Guidelines for
Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions

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University Grants Commission
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Table of Contents

Foreword

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to reform the Higher Education system by providing, among other things, flexibility to students in terms of choice of subjects to study and academic pathways. A creative combination of disciplines for study with multiple entry and exit points is one very important recommendation of NEP, 2020.

The multiple entry and exit points in the academic programmes offered at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) would remove rigid boundaries and create new possibilities for students to choose and learn the subject(s) of their choice. In addition, it will pave the way for seamless student mobility, between or within degree-granting HEIs through a formal system of credit recognition, credit accumulation, credit transfers, and credit redemption.

I am delighted to present "Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions". I hope HEIs will find it useful in implementing multiple entry and exit points in their academic programmes and ensure that students will reap the benefits of this initiative of UGC.

I sincerely thank Prof. Avinash Chandra Pandey, Chairman of the Expert Committee and the members in preparing these guidelines. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the support and valuable cooperation of Prof. Rajnish Jain, Secretary, UGC in bringing out the guidelines. The contributions of Dr N. Gopukumar, Joint Secretary, UGC and Dr Diksha Rajput, Deputy Secretary, UGC are also acknowledged.

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1. Introduction

Flexible learning is important to choose one's academic pathway leading to the award of certificate, diploma, and degree. There are occasions when learners have to give up their education mid-way for various reasons. The records of the clearance of credits for such incomplete academic programmes remain unaccounted. Some contingency approaches are followed in a few Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by allowing the learner to settle for a lower level of certification. Such rigid boundaries need to be removed to ensure zero-year-loss to students in the event of exiting in between. It will reduce the drop-out rate, thus improving Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which is one of the major objectives of the National Education Policy, (NEP), 2020. Flexible learning also facilitates lifelong learning. These objectives can be achieved on the principle of a multiple entry and exit system along with the opportunity of learning from anywhere, anytime.

Highlighting the importance of flexible learning, NEP, 2020 states that imaginative and flexible curricular structures will enable creative combinations of disciplines for study and would offer multiple entry and exit points and thus, remove the currently prevalent rigid boundaries. These would create new possibilities for students to choose and learn the subject(s) of their choice, while changing the HEI as per their preference, convenience, or necessity. In order to pave the way for seamless student mobility, the NEP, 2020 envisages adjustments in the structure and lengths of degree programmes and an Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) to ensure seamless student mobility between or within degree-granting HEIs through a formal system of credit recognition, credit accumulation, credit transfers, and credit redemption to promote distributed and flexible teaching-learning. The ABC is an academic service mechanism as a digital/virtual/online entity established and managed by Ministry of Education (MoE)/UGC to facilitate students to become its academic account holders. To take this forward, NEP, 2020 promotes rigorous research-based specialization and opportunities for multidisciplinary work, including academia, government and interdisciplinary thinking at the graduate, Master's and doctoral level education in large multidisciplinary universities. It also points out that, "Higher education qualifications leading to a degree/diploma/certificate shall be described by the National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) in terms of such learning outcomes."

The undergraduate degree should be of either a three- or four-year duration, with multiple entry and exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications. For example, a certificate after completing one year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas; a diploma after two years of study; or a Bachelor's degree after a three-year programme. The four-

year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, is the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on major and minor subjects as per the student's preference. The four-year programme may also lead to a degree with Research, if the student completes a rigorous research project in the major area(s) of study as specified by the HEI.

For the Master's programmes, the HEI will have the flexibility to offer different designs:

a) A two-year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the three-year Bachelor's programme;

b) A one-year Master's programme for students who are completing a four-year Bachelor's programme with Research; and

c) An integrated five-year Bachelor's/Master's programme with an option to exit at the end of the third year with a Bachelor's degree, with an entry to a Master's programme in another HEI.

2. Objectives

The guidelines of the proposed multiple entry and exit option will serve the following objectives:

- Remove rigid boundaries and facilitate new possibilities for learners.

- Curtail the dropout rate and improve GER

- Offer creative combinations of disciplines of study that would enable multiple entry and exit points.

- Offer flexibility in curriculum and novel course options to students in addition to discipline specific specializations.

- Offer different designs of the Master's programme.

- Enable credit accumulation and transfer along with provision of evaluation and validation of non-formal and informal learning for the award of a degree and encourage lifelong learning; and

- Facilitate encashing credits earned when the learner resumes his/her programmes of study.

3. Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), a national-level facility will promote the flexibility of the curriculum framework and interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary academic mobility of students across the HEIs in the country with appropriate "credit transfer" mechanism. It shall be a mechanism to facilitate the students to choose their own learning path to attain a Degree/ Diploma/Certificate, working on the principle of multiple entry and exit as well as anytime,

anywhere, and any level of learning. ABC shall enable the integration of multiple disciplines of higher learning leading to the desired learning outcomes including increased creativity, innovation, higher order thinking skills and critical analysis. ABC shall provide significant autonomy to the students by providing an extensive choice of courses for a programme of study, flexibility in curriculum, novel and engaging course options across a number of higher education disciplines/ institutions.

The multiple entry and exit options for students is facilitated at the undergraduate and Master's levels. It would facilitate credit accumulation through the facility created by the ABC scheme in the "Academic Bank Account" opened for students across the country to transfer and consolidate the credits earned by them by undergoing courses in any of the eligible HEIs. The ABC allows for credit redemption through the process of commuting the accrued credits in the Academic Bank Account maintained in the ABC for the purpose of fulfilling the credits requirements for the award of certificate/diploma/degree by the authorized HEIs. Upon collecting a certificate, diploma or degree, all the credits earned till then, in respect of that certificate, diploma or degree, shall stand debited and deleted from the account concerned. HEIs offering programmes with the multiple entry and exit system need to register in the ABC to enable acceptance of multidisciplinary courses, credit transfer, and credit acceptance.

4. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM: www.swayam.gov.in) is India's national Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform, designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of India's Education Policy: access, equity, and quality. The University Grants Commission (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Regulations, 2021 have been notified in the Gazette of India, which now facilitates an institution to allow up to 40 per cent of the total courses being offered in a particular programme in a semester through the online learning courses offered through the SWAYAM platform. Universities with approval of the competent authority may adopt SWAYAM Courses for the benefit of the students. A student will have the option to earn credit by completing quality-assured MOOC programmes offered on the SWAYAM portal or any other online educational platform approved by the UGC/regulatory body from time to time.

5. Admission Paths for Undergraduate Programme (First Degree)

- Students who have successfully completed Grade 12 School Leaving Certificate shall be eligible for admission to a first degree programme.

- The admission shall be made on merit on the basis of criteria notified by the university, keeping in view the guidelines/norms in this regard issued by the UGC and other statutory bodies concerned and taking into account the reservation policy issued by the government concerned from time to time.

Student enrolment shall be in accordance with the academic and physical facilities available keeping in mind the norms regarding the student-teacher ratio, the teaching-non-teaching staff ratio, laboratory, library, teaching-learning tools.

- The in-take capacity shall be determined at least three months in advance by the university/institution through its academic bodies in accordance with the guidelines/norms in this regard issued by the UGC and other statutory bodies concerned so that the same could be suitably incorporated in the admission brochure for the information of all concerned and uploaded on the institutional website.

- Depending upon the academic and physical facilities available, the HEIs may earmark seats for lateral entrants to the second year/third year/fourth year of a first-degree programme, if the student has either (a) successfully completed the first year/second year/third year of the same programme in any institution, or (b) already successfully completed a first degree programme and is desirous of and academically capable of pursuing another first degree programme in an allied subject.

6. Operational Details

To enable multiple entry and exit points in the academic programmes, qualifications such as certificate, diploma, degree are organized in a series of levels in an ascending order from level 5 to level 10. Level 5 represents certificate and level 10 represents research degree **(Table 1).** The four year undergraduate programme may comprise courses under many categories. Some of these include:

- disciplinary/interdisciplinary major (40-56 credits)

- disciplinary/interdisciplinary minor (20-28 credits)

- vocational studies (12-18 credits)

- field projects/internship/apprenticeship/community engagement and service (24-32 credits).

Qualification Type and Credit Requirements are given in Table. 1. The entry and exit options for students, who enter the undergraduate programme, are as follows:

1st Year

Entry 1: The entry requirement for Level 5 is Secondary School Leaving Certificate obtained after the successful completion of Grade 12. A programme of study leading to entry into the first year of the Bachelor's degree is open to those who have met the entrance requirements, including specified levels of attainment at the secondary level of education specified in the programme admission regulations. Admission to the Bachelor degree programme of study is based on the

evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the applicant's ability to undertake and complete a Bachelor's degree programme.

Exit 1: A certificate will be awarded when a student exits at the end of year 1 (Level 5). The first year of the undergraduate programme builds on the secondary education and requires 36-40 credits during the first year of the undergraduate programme for qualifying for an undergraduate certificate.

2nd Year

Entry 2. The entry requirement for Level 6 is a certificate obtained after completing the first year (two semesters) of the undergraduate programme. A programme of study leading to the second year of the Bachelor's degree is open to those who have met the entrance requirements, including specified levels of attainment, in the programme admission regulations. Admission to a programme of study is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the applicant's ability to undertake and complete a Bachelor's degree programme.

Exit 2: At the end of the 2nd year, if a student exits, a diploma shall be awarded (Level 6). A diploma requires 72-80 credits from levels 5 to 6, with 36-40 credits at level 6.

3rd Year

Entry 3. The entry requirement for Level 7 is a diploma obtained after completing two years (four semesters) of the undergraduate programme. A programme of study leading to the Bachelor's degree is open to those who have met the entrance requirements, including specified levels of attainment, in the programme admission regulations. Admission to a programme of study is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the applicant's ability to undertake and complete a Bachelor's degree programme.

Exit 3: On successful completion of three years, the relevant degree shall be awarded (Level 7). A Bachelor's degree requires 108-120 credits from levels 5 to 7, with 36-40 credits at level 5, 36-40 credits at level 6, and 36-40 credits at level 7.

4th Year

Entry 4. An individual seeking admission to a Bachelor's degree (Honours/Research) (Level 8) in a specified field of learning would normally have completed all requirements of the relevant three-year bachelor degree (Level 7). After completing the requirements of a three-year Bachelor's degree, candidates who meet a minimum CGPA of 7.5 shall be allowed to continue studies in the fourth year of the undergraduate programme to pursue and complete the Bachelor's degree with Research.

Exit 4: On the successful completion of the fourth year, a student shall be awarded a degree (Honours/Research). A Bachelor's degree (Honours/Research) requires a total of 144-160 credits from levels 5 to 8, with 36-40 credits at level 5, 36-40 credits at level 6, and 36-40 credits at level 7, and 36-40 credits at level 8.

7. Master's Programme

Admission paths for the postgraduate programme:

- Students shall be admitted to a two-year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the three-year Bachelor's programme

- Students completing a four-year Bachelor's programme with Honours/Research, may be admitted to a one-year Master's programme

- There may be an integrated five-year Bachelor's/Master's programme.

Entry 5: The entry requirement for Level 9 is

- A Bachelor's Degree (Honours/Research) for the one-year/two-semester Master's degree programme.

- A Bachelor's Degree for the two-year/four-semester Master's degree programme.

- A Bachelor's Degree for the one-year/two-semester Post-Graduate Diploma programme.

A programme of study leading to the Master's degree and Post-Graduate Diploma is open to those who have met the entrance requirements, including specified levels of attainment, in the programme admission regulations. Admission to a programme of study is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the applicant's ability to undertake postgraduate study in a specialist field of enquiry.

Exit 5: For postgraduate programmes, there shall only be one exit point for those who join the two-year Master's programme, that is, at the end of the first year of the Master's programme. Students who exit after the first year shall be awarded the Post-Graduate Diploma.

Credit Requirements

- A one-year/two-semester Master's degree programme builds on a Bachelor's degree with Honours/Research and requires 36-40 credits for individuals who have completed a Bachelor's degree with Honours/Research.

- The two-year/four-semester Master's degree programme builds on a Bachelor's degree and requires a total of 72-80 credits from both years of the programme, with 36-40 credits in the first year and 36-40 credits in the second year of the programme at level 9.

- A one-year/two-semester Post-Graduate Diploma programme builds on a Bachelor's degree and requires 36-40 credits for individuals who have completed a Bachelor's degree.

A student will be allowed to enter/re-enter only at the odd semester and can only exit after the

even semester. Re-entry at various levels as lateral entrants in academic programmes should be based on the earned credits and proficiency test records.

The validity of credits earned will be to a maximum period of seven years or as specified by the ABC. The procedure for depositing credits earned, its shelf life, redemption of credits, would be as per UGC (Establishment and Operationalization of Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) scheme in Higher Education) Regulations, 2021.

Table-I

Qualification Type and Credit Requirements		
Levels	**Qualification title**	**Credit requirements**
Level 5	Undergraduate Certificate (in the field of learning/discipline) for those who exit after the first year (two semesters) of the undergraduate programme. (Programme duration: first year or two semesters of the undergraduate programme)	36–40
Level 6	Undergraduate Diploma (in the field of learning/discipline) for those who exit after two years (four semesters) of the undergraduate programme (Programme duration: First two years or four semesters of the undergraduate programme)	72–80
Level 7	Bachelor' Degree (Programme duration: Three years or six semesters).	108–120
Level 8	Bachelor' Degree (Honours/Research) (Programme duration: Four years or eight semesters).	144–160
Level 8	Post-Graduate Diploma for those who exit after the successful completion of the first year or two semesters of the two-year Master's degree programme). (Programme duration: One year or two semesters)	36–40
Level 9	Master's Degree (Programme duration: Two years or four semesters after obtaining a Bachelor's degree).	72–80
Level 9	Master's Degree (Programme duration: One year or two semesters after obtaining a four-year Bachelor's Degree (Honours/Research).	36–40
Level 10	Doctoral Degree	Minimum prescribed credits for course work and a thesis with published work

8. Synchronization of General Education with Skill and Vocational Education

A framework of possible pathways synchronizing general education with vocational and skill education is given in the **Annexure-I.**

9. Assessment

- The assessment should be on the basis of learning outcomes for seamless lateral mobility across the academic programmes in different HEIs.

- The general education component will be assessed by the HEI concerned as per the prevailing standards and procedures.

- The Skill component of the course will be generally assessed by the respective Sector Skill Councils (SSC). In case, there is no SSC for a specific trade, the assessment may be done by an allied Sector Council or the Industry partner or a recognized Skill University. Further, if the SSC in the concerned/relevant trade has no approved Qualification Pack/set of competencies, which can be mapped progressively or due to any other reason the SSC expresses its inability to conduct the assessment or cannot conduct the skill assessment in stipulated time frames as per an academic calendar, the institutions may conduct the skill assessment through a Skill Assessment Board by "Certified Assessors" as per the provisions enumerated in MoE Skill Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth (SAMVAY). The Skill Assessment Board may have the Vice-Chancellor/Principal/Director/Nodal Officer/Coordinator of the programme/Centre, representatives of the partner industry(s), one nominee of the Controller of Examination or his/her nominee of the university/autonomous college and at least one external expert.

- One credit means the standard methodology of calculating one hour of theory or one hour of tutorial or two hours of laboratory work, per week for a duration of a semester (13-15 weeks) resulting in the award of one credit; which is awarded by a higher educational institution on which these regulations apply; and, Credits' for internship shall be one credit per one week of internship, subject to a maximum of six credits.

Synchronization of General Education with Skill and Vocational Education

- The different levels of qualifications in a given education and training system should be quality assured and embrace different pathways of learning, including experiential learning. The new higher education system tends to be inclusive of all tertiary education and training sectors and learning pathways (for example, Technical Vocational Education and Training and higher education institutions, and cover public and private institutions) based on robust quality assurance that enhances credibility and builds trust in learning outcomes achieved at different levels of the qualifications framework. It also includes different modes of learning, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning so that the outcomes are comparable, recognizable, and transferable, and thus contribute to lifelong learning. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is one example of how the flexible learning pathways are integrated in higher education.

- Recognition of prior learning and the integration of skills and competencies earned by learner in the past or in parallel, as credits into a formal certification of academic qualification: Whether studying at home or abroad, online or offline, lifelong learning is essential to ensure peace and stability. This consideration is also at the core of Sustainable Development Goal 4, known as the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda. This shared vision lays out a universal and transformative aspiration whereby innovative solutions must be part of an integrated agenda; which is to say all 17 SDGs are essential to create lasting change.

- The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) will be detailed further for each discipline vocation and profession for syncing it with General Education. Further, Indian standards will be aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations maintained by the International Labour Organization. This Framework will also provide the basis for Recognition of Prior Learning. Through this, dropouts from the formal system will be reintegrated by aligning their practical experience with the relevant level of the Framework.

- The policy framework for skills development envisages that skilling will be integrated with formal education by introducing vocational education classes from grade 9 of secondary education onwards. In higher education, skilling will be integrated with polytechnics offering NSQF-aligned vocational courses and bachelor degrees in vocational studies. The concerns about the nation's readiness to meet employers' needs for workers with the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics skills that many of today's jobs across all sectors require, the framework opens up opportunities for all to participate in and benefit from advances in science and technology.

Framework for Synchronization of General Education with Skill and Vocational Education

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK	LEVEL	CREDITS	SKILLS	VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL	ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIANTIAL LEARNING	RE-ENTRY	ACADEMIC	SEMESTERS	EXIT OPTIONS
LEVELS BASED ON EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOME	9	72–80	ALL QUALIFICATIONS ARE QUALITY ASSURED as per the provisions enumerated in MoE Skill Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth (SAMVAY).				Master's Degree. (Programme duration: Two years or four-semesters after obtaining a Bachelor's degree).	Two-year (four-semester)	
	9	36–40					Master's Degree. (Programme duration: One year or two semesters after obtaining a four-year Bachelor's degree—Honours/Research).	One-year (two-semester)	
	9	180–200					Integrated Bachelor's - Master's Degree programmes	Five-year (ten-semester)	
	8	36–40					Post-Graduate Diploma for those who exit after successful completion of the first year or two semesters of the two-year Master's degree programme. (Programme duration: One year or two semesters)	One-year (two-semester)	
	8	144–160					Bachelor' Degree (Honours/Research). (Programme duration: Four years or eight semesters).	Four-year (eight-semesters)	
	7	108–120					Bachelor' Degree (Programme duration: Three years or six semesters).	Three-year (six-semesters)	
	6	72 – 80	DIPLOMA	DIPLOMA			Undergraduate Diploma (in the field of learning/discipline) for those who exit after the first two years (fourse-mesters) of undergraduate programme (Programme duration: First two years or four semesters of the under-graduate programme)	Two-year (four-semester)	
	5	36 – 40	SKILLS CERTIFICATE(S)	V0CATIONAL & TRAINING CERTIFICATE			Undergraduate Certificate (in the field of learning/discipline) for those who exit after the first year (two semesters) of undergraduate programme. (Programme duration: First year or two semesters of the undergraduate programme)	One-year (two-semesters)	

Acknowledgements

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