

NCDOE Guidelines for Course Writers

The effectiveness and success of the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system largely depend on well-designed Self-Learning Materials (SLMs). Developing SLMs is a specialised process and requires an understanding of learner-centred design and the effective use of communication methods and technologies to support independent learning.

Difference between Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) and Textbooks

Developing self-learning materials differs significantly from traditional textbook or journal writing. The key differences are outlined below:

Textbook	Self-Learning Material (SLM)
Written primarily for teacher use	Designed for independent learner use
Rarely states clear aims and objectives	Clearly defines aims and learning objectives
Limited or no self-assessment activities	Strong emphasis on self-assessment
Rarely anticipates learner difficulties	Identifies and addresses potential learning challenges
Formal writing style	Personalized and conversational style
Dense layout	Open, learner-friendly layout
Passive learning approach	Encourages active learner engagement
Developed for a broad market	Designed for a specific target audience

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Characteristics of Self-Learning Materials (SLMs)

Self-learning materials function as an effective virtual teacher by guiding, motivating, explaining concepts, facilitating discussion, asking questions, assessing learner progress, and providing feedback and support. They promote pedagogical dialogue by simulating interaction between the learner and an instructor, creating an engaging and interactive learning experience. Through self-check questions and reflective activities, SLMs enhance learner curiosity and participation. The success of self-directed learning largely depends on the quality and design of these learning materials. The following are some of the characteristics of self-learning materials:

Self-Contained: Self-learning materials are designed to be self-sufficient, enabling learners to understand the content without requiring additional sources or constant teacher support.

Self-Explanatory: Self-learning materials present concepts in a clear, logical, and learner-friendly manner, enabling most learners to understand the content independently. The material is designed considering the learners' background, with additional support available through tutorials or guidance when needed.

Self-Directed: Self-learning materials provide structured guidance, hints, and learning activities to support learners at each stage. Through clear explanations and sequential development, they simulate the role of a teacher in guiding and regulating the learning process.

Self-Motivating: Self-learning materials are designed to encourage and engage learners by stimulating curiosity, connecting concepts to real-life situations, and providing reinforcement and feedback to sustain motivation throughout the learning process.

Self-Evaluating: Self-learning materials include built-in evaluation through self-check questions, exercises, and activities that provide feedback on learner progress. These help learners assess understanding, reinforce learning, and support effective self-directed study.

Self-Learning: Self-instructional materials are designed to support independent learning by providing clear guidance, directions, and study support. Simple explanations, examples, illustrations, and activities help learners understand concepts and learn at their own pace, with occasional support from teachers when required.

Example of a NCDOE Unit Structure

Index points	Features
Contents	Clearly structured topics and subtopics for systematic learning flow
Learning outcomes	4–6 clearly defined learning outcomes for each chapter aligning with Bloom's Taxonomy
Introduction	Covers prerequisites and outlines the importance and scope of the chapter
Topic	Concepts presented progressively, moving from basic to advanced levels of complexity. Includes infographics where necessary to enhance understanding, along with activities and case scenarios for applied learning.
Self-assessment question	Questions designed to help learners evaluate their understanding and reinforce key concepts
Summary	Concise recap of key ideas and important takeaways from the chapter
References	Properly formatted academic references and recommended readings

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Copyright Policy

Purpose

Understanding the concepts of copyright and plagiarism is essential to uphold academic integrity and to avoid legal and ethical violations. Copyright involves legal ownership and protection of original works, while plagiarism refers to the unethical use of another person's work without proper acknowledgment. Both carry serious implications in academic publishing and distance education. At NCDOE, violations of copyright and plagiarism are treated as serious academic and legal offenses.

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- The content does not infringe upon any existing copyright or previously assigned rights.
- No portion of the material is plagiarized.
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Copyright Compliance Guideline

To ensure adherence to academic and legal standards, faculty/course writers must:

Verify Copyright Status

- Identify whether third-party material is copyrighted.
- Locate and document the copyright holder.

Obtain Written Permission (where required) for:

- Using third-party materials such as tables, figures, charts, extracts from books, maps, illustrations, diagrams, photographs, and images.

Maintain Documentation

- Prepare a list of materials requiring permission.
- Inform the Course Coordinator/Academic Unit for formal approval and record-keeping.

Provide Proper Acknowledgment

- Cite all sources accurately following the prescribed referencing style (APA/MLA/Chicago as applicable).
- Ensure complete bibliographic details are included for traceability.

Understand Fair Dealing Provisions

- The Copyright Act permits limited use of copyrighted material for research, criticism, review, and educational purposes under “fair dealing.”
- The extent of usage must be reasonable, justified, and not substitute the original work.

Note: Materials prepared for distance education may require stricter compliance than classroom use.

Plagiarism Policy

- All submissions must undergo plagiarism screening as per institutional norms.
- Proper paraphrasing, citation, and referencing are mandatory.
- Self-plagiarism (reuse of previously published work without acknowledgment) must be avoided.
- Any detected violation may lead to rejection of the material and further disciplinary action.