

4.3.1 Learner Support Services established at the different levels by the Institution (Three tier/ Two-tier) Response:

Learner support services are the most vital component of any open and distance learning (ODL) system. It includes a wide range of academic and other related activities. The support services should not only be responsive to the needs of the distance learners but should also be accessible. Monitoring of the support services has to be a continuous and ongoing exercise, which could bring constant improvement through innovations in the support services.

In the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, learner support services (LSS) play an instrumental role in making two-way communications possible and in the expansion of the ODL system across the country. Learners support services are vital for attracting and retaining learners in the open and distance learning program. Since, most of the learners are likely to be employees and housewives, scattered over a wide area including the interior remote and tribal villages, they may not find it convenient to be physically present in a classroom for face-to-face interaction at the stipulated time and place.

It is essential for removing isolation, overcoming hindrances, promoting independent learning, motivating learners, improving study skills, and providing feedback on progress to a great extent in the ODL system. In the ODL system, learners are free to learn at their own pace and convenience, while being away from the institutions. Modern technology has been playing a significant role in the promotion of learner support services. The success of the University has come through the effective implementation of learner support services which are framed to meet the needs of learners coming from diverse backgrounds.

Head Quarters:

The PSSOU has adopted an integrated multimedia approach in the form of print materials, broadcasting interactive counseling, e-mail and web technologies, etc. The objective of Learner Support Services is to provide academic, administrative, and informative support to the learners through various contact channels to handle isolation. The three-tier system of the Learner Support system of the PSSOU:

Coordination of activities for timely admission of students, dispatch of study materials and all communications to learners, proper conduct of counseling sessions, efficient handling of turn-around time of assignments and their reliable evaluation, maintenance of a continuous feedback and communication system requires competent and committed functionaries with

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REGISTRAR
Sunderlal Sharma (Open)
University Chhattisgarh
BILASPUR (C.G.)


Dr. Preeti Rani Mishra
Incharge NAAC Criteria-IV
PSSOU, CG Bilaspur

specialized skills. In PSSOU, for instance, Regional Services Division plays a crucial role in these matters, among others, requiring maintenance of various student support services.

If any learner is requires to come to the headquarters, the department concerned (e.g. Registrar Dept. -reg. admission/ registration, Directorate of Study Centers- reg. counseling, SLMs, School of Studies -reg. academic issue, Examination Dept.- reg. examination) extends the support and tries to satisfy them. The university provides the following support services)

- i. **Study Materials and e-Content:** The study materials are sent by post to the learners after admission to their addresses. At that time, the Assignment Answer copy, prospectus and the schedule of the Counseling Sessions is also communicated. The e-contents are also available on the University's website.
- ii. **Audio Lecture:** Audio lectures are made by the teachers available in the university. The broadcasts are available to students through Arpa Radio. Audio lectures are also available on the university website.
- iii. **E-Mail:** The core faculty members regularly respond to the queries of learners through e-mail.

Regional Centres:

Seven Regional Centres are located in different regions of the State including the headquarters. All the Regional Centers have adequate physical infrastructure and human resources to provide support to the learners. Dedicated Help desk, Learner Facilitation Centre with free internet facilities is available at all the RCs. Discipline pacific faculty members are also posted to extend academic support to learners. The RCs are well equipped with discipline-specific science laboratories.

- i) **Induction Meeting:** After admission the University invites the learners for an induction meeting in their Regional Centers. where they are familiarized with the ODL system and their works. The faculty members of the University remain present on such days.
- ii) **Face-to-Face Counselling and Contact Classes:** Counselling classes and contact classes are organized in every session. 75% attendance of students is mandatory in the subject in which practical examinations are conducted. Counseling classes and contact classes are organized by the university based on the number of students.

VERIFIED



REGISTRAR
Pt. Sunderlal Sharma (Open)
University Chhattisgarh
BILASPUR (C.G.)



Dr. Preeti Rani Mishra
Incharge NAAC Criteria-IV
PSSOU, CG Bilaspur


iii) **Home Assignment:** For writing the assignment, the students are provided answer sheets with the space for each question by the post with SLM. After completing the work of writing assignments, students submit their assignments to their respective study centers by the due date.

Learning Support Centres:

The LSCs are the actual places where the learners interact with the academic counselors, their co-learners, and coordinators for various purposes. The learner support services are organized through a network of 138 LSCs. The LSCs play a vital role in the success of the university. The LSCs serve as a link between the learners and the University. Generally, the LSCs offer the following support services:

1. Pre-admission counseling for prospective learners to provide information to facilitate them in taking an informed decision on joining a specific Programme.
2. Support for admission-related matters.
3. E-Study material and information available on the website of the University.
5. Help desk well versed with the learner information database providing single window services for all learner-related queries.
6. The university provides facilities for online guidance and counseling facilities to the learners.

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REGISTRAR
Pt. Sunderlal Sharma (Open)
University Chhattisgarh
BILASPUR (C.G.)



Dr. Preeti Rani Mishra
Incharge NAAC Criteria-IV
PSSOU, CG Bilaspur