of Mentoring Services for ODL Learners

Though the terms Mentoring and Academic Counselling are used synonymously but they differ operationally. In academic counselling, the ODL learners are expected to read the self-learning materials or gone through the e-contents and note down the doubts and come prepared for the counselling session either physically or online for discussion with the counsellors. But in practice, it has been found that mostly face-to-face teaching takes place in the counselling sessions. Further, another important observation is that the current academic counselling practices do not give due importance to the non-academic problems of the learners. It is also seen that all the learners do not attend counselling sessions. So, the existing academic counselling system is not only able to cover the all learners but also unable to address the individual learner's specific needs and requirements. On the contrary, mentoring may be defined here as more comprehensive, more penetrating and more inclusive kind of support services for the ODL learners through which all academic and non-academic issues of the every ODL learner address individual basis continuously during his/her study period. It fills the gaps that remain in the normal academic counselling process. As such it is a complementary service to academic counselling which is instrumental to fulfil the each learner's specific needs that arise due to their age, experience, aptitude, interest, ego level, study orientation and diverse background etc. Since ODL learners physically remain away from their teachers, institution and peers, so, through continuous mentoring the learners get personal support that greatly enhances learners' chances for success in their study. In view of the above, the University introduces a unique system of LSS for all the learners which is called KKHSOU Learner Mentoring Services (KLMS).

1.4

Objectives of the KKHSOU Learner Mentoring Service

The objectives of the KKHSOU Learner Mentoring Services are-

- a) To help the learners to acquire the all the characteristics of open and distance learners so that they are able to proceed their study with high self-confidence, self-esteem, morale and sense of identity.
- b) To create the greater sense of inclusion or reduced feelings of isolation by providing continuous personal care and guidance to each and every learner in need.
- c) To prevent the drop-out of the learner and ensure their meaningful retention in the study programme by addressing their academic and non-academic problems proactively on individual basis.
- d) To make aware the learners about the different learner support services of the University available for them and ensure each learner avails all these support services effectively.
- e) To provide special care and guidance to the learners with special needs, learners of disadvantaged groups, women learners and learners with insufficient early study orientations.
- f) To minimize the personal difficulties and identifies the problems faced by the learners due to their diverse needs and backgrounds and guide them to evolve appropriate and suitable learning strategies to overcome all these difficulties and problems for successful completion of their programme of study.

1.5

Who will be the Mentor?

All the University faculty members act as Mentor and provide services to all learners studying in the University along with their regular role as Academic Counsellor.

1.6

How to create the Mentoring Group?

All the Learner Support Centres (LSC) of the University is covered by this Mentoring Services. A faculty member is assigned a fixed numbers of LSCs for mentoring the learners by the competent authority of the University. Once assigned the LSCs, the faculty member creates a WhatsApp or Telegram Group and includes all the learners of the assigned LSCs in that WhatsApp or Telegram Group. Each WhatsApp group will consist of not more than 250 learners. In case of Telegram the numbers of learners may exceed 250 numbers.

1.7

Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor

- Each mentor prepares the learner profile of his/her assigned LSC. Each individual learner's profile is consisted of learner's enrolment no., programme of the study, subject taken, major or pass (in case of UG programmes), medium of study, age-group belong, gender, caste, locality, mobile no. and email ID of the learners, employment status of learner, Parents' educational background, average monthly income of the family, and any special area of interest etc.
- On the basis of the learner's profile, each mentor prepares his/her plan of actions for mentoring the learners under his/her supervision. S/he may prepare specific plan of actions for specific learners, if required.
- The mentor should develop a close contact with the Coordinators of the assigned LSCs for providing effective mentoring services to the learners.
- The mentor should develop a rapport with the learners and make them clear why this mentoring group is formed and how it is different from usual academic counselling. Further, the mentor should clearly speak to the learners how they will be get benefitted from the mentoring services.

- The mentor should try to identify the unique problems of academic and non-academic areas that faced by the each learner in his study and accordingly try to provide all sorts of support and guidance to the learner for smooth advancement of the learner's study life.
- The Mentor should orient the learners about all the learner support services provided by the University and also provide all necessary guidance and encouragement to the learners to avail these facilities.
- The mentors should provide all the important notices and the University website links such as learners' corner, grievance redressal cell, Learners' Charter and feedback etc. to the learners so that learners get necessary information in time and get the benefits of the various useful website links of the University.
- The mentors should liaison between the learners and different branches of the University in resolving the various problems faced by the learners.
- The mentor should play the friend, philosopher and guide's roles while mentoring his/her learners and take all the necessary steps for keeping the motivation of the learner's intake all the time during his study life.
- The ultimate function of the Mentor is to help and guide each learner to successfully complete his/her study.
- The mentors should periodically submit the report of the Mentoring to the competent authority with useful suggestions, if any. The report should prepare by broadly classifying academic and non-academic problems and issues of the learners.

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