



**Massive Open Online Course
on
'Understanding Neurodiversity'**

Duration: 5-week
(15th May- 21st June 2023)

The Second Cycle

Organized by

Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU)
in collaboration with
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

Report Prepared by

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Report

About Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU)

Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) is the premier State Open University in India and only Open University in West Bengal established in the year 1997 [W.B. Act (XIX) 1997] and recognised by UGC-DEB and RCI (www.wbnsou.ac.in). At present NSOU is offering Under Graduate, Post Graduate and Ph.D. programmes and also a good number of vocational courses. NSOU is the first Open University in India to apply for NAAC A & A process and the first State Open University in India to be accredited by NAAC with Grade- 'A' in its first cycle. NSOU operates through three Regional Centres (Kalyani, Durgapur, Jalpaiguri) and 162 Learner Support Centres across the state of West Bengal.

About Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) {cemca.org} serves as the regional educational media centre of Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver (<https://www.col.org/>) for Commonwealth Asia, established at New Delhi in 1994. CEMCA promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media and technology to serve the educational and training needs leading to Sustainable Development through learning in Commonwealth member states of Asia. The Govt. of India by a Gazetted Notification, dated 10th February 2000, notified CEMCA as a diplomatic mission under provisions of the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947.

Understanding Neurodiversity-the background

Unlike neurotypical people, neurodivergent people are usually made aware that their brains work differently. A neurodivergent person has one or more ways in which their brain functions outside the "typical" way. Neurodivergent people may be diagnosed with autism, ADHD, OCD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or Tourette's. Previously, these conditions were treated as problems. But of late, with understanding neurodiversity, we now have a better and more appropriate way of knowing and handling them. This has become possible only through sensitization on understanding the various facets of neurodiversity by the advocates globally. A person's life traverses through childhood-youth-adulthood. Neurodiversity advocacy focuses on embracing and celebrating neurodivergent brains instead of trying to fix them and make them neurotypical. In turn, advocacy work for alternative methods of handling.

The inclusion and equal participation of all children within the schooling system has been accorded the highest priority in the Government of India's National Education Policy 2020. There is a growing need to provide increased awareness, knowledge, and training regarding teaching students with neurological differences.

After witnessing an overwhelming pan India participation in the 1st cycle of this MOOC which was developed jointly by CEMCA and NSOU, the 2nd cycle was floated in the month of April 2023. This joint venture is perhaps the first of its kind in India, offering a MOOC on Understanding Neurodiversity as a value-added course, open to all who are interested-academics and beyond.

Need of the Course

It is not just neurodivergent people who can benefit when society accommodates neurodiversity. The understanding of neurodiversity allows us to appreciate how each of us functions differently. Instead of thinking in terms of "right" and "wrong" ways of functioning, we can embrace these differences.

In workplaces and schools, this means accommodating the atypical needs and impressing on the unique strengths of each neurodivergent person. This 5-week MOOC through its course contents delivered in 4-quadrants (viz., AVLS, e-text, SAQs and interaction through the Discussion forum) has tried to cater to the things which might be underscored as-

- ✚ Allowing a person who is neurodivergent the freedom to accomplish tasks in their own way
- ✚ Educating employees/students on neurodiversity
- ✚ Fostering an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance
- ✚ Providing an acceptance to realise neuro-inclusion through knowledge of various neurodivergent types.
- ✚ Following inclusive culture/teaching practices
- ✚ The powerful specific skills of neurodivergent people

About the Course:

Neurodiversity is a scientific concept arising from brain imaging. Several brain studies have shown that people with learning or thinking differences are “wired” differently than their peers. In other words, some children are born with brains that think, learn and process information differently than others. The term neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to a spectrum of conditions, not any single group and has since come to include the following variations:

- ✚ Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- ✚ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD or dyspraxia)
- ✚ Dyslexia
- ✚ Dyscalculia
- ✚ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- ✚ Other neurological conditions

Objectives of the Course:

Addressing the need to create a level play field and develop an inclusive perception, CEMCA and NSOU have come forward to jointly develop and offer a 2nd cycle of the 5 Week MOOC on “Understanding Neurodiversity”.

- ✚ To impart knowledge about the concepts of neurodiversity and building positive mind-sets.
- ✚ To create sensitive processes and essentials for Neurodivergent learner/young people.
- ✚ To enhance human resource professional's ability to understand and connect to Neurodivergent people.
- ✚ To increase awareness about the social, psychological, and academic implications for neurodivergent students; and to increase the capability of implementing inclusive education practices.

- ✚ To share, develop, and embed existing good/ best practices for accommodation and intervention among professionals both nationally and internationally, to support neuro-divergent students/neuro-diverse people.

Perspective revisions were made in order to enrich some of the aspects of Module-2 of the MOOC. This added pertinence to the context valuing and sensitizing Neurodiversity.

The Course Development Team:

Course Coordinator

Professor Anirban Ghosh

Course Developers

Ms. Manobina Chakraborty

Ms. Kavita Sharma

Dr. Papiya Upadhyay

Ms. Antara Choudhury

Dr. Abhedananda Panigrahi

Ms. Alakananda Bandyopadhyay

Course Instructors/Mentors

Ms. Manobina Chakraborty, FRS of Arts, London & Inclusive Education Expert

Ms. Kavita Sharma, Founder, Prayas

Dr. Papiya Upadhyay, Assistant Professor of Education, NSOU

Introductory Video:

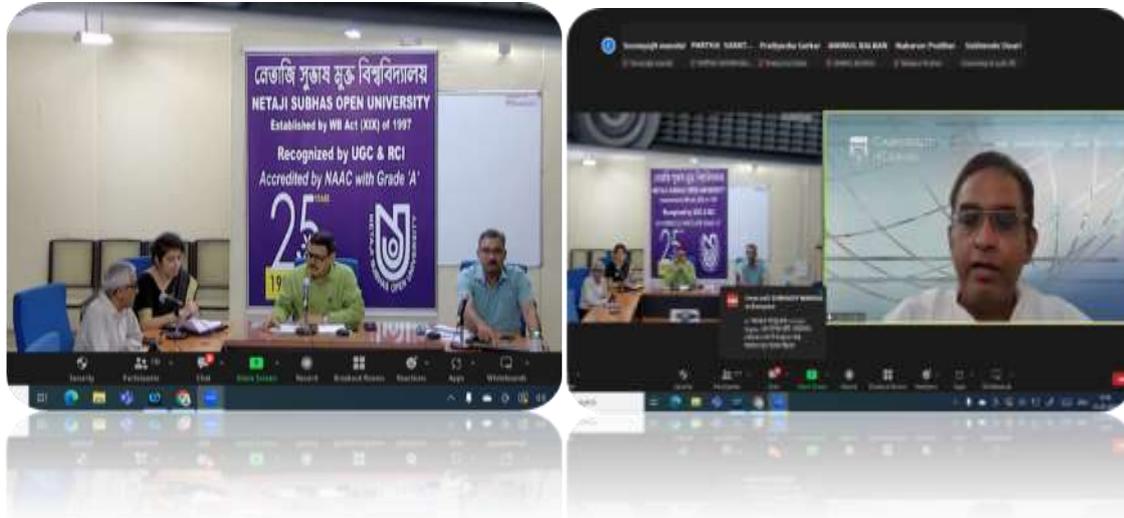
Professor Anirban Ghosh

<https://youtu.be/YRFdoHf53eM>

Introductory session of the 2nd cycle of the MOOC:

Netaji Subhas Open University with the support of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia have again come together to offer the 2nd cycle of the much appreciated 5-week MOOC on Understanding Neurodiversity. The launch was unveiled on 15th of May 2023 at 12.30pm through the blended platform with an assembly of around 161 participants out of 210 enrolled for this course. The session commenced with a hearty welcome note by Prof. Anirban Ghosh, Director-CIQA, NSOU and Course Coordinator of the MOOC. Considering the feedback received from the experts and mentors, the e-content has been revised in the 2nd cycle. Dr. Ghosh informed the participants that the present MOOC was developed and delivered with the support of CEMCA in the year 2020-21. This was followed by an inspiring and congratulatory address by Prof. Chandan Basu, the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of NSOU. He fervently expressed the long partnering ties between CEMCA and NSOU towards academic, financial, and ideological support. The Director-CEMCA, Dr. B. Shadrach enlightened on the various contemporary issues about promoting inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Ms. Manobina Chakraborty, FRS & Mentor of this MOOC articulated the nuanced understanding of Neurodiversity. Dr. Papiya Upadhyay briefly presented the online curricular transactions and upcoming learning experiences of the

MOOC. The session was concluded with a warm vote of thanks offered by Prof. Arun Chakraborty, Head, Dept. of LIS, NSOU. It was the beginning of yet another promising journey of celebrating differences and redefines our relationships with each other, which call for pedagogies of solidarity and cooperation that treasure diversity and pluralism.



DETAILS OF THE MOOC

Duration of the course:

15th May to 21st June 2023

Participants:

216 registered for the course, out of which 152 actively participated and 142 participants completed the course with certificate.

Nature of the participants

Participants encompassed teachers and teacher educators, college and university faculty with related teaching and research interests, teaching assistants, psychologists, counsellors, speech therapists, students, advocate, physiotherapist, special educators, police personnel, child welfare officer, clinical occupational therapists, medical officers, ICT instructors, parents of children with Specific Learning Difficulties/neurodiversity, and educational leadership including heads of schools/Academic Institutions.

Course Modalities

The course was designed, developed, and delivered following four quadrant approach adopted in SWAYAM. It was launched on Netaji Subhas Open University Learning Management System (NSOU-LMS). There are five modules, distributed across five weeks followed by a final assessment. Each module is enriched with video-tutorials with transcriptions, e-contents, and quizzes. Glossary, several additional web resources, recorded Live classes were also provided for the learners for grasping the curricular contents. A dedicated WhatsApp group of the registered participants was created to disseminate and exchange information pertaining to the course. Technical and academic support has been provided through 24×7 phone call and addressed through two different emails. The participants had to participate in at least five relevant posts on the discussion forum and submit feedback form and score above 70% as requisites to complete the course.

Chronicles of the course:

The 5-week course (15th May-21st June 2023) was coordinated by Professor Anirban Ghosh, NSOU. The study hours required for this course was four hours per week. The participants interacted through the Discussion Forum on relevant areas in an asynchronous mode. Five introductory live session were organized in the weekend evening to deliberate and further clarify and discuss on each module of the week. In addition to this, interaction with the participants, addressing to their queries related to the course and learning were also considered. All the course mentors/facilitators participated in the live interaction to present/deliberate on a particular topic of the weekly module and satiated queries/doubts raised by the participants. The NSOU technical team through the WhatsApp group notified relevant information to all the participants related to the course.

Access to the contents

The participants were provided with login ID and password to access the LMS and navigate through the course materials arranged in Week-wise in modules. Each topic of the Module under each week contained video-tutorials with transcriptions, e-contents, and quizzes. Several additional web resources, like external links, glossary etc. were also provided for further enrichment and quench the thirst of knowledge.

Live Sessions

- ✚ One introductory Live session
- ✚ Five Live sessions on the weekend evening.

The detailed information is presented below:

WEEK NO.	OPEN DATE	ONLINE CLASS DATE & TIME	Topic of presentation (20 mins) & Interaction (20mints), session summary (10 mints)	Name of the presenting Mentor (in bold)
WEEK 1	15/05/2023	20/05/2023 – 4pm	Why to understand Neurodiversity (ND)?	Ms. Kavita Sharma Ms. Manobina Chakraborty Dr. Papiya Upadhyay
WEEK 2	22/05/2023	27/05/2023 - 4pm	SAP & ND at Workplace/Sharing thoughts & experiences	Ms. Kavita Sharma Ms. Manobina Chakraborty Dr. Papiya Upadhyay
WEEK 3	29/05/2023	03/06/2023 - 7pm	Eliciting discussion based on DF questions/ Brief Focus on SpLD	Ms. Manobina Chakraborty Ms. Kavita Sharma Dr. Papiya Upadhyay
WEEK 4	05/06/2023	10/06/2023 - 7pm	Eliciting discussion based on DF questions ADHD & ASD, etc. in the society	Ms. Manobina Chakraborty Ms. Kavita Sharma Dr. Papiya Upadhyay
WEEK 5	12/06/2023	17/06/2023 - 7pm	Building Sensitization	Dr. Papiya Upadhyay Ms. Manobina Chakraborty

			Sharing of life experiences by a role Model	Ms. Kavita Sharma Mr. Mihir Pillai
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During these sessions, all doubts and queries were redressed through synchronous mode on Zoom platform. Each live session was lauded with overwhelming participation and exchange of thoughts, instances, views and experiences.

Striking attention

The fifth live session marked the presence of Mr. Mihir Pillai, a 27-year-old digital marketing enthusiast from Ahmedabad, having completed his BBA from Amity Global Business School and a PGDM in Development Studies from Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India. After two years of working in the development sector, Mihir found a passion for digital marketing and is currently pursuing it as a career. His goal is to help clients improve their search engine rankings by working on SEO projects. He shared his life experiences- childhood-schooling-growing up with successes in co-curricular areas, sometimes dented with challenges. His lucid talk with all smiles captivated the audience. His words were an inspiration and motivated everyone in understanding the world of neurodiversity which is nothing but a kind of biodiversity.

Despite being diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD at the age of 9, Mihir has impressive public speaking skills and enjoys writing poetry in his free time.



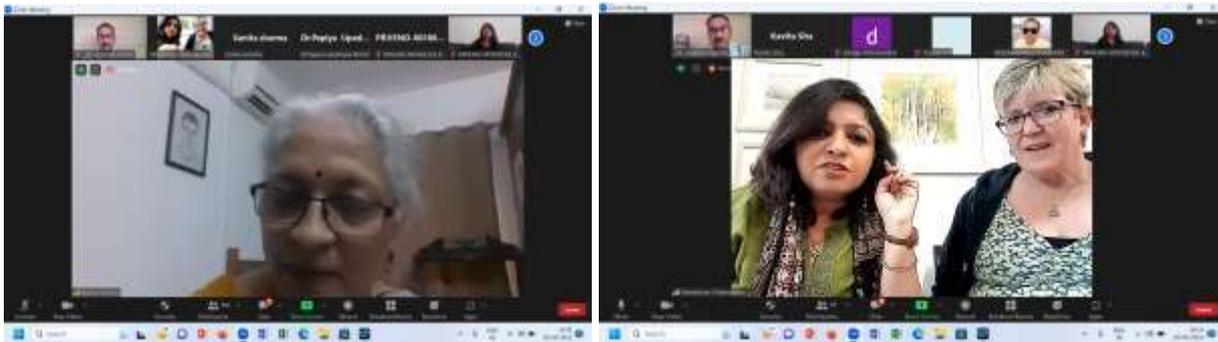
Discussion Forum

There was an overwhelming interaction in the discussion forum throughout the five weeks. The interaction comprised of questions, doubts, queries, exchange of thoughts between peers, mentors, coordinator, and participants. In reciprocation to these, Instructors and facilitators replied all the queries and relevant topics raised in discussion forum in asynchronous mode. All the course facilitators expended their roles as mentors throughout the programme by guiding and answering all queries/questions and clarifying the doubts posted in discussion forum daily throughout the duration of the course. Sometimes questions were posted to elicit responses from the participants. Majority of the participants responded with enthused spirits and beam of confidence.

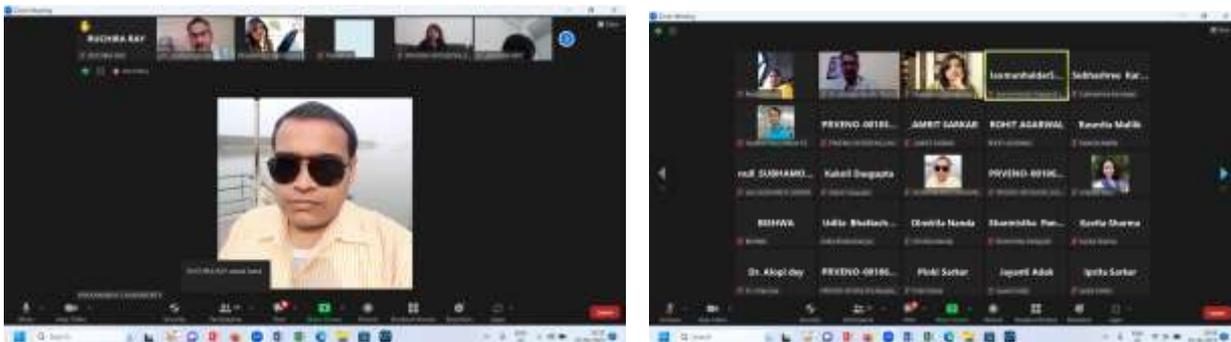
Evaluation

There were five quizzes at the end of each module per week. These self-assessment quizzes were 15 MCQs. The participants were allowed for multiple attempts to finish their self-assessment quiz. There was a final assessment at the end of the 5th week. The final assessment was made available from 17th June to 21st June 2023 (24x7). This consisted of 20

MCQs. The time period to finish was 40 minutes. 142 participants have submitted their final assignment and feedback form to qualify for the completion certificates.



Some glimpses of LIVE sessions



Completion and Certification

The Completion certificates were issued to 142 successful participants who scored above 70% in the assessment and participated in at least five discussion forum posts.

Participants' Feedback

The participants sincerely expressed their gratitude for having gained an understanding of the philosophy and true spirit of Neurodiversity in all settings of life space. This course has helped them to build a strength-based approach and a positive mindset to look at diversity/differences/difficulties through the lens of sensitization, advocacy, celebration and finally inclusion. Some of them added that this Course was very helpful for them to identify and act towards their job with responsibility and not mere controlling or treating the neurodivergent students or groups of people with mere sympathy and label. Many school teachers were confident to disseminate the neurodiversity movement steering strong message in their respective workplace and educational settings. They extended their acknowledgement to the Coordinator, Team of Instructors and facilitators who made this course fascinating, engaging, enriching and informative. The participants came out to consider it as a very well-knitted programme. They applauded that it is worth pursuing this course as it was intensive and very professionally crafted. The quality of the MOOC was outstanding, according to almost all participants.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This MOOC with its percept to create awareness on understanding neurodiversity has extended its scope to embrace celebrating differences and also created a plethora of continuous professional development among academicians and practitioners. The course

taught to think differently and take the baton to the society. The contents of this course brought into light that being different is neither a curse nor a boon but it is a matter to rejoice focusing on the strength and overcoming the challenges through proper diagnoses. Over simplification of difficulties were strictly adjourned as it is felt that it may ruin the well-being of someone who has the right to live with a difference.

Feedback analysis

Out of the total participants, 142 participants appeared in the final assessment and submitted the feedback form to get the completion certificate satisfying the qualifying criteria. The responses received against each parameter from participants are depicted below:

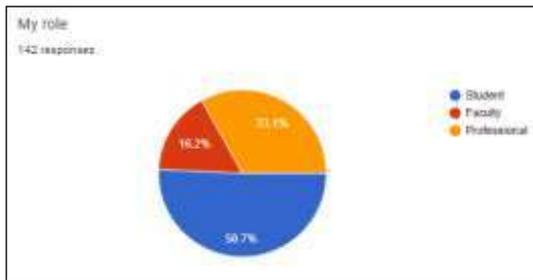


Fig 1

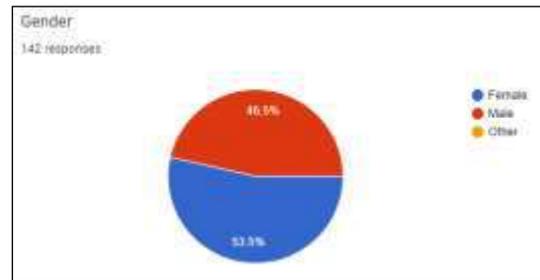


Fig 2

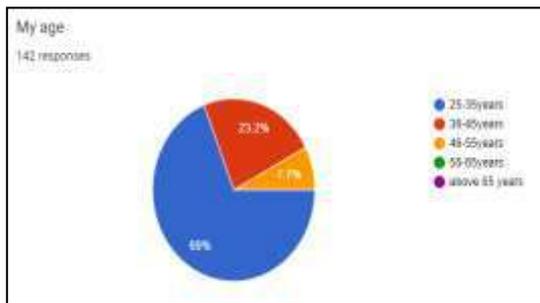


Fig 3

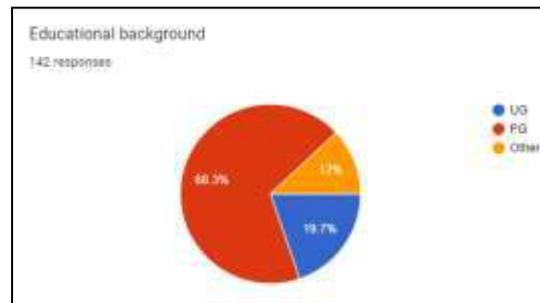


Fig 4

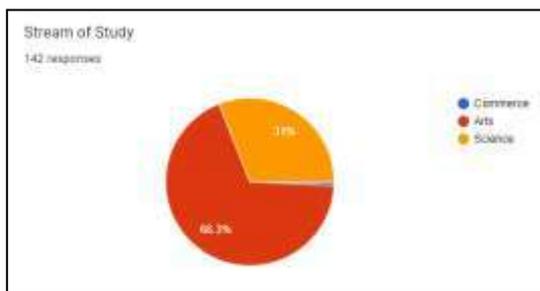


Fig 5

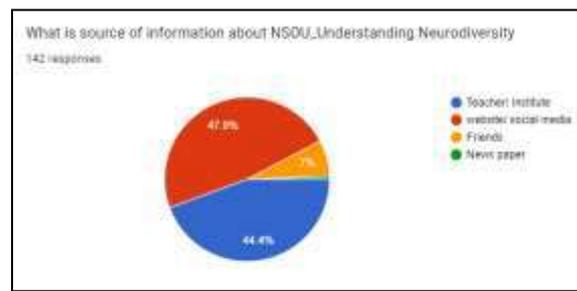


Fig 6

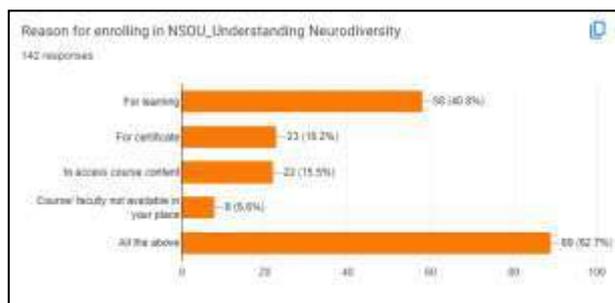


Fig 7

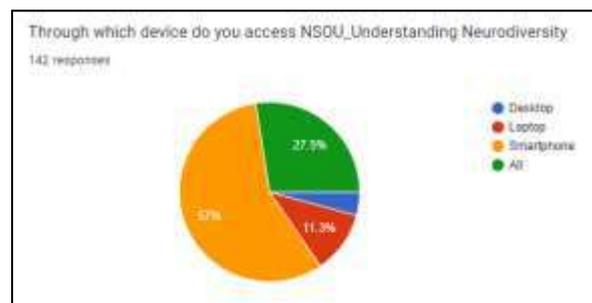


Fig 8

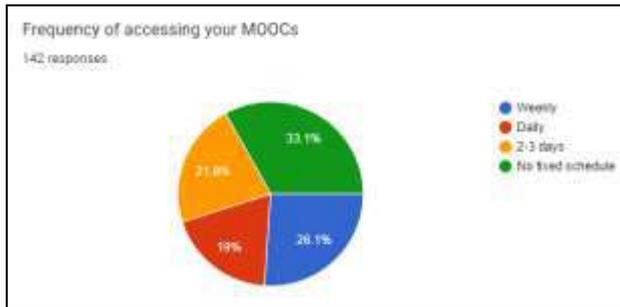


Fig 9



Fig 10

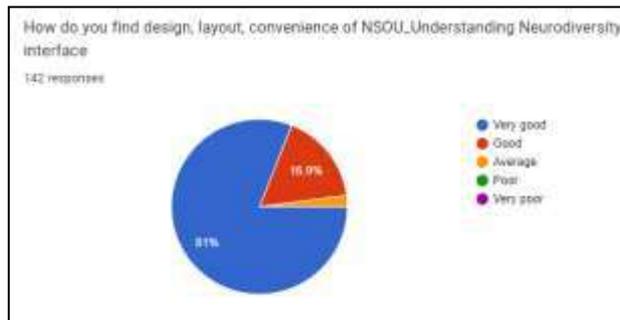


Fig 11

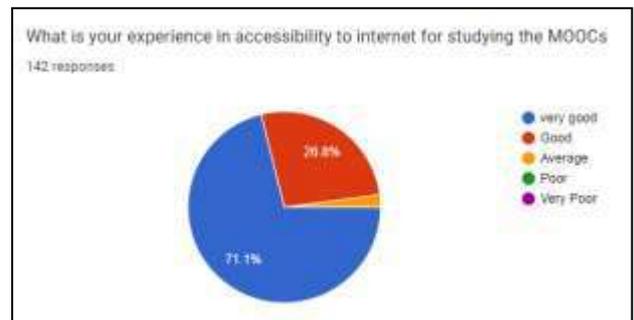


Fig 12

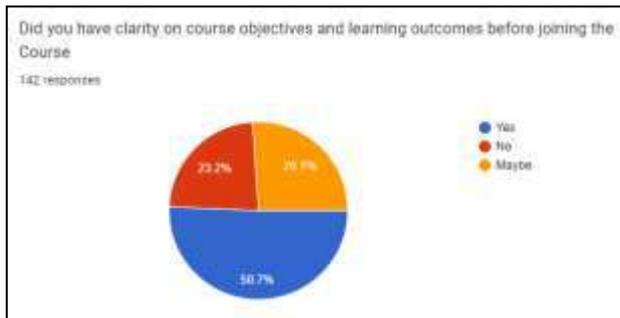


Fig 13

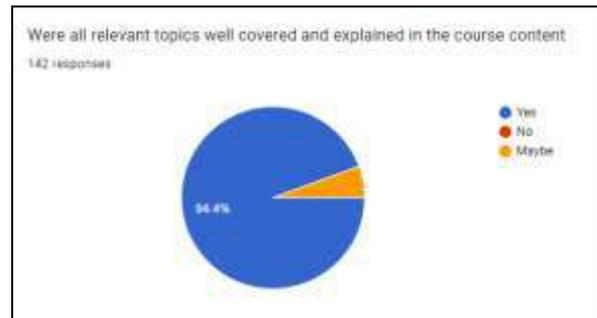


Fig 14

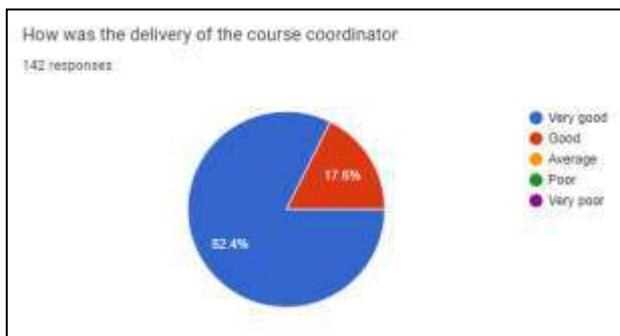


Fig 15

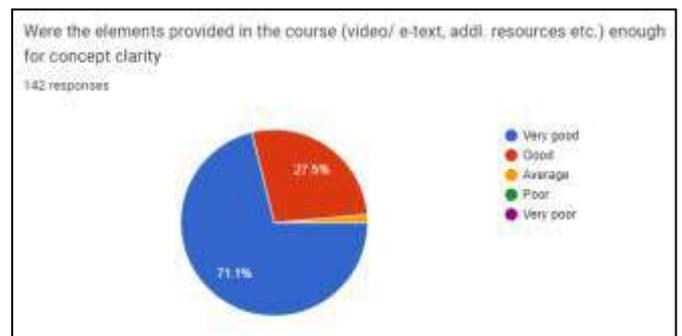
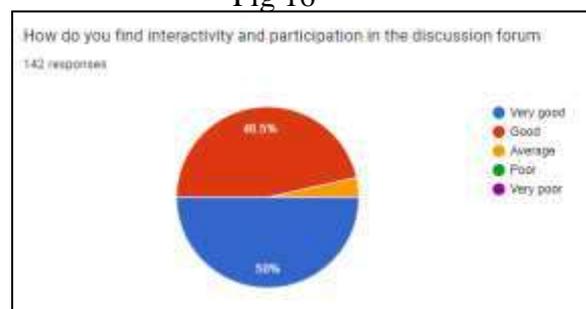
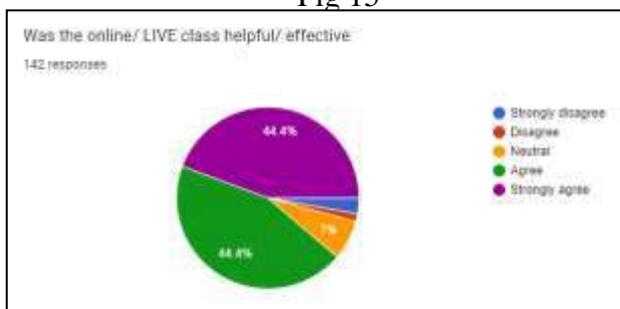


Fig 16



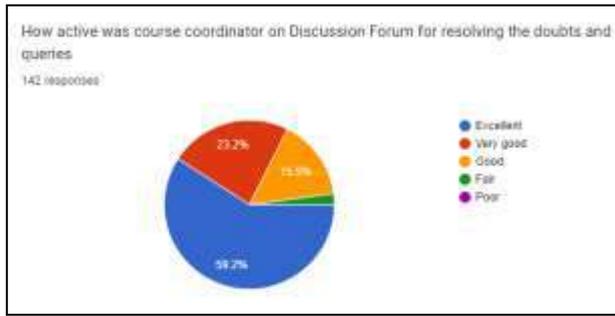


Fig 19

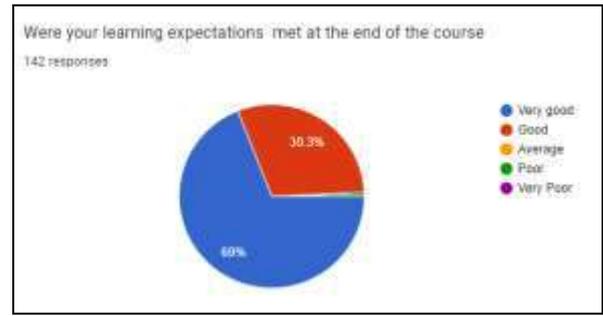


Fig 20

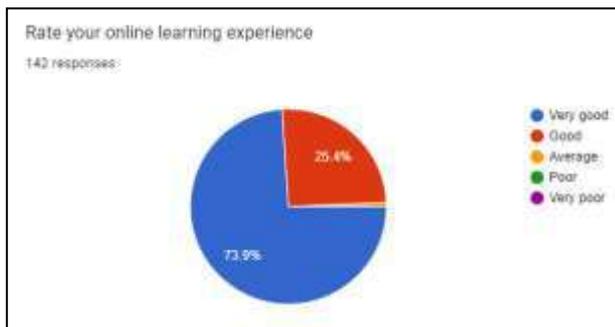


Fig 21

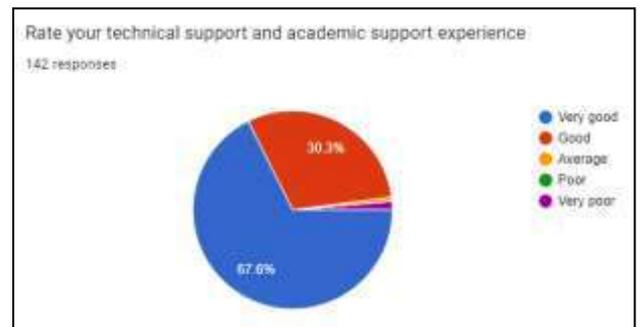


Fig 22



--Report prepared by the Project Team.