

BEST PRACTICES

Netaji Subhas Open University

Website: www.wbnsou.ac.in

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PREFACE

An educational institution operates in the larger milieu of education system of the country. In order to be relevant in changing national and global contexts an educational institution has to be responsive to the emerging challenges and impending issues. It has a social responsibility to be upbeat towards development in the larger contexts. Thus, the role of Netaji Subhas Open University is reflected in terms of the kinds of programmes, activities and values that it incorporates within its regular functioning. The extent to which an institution impacts positively in these areas, is a one of the aspects of its quality.

Best practices are those that add value to human existence while also supporting an institution's principal goal. To quote NAAC ‘...best practices are quality enhancing academic/ administrative/ infrastructural strategies adopted by highly accredited institutions of higher learning in the present instance...’. Netaji Subhas Open University believes that best practices are the agents of positive change not only in case of teaching-learning, but they also promote innovative ideas and activities and instil a scientific approach to issues or problems of the society in which the HEI operates and beyond.

Grade ‘A’ received by NSOU in its maiden NAAC cycle, was in fact, an aggregate of the institutional best practices followed in different areas of institutional performance. NSOU has continuously focused on improving its effort on institutionalization, internalization and dissemination of its best practices. The University has made special efforts to highlight the significance of open and distance education in ‘reaching the unreached’ especially during the pandemic period and in the light of the NEP 2020. There is no doubt that digital learning will be the driving force in the education sector in years to come and the best practices of NSOU are futuristic in their goal and scope at the regional and national level as well as in tune with the United Nations SDG-4.

NSOU is responsive to at least a few pressing issues such as empowerment and inclusion, environmental consciousness and sustainability towards the diverse society. However, the mechanisms adopted to address these and practices evolved will always be unique to the University. Some meaningful practices are evolved internally by the institution leading to improvements in its functioning – academic, administrative or organizational. Over a period of time, due to such unique ways of functioning, NSOU has developed distinct characteristics which became its recognizable attribute or distinction.

*Kolkata
25th March 2022*

*Prof. Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice Chancellor
Netaji Subhas Open University*

About NSOU

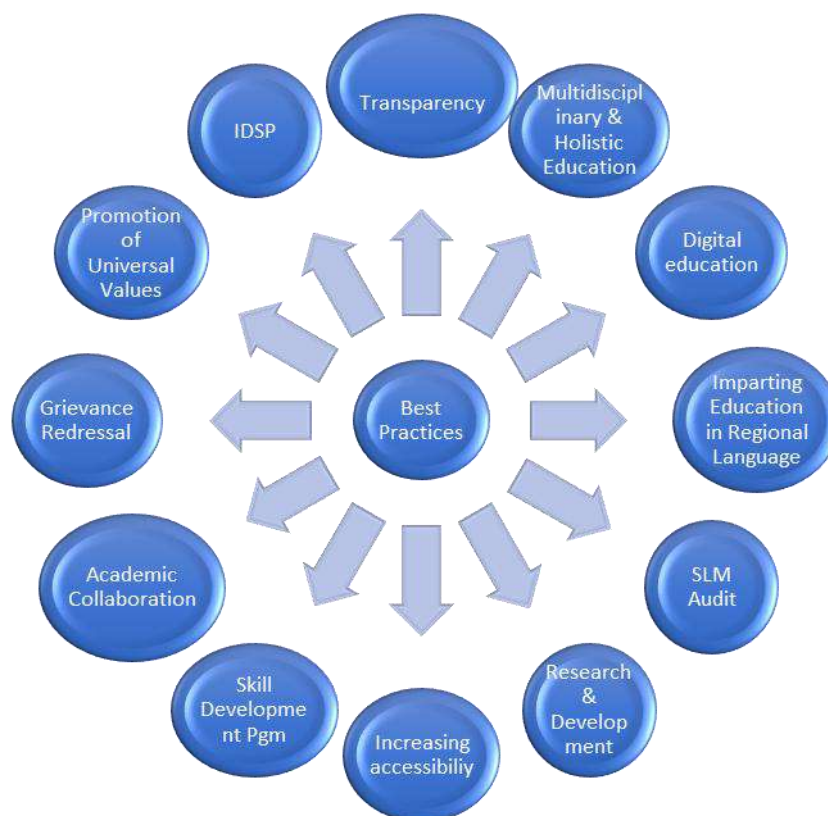
Established in 1997 by West Bengal State Legislature Act XIX (1997) as the State Open University to impart education in the Distance mode, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has made a sustained mark in the education scenario with its avowed mission of “Reaching the Unreached”. The University started functioning from the historic building of Sri Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with effect from July 1998 Semester with the Bachelor's Degree Programme in Arts & Commerce to provide an opportunity for higher education in the vernacular medium to various disadvantaged groups of aspiring learners. It is the tenth Open University of the country. With the recognition of apex bodies like the UGC, the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), and now the UGC-DEB, NSOU has emerged as a force to reckon with in terms of empowering a wide cross section of society through education with its multiple options. The university received the following awards for its educational excellence during the last 25years of service to the society.

- i) Excellence in Distance Education Award (EDEA) from COL in 2006
- ii) Best Innovative University Award from DNA & Stars group in 2016
- iii) Educational Excellence Award 2021 from Zee24Ghanta News in 2021
- iv) NAAC Accreditation - Grade ‘A’ in 2021

The year 2021 is very important for the University as this year, NSOU celebrated its silver jubilee year and the National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC) accredited the University with Grade A’ in its first cycle. At NSOU over the years, we have been catering to a very heterogeneous learner base both in terms of age group and socio-economic backgrounds. Given all these factors, the matrix of our operations includes both conventional academic areas as also vocational courses that are aimed at skill specific development of human resources. At present NSOU offers Under Graduate (15 programmes), Post Graduate (16 programmes), Two 2nd Degree Programmes, 15 Ph.D. programmes and 32 Vocational courses. NSOU operates through three Regional Centres (Kalyani, Durgapur, Jalpaiguri) and 162 Learner Support Centres across the state of West Bengal.

BEST PRACTICES OF NSOU

The University has been practicing the following actions, described in details under the following broad vistas:



1. **Transparency:** Transparent System of Monitoring and Evaluation: From its very inception in 1997, the NSOU has laid special emphasis on a robust and transparent monitoring and evaluation system in all areas of activities:

- ✚ **Transparency in policy matters of NSOU authorities and statutory bodies:** The Vision and Mission of the University is clearly stated in the University website and prospectus made available to all the stakeholders.

- ✚ **Transparency in Financial activities:** All the financial transactions are duly monitored. All expenditure is made against the pre-sanctioned budget by the competent authority. The CAG Audit is done for every financial year. All admission/renewal/examination fees are received through online / offline (bank). Enlisting/ engagements of vendors for different types of jobs are done as per rules set by the Finance Committee. Every purchase is made as per the financial rule through

tendering / e-tendering process / GeM monitored by a statutory body, viz., the Tender & Purchase Committee.

✚ **Transparency in Admission Process:** A transparent online admission procedure is already in place and continuous efforts are made to make it glitch-free for the learners as far as possible. Admissions are as per merit only and the reservation policy is strictly followed during admissions in case of programmes where intake is limited like PG programme in Zoology, Geography and B.Ed. (Spl. Edn). All information relating to admission like fees, refund of fees, merit and waiting list, renewal of learnership is available on the website. All UG and PG program details are available in the Prospectus which is also available on the university website.

✚ **Transparency in Monitoring the LSCs:** NSOU's policy is to stay in regular contact with the Principal and Coordinator of each of its LSC to ensure a dynamic and transparent monitoring system. This contact is maintained through regular meeting, letters, phones and e-mails. The University has a dedicated department, namely, the Department of Study Centres and three Regional Centres to look after the academic/administrative activities of its LSCs on a regular basis and to inspect their performance through sending Inspection Teams to ensure that they maintain and follow rules set by the NSOU. Induction Meetings are organized every year across UG/PG programmes.

2. **Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education:** To enhance the GER, the NSOU provides quality education in a flexible manner to those who are beyond the arena of the higher education institutions &/or in need of flexible learning schedules. The relevance of all programs offered by various Schools are envisaged. There are 33 self-developed programmes (BDP=15, PG=16, 2nd Degree program=02). With the aim to be an integrated higher education system, promoting holistic and multidisciplinary education and instilling more in-depth learning and mastery of curricula across fields, the University has adopted the following measures:

✚ In Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based UG Programmes, existing courses from across the Schools of Studies are included in the Generic Electives (GE) basket for Honours in B. A, B. Com and B. Sc. programmes to further enhance the multidisciplinary nature of these programmes.

✚ In PG programmes, syllabi revisions have been made especially in MSW, MLIS, M. Com, PG-ELT, PGED to meet the 21st century learning needs and education for the millennial.

✚ Two centres viz. i) Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) under the aegis of School of Vocational Studies and ii) Centre for Language, Translation and Cultural Studies (CLTCS) under School of Humanities have been set up. The main objective of the CLL is to impart skill- training to rural youth in a collaborative way. The objective of the CLTCS is to undertake research activities in related fields of translation and cultural studies. New courses on art and culture have been introduced under these Centres to impart holistic education with flexible/contemporary curricular transactions.

✚ Centre for Disability Studies & Educational Research, under the aegis of School of Education aims to develop human resources in various fields and areas of disability and research in Education and Special Education towards creating a sustainable and inclusive society. The Centre also envisions strengthening the potentialities of teachers and teacher educators, rehab professionals and building competence which

would be instrumental to help them connect to the changing society and provide professional support as and when such service is required. Through varied programmes/activities, the Centre rivet in drawing out skills and aptitude necessary for conducting and undertaking research and extension activities of the greater academia. Courses on Inclusive Education and Understanding Neurodiversity are one of the first kind in India to be offered by this centre.

✚ Centre for Social Studies (CSS) under the aegis of School of Social Sciences aims to pursue research on various social issues (Caste, Gender, Social formation, Political mobilization, etc.) and establish academic links with other research Institutions in a meaningful way.

3. Digital Education and ICT Initiatives

Several ICT initiatives have been taken by NSOU to cope up with the situation of world-wide pandemic and existing IT Infrastructure have been strengthened to continue teaching learning process during Covid-19 pandemic. The design of the website has been modified to segregate the information in a meaningful way. Information can now be searched in each section of the website (like academic year wise) to facilitate information extraction. Each section of the Online Services has been enhanced with new features and contents during this academic year. The official website of the University has been designed to store and manage the digital contents quick hyperlinks. Each section is substantially updated with high-quality low-bandwidth friendly electronic contents.

The University has established ICT based Student Support Cell which addresses the issues raised by the students either through mail or SMS. Learners are advised to follow the website in regular interval for latest notice/ information etc. The stakeholders take full advantages from the following services as provided by the University towards the success of the academic, administrative and organisational enrichment:

- i. **Online support services:** The university has developed a mechanism for SMS alert to communicate the registered students with all information/ notice etc. A dedicated Student Support Cell has been established to receive phone calls and redress the grievance of the students within two working days. Automatic ticket generation for each call is maintained. Call at: 033-4058 5172; e-mail: admin@nsouict.ac.in. CIQA has introduced E-mentoring for the enrolled learners through dedicated Telegram group across the various programmes.
- ii. **Learning Management System (LMS):** NSOU have dedicated a web portal to host LMS. Presently the PG and UG (CBCS) learners can access academic content with their user ID and pass word through this dedicated LMS. Academic content includes course materials and audio-visual lectures available to facilitate any time anywhere learning. (<http://www.nsouict.ac.in>).
- iii. **NSOU OER Repository:** NSOU is the only state-aided university in West Bengal having the OER repository. The course materials and audio-visual lectures with appropriate open license (Open Educational Resources, OER) are made available through this repository free of cost. Students of any university may access / get these academic resources online. (<http://nsouoer.krc.net.in>). OER Repository helps access the academic resources having CC BY-NC-SA license any time & anywhere. The academic resources are also provided through SD card to facilitate offline learning for some specific courses.

- iv. Online Examinations:** Assignments and Term-end examinations were held online through a dedicated portal. Final TEE results are available on the National Academic Depository (NAD).
- v. E-content & A/V lectures:** To supplement face-to-face counselling, the university has taken initiatives to develop audio visual lectures delivered by eminent teachers/ experts. The A/V lectures are made available through LMS and OER Repository. The e-contents are developed in the studio, set up by the University. The faculty members are engaged in developing and editing the e-contents.
- vi. Mobile App/ M-learning:** The LMS is made compatible with the android application so that the students can get all the academic content through their mobile devices. The academic resources are also made available through Mobile App
- vii. NSOU Web TV (Multimedia Streaming Service):**
http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/online_services/webtv.shtml#active_webtv
- viii. NSOU Web Radio ‘Muktak’ (Internet enabled Audio Streaming Service):**
http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/online_services/web_radio.shtml#active_webradio
Web Radio services was introduced to broadcast important lectures through Web. The web Radio service (Muktak) is especially effective where internet connectivity is not enough to avail multimedia streaming.
- ix. MOOCs/Online Courses:** SWAYAM online courses, NSOU MOOCs: Available at <http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/NSOU-MOOC/nsou-mooc.shtml#nsou-mooc>
- x. Virtual Counselling** is introduced in B.Ed (Special Education). A **chatbot** (AI enabled) facility is introduced as a pilot project for B.Ed. (Special Education) Admission 2021-23.
- xi. Awareness programme on ICT** support services are organised to enable students’ optimum use of ICT in their learning process; Orientation of faculties on Question paper setting for online exams; LMS orientation; Pre-admission counselling, Induction meet are judiciously organized through online.
- xii. Feedback** from various stakeholders (students, academic counsellors, subject experts, alumni) on teaching-learning process, quality of content delivered and delivery mechanism of ICT services were taken to deeply analyse feedback and extract important trends and information in order to improve ICT enabled learning.
- xiii. Placement Facilitation Service:** The University is providing online “placement facilitation service’ for its vocational students free of cost. Other students may also register their name with nominal registration fees payable online. Through this online platform the students may upload their CV which may be accessed by the employer available online. The employer may call suitable candidates for personal interview. (www.wbnsou.ac.in)
- xiv. Enhancing the Website accessibility for Differently-abled persons:** With a view to empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and

equity, the University has made its website more accessible to visually impaired. The site is now equipped with assistive technology for customized experiences.

- xv. **SMS alert:** University has started SMS alert facility for the students regarding renewal, payment of fees, examination etc.
- xvi. **NSOU on social media:** University has introduced social media plugin e.g., Twitter for sharing and interacting with the students. The official twitter account being @NetajiOpen.
- xvii. **NSOU Live Chat:** University interacts with the learners and Coordinators of the LSCs through NSOU App at regular interval to discuss various issues on teaching-learning process and try to resolve the grievances of the learners.
- xviii. **Learners' Facilitation Centre:** Learners' Facilitation Centres at all the three Regional Centres have been set up to provide free internet facility to the students for the purpose of admission, renewal, downloading the course content etc.
- xix. **Village Knowledge Centre (VKC):** Village Knowledge Centres have been set up at rural Vocational Learner Support Centres to provide free academic support to the enrolled learners.
- xx. **Online Library services:** Online Public Access Catalogue of the library resources are available on the NSOU website under the heading Library Services where bibliographical information of printed books is available. Learners may get the idea about library resources before physically visiting the library.
- xxi. **E-governance Initiatives: These are-**
 - ✚ Online admission: All the admission (UG/ PG) are done online with online payment system.
 - ✚ RTGS/NEFT: The maintenance grants / payments to the study centres/ vendors are made through RTGS/ NEFT.
 - ✚ CCTV surveillance: The University has installed CCTV at Headquarters and Examination Department.
 - ✚ Data base for employer: The University maintains a database of the employers who appoint University pass out students. A good number of university graduates are being appointed by both the private sector and govt. sector.
 - ✚ CIQA has taken initiatives to introduce E-office system at NSOU

4. Imparting Education in Regional language

- ✚ It is a policy decision of NSOU to mandatorily provide SLMs in the regional language of the State for all Bachelor Degree Programmes.
- ✚ In the Post Graduate programme, the SLMs are provided both in Bengali and English version.
- ✚ The learner may opt the medium of SLMs at the time of admission. Most of the SLMs in Bengali version have been digitized.
- ✚ A number of A/V lectures are also presented in Bengali for better understanding among the learners. The lectures on web radio-Muktak are also available in the regional language.

- ✚ The NSOU Website can also be accessed in regional languages like Bengali, Hindi and Nepali apart from English language.
- ✚ The learners are free to write their answers in Bengali or in English as per their convenience. The learners feel comfortable to internalise their new knowledge when studied through their mother tongue. Question papers of the assignment and term-end examination are set in Bengali and English version.
- ✚ The information brochure/ prospectus is prepared in Bengali version targeting the rural learners. The prospectuses describe the code / rules applicable for academic and non-academic staff.
- ✚ Publicity/ advertisement are released in local newspapers. Centre for Language, Translation and Cultural Studies has been established under the aegis of School of Humanities.

5. SLM Audit:

Success of the ODL system depends on the well designed and well-structured Self Learning Materials (SLMs) which actually bridge the gap between the teachers and the learners. SLMs are also known as Self Instructional Materials (SIMs) which are written in dialectic form. To ensure the quality of the content and to standardize the presentation, the University has introduced SLM audit.

6. Research and Development:

The Research Policy of the University has been enunciated to guide the future of research in the University. A principal objective of NSOU's research project has been to maintain a strong focus on the flow of theoretical ideas and to connect it with the empirical works of subject oriented researches in social sciences, humanities, commerce & management, sciences and other disciplines offered by the University as areas of probe and investigation from time to time.

Taking into considerations the importance, the University encourages its faculty members to carry out research projects in different subjects and provides financial assistance subject to availability of funds from government/ research institutions viz. MOE, UGC-DEB, ICSSR, CSIR, DST etc. for their projects. During the financial year (2021-22), the University has extended the financial assistance to the faculties (Professor/ Associate Professor/ Assistant Professor) to carry out their project as recommended by the duly constituted Project Evaluation Committee.

The in-house IT Team also contributes to develop customized inventory management software for huge volume of SLMs (printing and distribution).

7. Increasing accessibility (in terms of opening LSCs, academic resources etc.)

- ✚ At present, there are 162 conventional, 32 vocational and 12 Special LSCs of the University spread throughout the State of West Bengal.
- ✚ Special LSCs are dedicated for offering courses on Disability & Rehabilitation Studies.
- ✚ According to the policy of the University, special focus has been given to provide access to the marginalized groups (SC, ST, OBC, Defence etc.) residing in the remote villages and the tribal areas.
- ✚ There are about 49 such LSCs in the backward social group dominated Blocks of West Midnapur, Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Maldah, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Coochbehar Districts of the State. Some of them are also located at the international boundary.

- ✚ Keeping with our social responsibility, transgender learners can pursue courses free of cost.
- ✚ Enrolled learners can now avail the benefit of Students' Credit Card up to 10 Lakhs (as per State Govt norms).
- ✚ The University has set up a Backward Class Welfare Cell to look after to the interest of the socially disadvantaged sections of the learners.
- ✚ School of Sciences of the University conducts Lab Counselling and Evaluation Sessions (LCES) to cater to the enrolled learners for particular elective and subsidiary science subjects at a stretch of 12 days.

8. **Skill Development Courses:** School of Vocational Studies is dedicated in offering vocational and skill development programme. These programmes are conducted through PPP model.

9. **Academic Collaborations:** A good number of academic endeavours are taken up in collaboration with various reputed organisations, namely:

- ✚ Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR)
- ✚ Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)
- ✚ Bangladesh Open University (BOU)
- ✚ Khulna University, English Discipline (KU)
- ✚ Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU)
- ✚ Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU)
- ✚ Odisha State Open University (OSOU)
- ✚ Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- ✚ National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities, GoI (NIEPVD)
- ✚ National IP Awareness Mission, GoI (NIPAM)
- ✚ Enterprise Development Institute (EDI-BNCCI)
- ✚ George Telegraph Training Institute (GTTI)
- ✚ Cambridge University Press


















10. **Outreach/Extension Activities:** Centres of Innovation (CDSER, CLL, CLTCS, CSS) under different Schools of Studies and CIQA are frequently conducting community outreach programmes and extension activities across the state. Outreach programmes are organized in regular basis to meet the learners at different corners of the state. The objective of such programmes is to make general people aware of the ODL system and its advantages. It helps increase enrolment in different courses including skill development/ vocational programmes.

11. **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** NSOU has an effective grievance redressal mechanism in place as such a system is essential for all the HEIs which follow a learner-centric approach. The grievance Redressal Cell has been constituted as per provision of the UGC (ODL) Regulations 2017 which is dedicated to handle the grievances of the learners. All details are available on the website. NSOU has established a responsible Grievance Redressal Cell where the students can vent their grievances in a number of ways either by filling up a Grievance Redressal form online or contacting the LSCs, RCs or Headquarters directly. NSOU takes all possible

precautions at every stage of examination/evaluation/publication of results so that no candidate may feel aggrieved.

12. Promotion of Universal values, ethics and harmony:

The University conducts a plethora of events/celebration for promotion of Universal values, National values, National integration at Headquarters /Regional Centres/ LSCs through digital Platform /offline/blended mode:

 Independence Day	 International Day of Yoga
 Republic Day	 Birth Anniversary of eminent personalities
 Teachers Day	 International Mother Language Day
 International Day of Persons with Disabilities	 National Education Day
 International Women's Day	 National Science Day
 World Environment Day	 Memorial Lectures
 World Day against Child Labour	 Foundation Day Lecture
 World Autism Awareness Day	 World Book Day
	 International Day of Education

13. Institutional Development and Strategic Plan:

As resolved in the 11th CIQA meeting held on 25th January 2022, a committee has been constituted to prepare an Institutional Development and Strategic Plan (IDSP) which may cover all important aspects of NAAC criteria as well as the provisions of NEP 2020. The objective of the IDSP is to guide the university to achieve its goals in academic and administrative areas of work viz. academic programmes, human resource management, resource mobilization and its optimum utilization, infrastructural development, automation etc.