

6. Student Support Services

In Open and Distance Learning System, learner - support is of paramount importance. Such support is provided through various services to:

- help learners learn well by providing timely and proper academic support,
- facilitate learners in solving their problems by the study centers/ learning centers established by the providing institution,
- coordinate and monitor the establishment, working and management of the study centers.

NIOS provides Student Support Services as under:

- Publicises about NIOS programmes and its working.
- Establishes study centers by accrediting recognized and reputed academic institutions all over the country, thereby building a network of Accredited Institutions (AIs).
- Enrolls and registers learners through Accredited Institutions of NIOS.
- Supplies self-study print material to learners through the study centers.
- Monitors functioning of the study centers and the Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs) at the study centers.
- Monitors Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA) for continuous assessment of the learners.
- Coordinates with the Regional Centers for timely and effective support to the learners.
- Deals with the problems and grievances of the learners.

6.1 Accreditation of Institutions

NIOS provides planned human support in different ways from the time a learner joins the system till the end of his/her successful completion. To provide this support along with the issue of easy access, NIOS considered utilization of existing available resources to provide better services by

accrediting institutions to be partners. Such partner institutions are called Accredited Institutions (AIs) and are spread all over the country. These AIs which function as study centers are usually formal schools that are recognized and affiliated to CBSE, ICSE and State Boards or reputed agencies involved in social and educational activities of disadvantaged and differently abled learners. The AIs assist NIOS in its various functions to reach out and to reach all.

Based on available infrastructure facilities and nature of the existing institutions, the AIs for Academic courses are categorized into three categories. Category-A having very good infrastructure and teaching staff can enrol upto 500 students. Category-B AIs can enrol upto 300 students. Category-C AIs are allowed to enrol only upto 150 students. NIOS has accredited institutions for regional mediums also like Marathi, Telugu, Gujarati, and Malayalam.

The types of schools/institutions that have become partners to function as AIs of NIOS include Government schools, Government Aided schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, Public and Private schools and Schools for special need.

Accreditation of the study centres is done after rigorous screening of applications on the basis of prescribed criteria and inspection of the institutions by a team of experts. In order to provide quality services through these AIs, norms for accreditation of institutions were reviewed and certain modifications, approved by the Departmental Advisory Board, were made. The Principal/ Vice-Principal of the school acts as the Coordinator of the AI functioning as the study center of NIOS. The core staff and teachers of the AIs work for NIOS programmes at the study centers in addition to their normal duties there.

The Application Form along with norms and procedures for accreditation is available at NIOS website <http://www.nios.ac.in> or <http://www.nos.org>. The Application Form is also available in a printed booklet form.

As on 31st March 2006, the total number of Accredited Institutes established in different parts of the country to conduct Academic Courses was 1815, which includes 33 Special Accredited Institutions for Education of the Disadvantaged (SAIEDs). In order to maintain quality and standard of the services provided by the AIs, 19 AIs were disaccredited on account of various irregularities. The state wise distribution of AIs as on 31.03.2006 is given in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Total State-wise Distribution of AIs and SAIEDs
(as on 31.03.2006)**

Name of the State/U.T.	No. of AIs (including Regional Languages AIs)	No. of SAIEDS Sec./Sr.Sec.	Total
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	08	—	08
Andhra Pradesh	132	—	132
APO	3	—	3
Arunchal Pradesh	15	—	15
Assam	15	—	15
Bihar	73	3	76
Chandigarh	10	2	12
Chhattisgarh	12	—	12
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	—	—	—
Daman and Diu	1	—	1
Delhi	221	7	228
Goa	09	—	09
Gujarat	24	—	24
Haryana	200	—	200
Himachal Pradesh	45	—	45
Jammu & Kashmir	24	—	24
Jharkhand	61	2	63
Karnataka	16	2	18
Kerala	30	—	30
Lakshadweep	—	—	—
Madhya Pradesh	64	1	65
Maharashtra	142	1	143
Manipur	47	—	47
Meghalaya	8	—	8
Mizoram	11	—	11
Nagaland	16	—	16
Orissa	25	6	31
Pondicherry	2	—	2
Punjab	55	1	56
Rajasthan	53	—	53
Sikkim	8	—	8
Tamil Nadu	21	3	24
Tripura	6	—	6
Uttar Pradesh	247	2	249
Uttaranchal	91	—	91
West Bengal	62	3	65
Foreign Countries	25	2	27
Total	1782	35	1817

To cater to the regional needs, several AIs were established for programme delivery through regional mediums. These include 22 AIs in Marathi medium, 2 AIs in Telugu medium, 13 AIs in Urdu medium, 8 AIs in Gujrati medium, and 3 AIs in Malayalam medium.

6.1.1 Towards On-line Accreditation Procedure

In order to speed up the processing of applications for accreditation and to make it more transparent, the Department of Student Support Services (SSS Department) envisaged for on-line processing of the applications for accreditation. For this purpose, a committee comprising of officers from CBSE and NIOS was constituted. In the first meeting of the committee, various aspects like on line receipt of application, converting the application format electronically, display of the status of application, allotment of consideration number, acceptance of required documents and fee offline by post were discussed. A revised and updated application format for accreditation has been developed in electronic form. The Computer Unit of NIOS has designed this programme. The electronic form and on line processing of accreditation will be available from the year 2006-07.

6.1.2 District wise Mapping of AIs

The main objective of NIOS is to reach the unreached. NIOS has its study centers in almost all the states of the country. However, it was observed that there are several districts/areas in different states where NIOS could not reach so far. Keeping this in view, district-wise mapping of the existing AIs has been done during 2005-06 which indicates the unreach districts and the literacy rate of the district. On the basis of the district wise mapping of AIs, NIOS has identified unreached and educationally backward districts where special advocacy programmes are being organized.

6.2 Admission

During the year 2005-06, admission to various courses was done through the network of Accredited Institutions, working as Study Centres, all over India and abroad. Like any other year, admission to the academic courses of NIOS was open to one and all in the month of July, 2005 and continued till September 2005. During the year 2005-06, the total number of students admitted in various academic courses through different AIs was 2,67,026.

The NIOS has AIs in the Middle East (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Kuwait, Sharjah, Bahrain) and Nepal also. The aim of having the study centres outside India is to extend educational facilities through the open learning system to non-resident Indians and other nationals settled there.

The State/ Union Territory wise enrolment at Secondary and Sr. Secondary level is shown in the Table 6.2

**Table 6.2 : State/Union Territory wise Enrolment in
Academic Courses 2005-2006**

State/ Union Territory	Secondary Enrolment	Sr. Secondary Enrolment	Total Enrolment
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1171	770	1941
Andhra Pradesh	1236	2918	4154
APO	9	37	46
Arunachal Pradesh	2225	801	3026
Assam	1304	1247	2551
Bihar	2851	2353	5204
Chandigarh	790	394	1184
Chhatisgarh	626	547	1173
Delhi	43663	34149	77812
Foreign Countries	488	551	1039
Goa	2232	437	2669
Gujarat	493	409	902
Haryana	21490	16725	38215
Himachal Pradesh	3992	9324	13316
Jammu and Kashmir	430	609	1039
Jharkhand	2137	1177	3314
Karnataka	397	520	917
Kerela	554	1742	2296
Madhya Pradesh	3583	1524	5107
Maharashtra	8860	3206	12066
Manipur	5062	4282	9344
Meghalaya	1174	18	1192
Mizoram	2184	990	3174
Nagaland	2463	969	3432
Orissa	2170	702	2872
Pondicherry	2	2	4
Punjab	6708	1972	8680
Rajasthan	2828	1542	4370
Sikkim	1441	760	2201
Tamil Nadu	271	244	515
Tripura	382	219	601
Uttar Pradesh	11584	13223	24807
Uttaranchal	6471	5083	11554
West Bengal	9166	5200	14366
All India SAIED	1396	547	1943
Total	151833	115193	267026

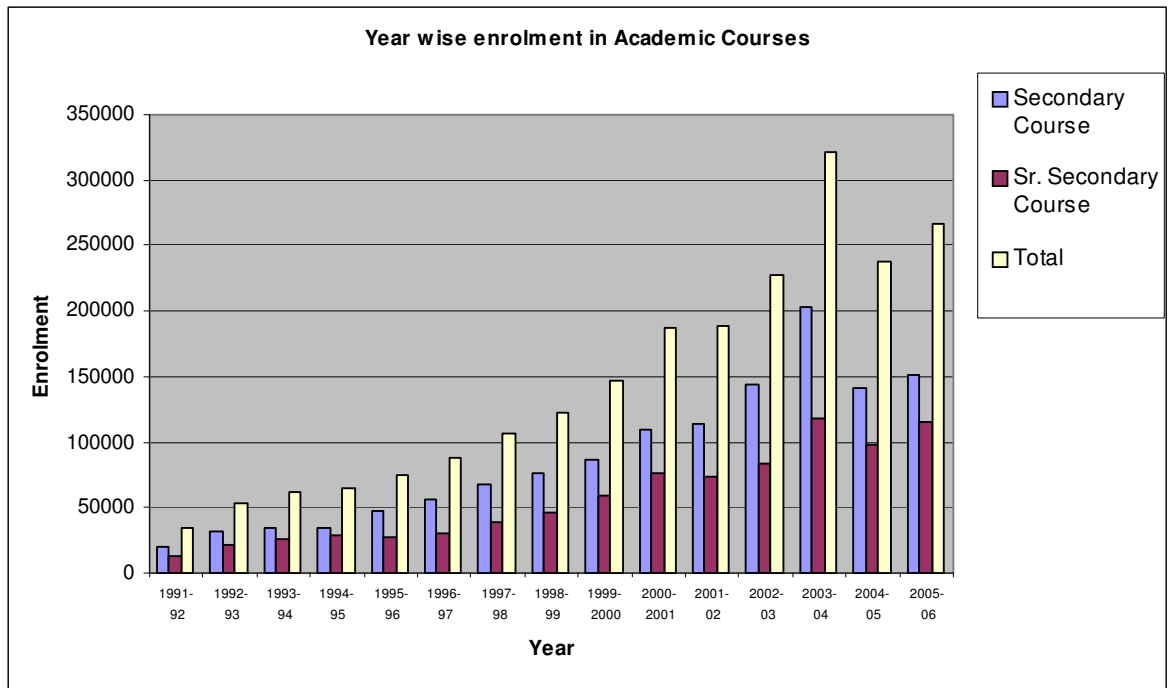
6.2.1 Academic Courses : Enrolment Trend

The year-wise enrolment in Academic Courses since 1991 is depicted in Table 6.3

Table 6.3. Year-wise and Course-wise Enrolment in Academic Courses from 1991-92 to 2005-06

Year	Foundation Course	Secondary Course	Sr. Secondary Course	Total	Growth %
1991-92	1020	20714	12690	34424	—
1992-93	1260	31375	20932	53567	55.60
1993-94	1408	35098	25777	62283	16.27
1994-95	815	34593	29054	64462	03.49
1995-96	596	47126	27711	75433	17.02
1996-97	504	56891	29861	87286	15.71
1997-98	431	67194	38835	106460	21.96
1998-99	855	75699	46172	122726	15.28
1999-2000	1080	86854	59580	147514	20.19
2000-01	1585	109213	75916	186714	26.57
2001-02	815	114272	72924	188011	0.69
2002-03	1087	143853	83122	228062	21.30
2003-04	—	203518	118236	321754	41.08
2004-05	—	140501	97568	238069	-26.00
2005-06	—	151833	115193	267026	12.16

The enrolment of students in the Secondary as well as Senior Secondary Courses has been generally increasing over the years. But due to the special measures to maintain the quality and standard of NIOS courses and its examination during 2004-05, there was a decrease in the enrolment as compared to the previous year. Again during 2005-06, there was an increase of 12.16% in the growth of enrolment.



6.2.2 Academic Courses: Student's Profile

During the session 2005-06, the course-wise, medium-wise and category-wise profiles of the learners are presented in Tables 6.4 to 6.7.

Table 6.4: Number and Percentage of Students Registered in Various Courses 2005-06

Course	No. of Students	Percentage
Secondary	151833	56.86
Sr. Secondary	115193	43.14
Total	2,67,026	100

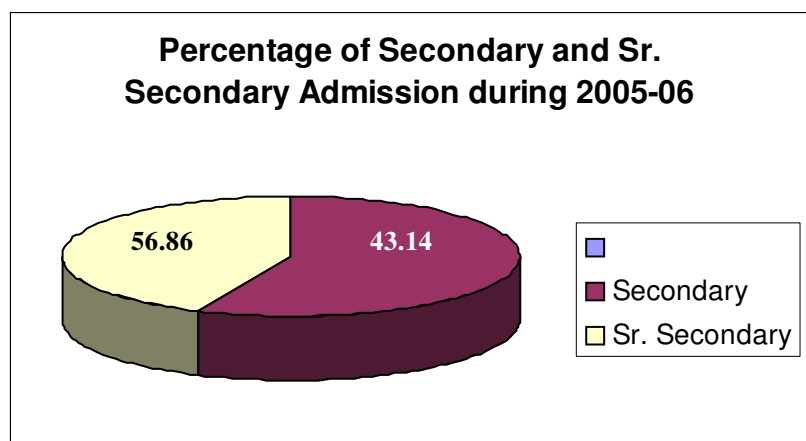


Table 6.5: Regional Medium-wise Distribution of Enrolled Students (2005-06)

Medium	No. of Students	
	Secondary	Sr. Secondary
Telugu	483	
Urdu	909	382
Marathi	1511	-
Malayalam	27	-
Gujarati	235	-
Total	3165	382

Out of the 3165 students who opted for regional mediums, at Secondary level, 909 students offered Urdu Medium, 483 students offered Telugu medium, 1511 students offered Marathi medium, 235 students offered Gujarati medium and 382 students offered Urdu at Sr. Secondary level.

Table 6.6 : Statement showing Category-wise Enrolment (2005-06)

S. No.	Category	Enrolment	Percentage
1	General	214667	80.39%
2	Scheduled Castes	30679	11.49%
3	Scheduled Tribes	19933	7.41%
4.	Ex-Servicemen	304	0.11%
5	Handicapped	1443	0.54%
	Total	2,67,026	100

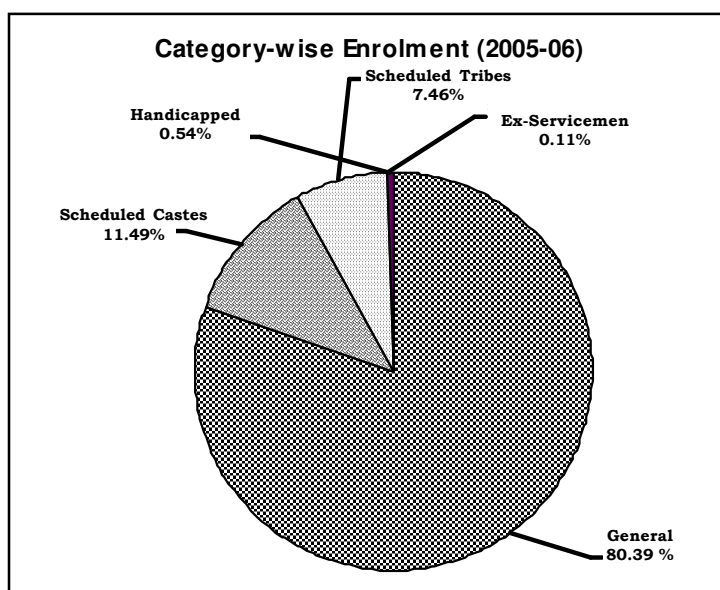


Table 6.6 indicates that out of 2,67,026 students enrolled for academic courses at NIOS, 214667 belonged to General category, 30679 belonged to SC category, 19933 belonged to ST category, 304 students were ex-servicemen and 1443 students were Handicapped.

Table 6.7 : Statement showing Gender-wise Enrolment (2005-06)

	Secondary	Sr. Secondary	Total	Percentage
Boys	102562	214667	182440	68%
Girls	49271	35315	84586	32%
Total	151833	115193	267026	100%

As shown in the Table 6.7, 68% male candidates and 32% female candidates were enrolled in different academic courses during 2005-06.

6.3 Transfer of Credit

The unique feature of NIOS is that it provided education to a large number of students who otherwise would have missed the opportunity to study further. Majority of these learners joined NIOS to avail the benefit of the prevailing flexibilities and be successful in life.

It is however pertinent to note that a lot of students under CBSE, ICSE or State Boards leave their studies every year out of frustration after having failed in the compartment examinations and they lose confidence to appear in all the subjects again. In order to give recognition to their past efforts and motivate them to continue their studies till they complete their course, Transfer of Credit (TOC) scheme was implemented for ex-NIOS, Ex-CBSE or State Board students from the session 1997-98. However the TOC of a subject is allowed only when it is according to the passing criteria of NIOS. Over the years it was noticed that some malpractices were taking place by way of producing fake mark sheets for the purpose of TOC. Therefore, the scheme of TOC was limited to only those Boards that agreed to verify the mark sheets submitted by the students seeking TOC at NIOS. During 2005-06, the benefit of TOC was given to the ex-students of CBSE, CISCE, UP Board, Uttaranchal Board and State Open Schools only as these Boards had agreed to verify the marks of the candidates of their Boards. 17,214 Candidates were granted TOC by NIOS during 2005-06 session.

6.4 Personal Contact Programme

The main characteristics of open learning system is to learn from self-instructional material at one's own pace and convenience. NIOS students study at their own using self instructional material. However, while learning

they do confront certain problems and need various types of help and guidance. For clarification of their doubts, NIOS conducts 30 Personal Contact Programme (PCPs) for non-science subjects and 35 PCPs for science subjects at the study center(s) on Saturdays, Sundays/other holidays or at any convenient time during week days. During Personal Contact Programme (PCP), learners meet each other as well as the subject teachers and seek their help. These are remedial and diagnostic sessions also.

The main objectives of PCP are:

- to clear doubts and solve problems that the learners face while studying the study material;
- to provide opportunity to learn through audio and video programmes;
- to provide feedback to the learners through assignments;
- to get additional learning material from the library of the concerned study centre;
- to interact with other learners; and
- to practice for mock examination.

All the Accredited Institutions were advised to display the Schedule of PCP on the Notice Boards meant for NIOS learners. They were also required to send a copy of the PCP schedule to the concerned Regional Centers.

In order to carry out this activity, NIOS makes payment to the study centres on pro-rata basis. During 2005-06, bills for Pro-rata payment for PCPs received from the study centres through the concerned Regional Centers were checked, processed and forwarded by the Department of Student Support Services to the Accounts Section for releasing payment.

6.5 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)

NIOS has developed several means and strategies for effective learning by the learners. Tutor Marked Assignment is one such tool which plays a very important role in learning through open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education. Learners are encouraged to submit the assignments at their study centres. These assignments are evaluated and returned to the learners along with comments and suggestions. TMAs help the learner to know his/her progress and attainment level and develop regular study habits. The TMAs prompt learners to attend PCPs at the study centres thereby attempting to make them sincere and disciplined in their studies. These assignments prove

useful in designing remedial and diagnostic teaching learning programmes during PCPs.

The Department of Student Support Services at NIOS Headquarters coordinated the matters related to the TMAs with the Study Centers and Regional Centers of NIOS.

Like previous years, new sets of Tutor Marked Assignments in all subjects, both for Secondary and Sr. Secondary level, were prepared in 2005-06 by the Academic Department and were made available to the learners through the study centres and through the website of NIOS. The innovative feature of the TMAs was that each assignment in each subject had a question on investigatory project to be done by the learner. Although the awards of the TMAs have no weightage in the Public examinations, the grades of the best two assignments, out of three, submitted by the learner are considered and reflected in the mark sheet. The study centres send the award list to the Regional Center concerned, which in turn send these to the HQ. During 2005-06, the awards of the TMAs (from all the Regional Centers) were consolidated and the bills of the evaluators of the TMAs were checked, processed and forwarded to the Accounts Section for payment.

6.6 Recognition of the NIOS Courses

The NIOS has been conducting examinations at all India level from the year 1991 under the authority vested in it by the Government of India through a notification. The Council of Boards of Secondary Education (COBSE) and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) have recognized the NIOS courses as equivalent to Secondary and Senior Secondary levels for admission to institutions of higher learning as also for employment through various agencies.

So far 143 Boards/Universities have recognised the NIOS courses. These include 23 Boards from 19 States/Union Territories, 111 Universities from 27 States/ Union Territories, and 9 other certifying institutions from 8 States/ Union Territories. During 2005-06 the remaining state boards were pursued and requested to accord equivalence and recognition to NIOS courses. The State-wise break up about recognition of the NIOS courses is given in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9: State-wise Break-up of the Boards/Universities/ Other Certifying Institutions recognising NIOS Courses (as on 31.03.2006)

Name of the State/U.T.	No. of Boards	No. of Universities	Other Certifying Institutions	Total
Andhra Pradesh	2	8	-	10
Arunchal Pradesh	-	1	-	1
Assam	1	2	-	3
Bihar	-	1	-	1
Jharkhand	1	4	-	5
Delhi	2	7	1	10
Goa	1	1	-	2
Gujarat	-	5	-	5
Haryana	1	5	1	7
Himachal Pradesh	1	2	-	3
Jammu & Kashmir	-	2	-	2
Karnataka	-	7	-	7
Kerala	-	5	-	5
Madhya Pradesh	1	7	1	9
Chhattisgarh	-	1	-	1
Maharashtra	1	8	1	10
Manipur	-	1	-	1
Meghalaya	1	-	-	1
Mizoram	1	-	-	1
Nagaland	1	1	-	2
Orissa	2	2	-	4
Punjab	1	4	-	5
Rajasthan	1	10	2	13
Sikkim	-	1	-	1
Tripura	1	1	-	2
Tamil Nadu	-	10	1	11
Uttar Pradesh	1	8	1	10
Uttaranchal	1	2	-	3
West Bengal	2	5	1	8
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-	-	-	-
Chandigarh	-	-	-	-
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	-	-
Daman & Diu	-	-	-	-
Total	23	111	9	143

6.7 Orientation and Training Programmes

6.7.1 Orientation Programme for Coordinators of AIs

As in the past, NIOS organised Orientation Programme for the Coordinators of Study Centers (AIs) during 2005-06 also. This Programme was conducted to highlight policy and procedural changes decided by NIOS in the functioning of study centers. Other areas of concern related to examination, administration and academic matters were also discussed to enable the Co-coordinators to function effectively. Orientation Programmes for the Coordinators of AIs were held Region wise as mentioned below :

S.No.	Regional Centre	Date of Meeting
1.	Pune	25.06.2005
2.	Hyderabad	27.06.2005
	Bangalore	11/12.08.2005
3.	Kochi	26.08.2005
4.	Patna	05.07.2005
5.	Kolkata	07.07.2005
6.	Guwahati	08.07.2005
7.	RCD Zone-II NOIDA	29.07.2005
	Haridwar	31.08.2005
8.	Jaipur	15.07.2005
9.	RCD Zone-I	18.07.2005
10.	Chandigarh	20.07.2005
11.	Allahabad	25.07.2005

6.7.2 Activating Academic Facilitators in all Regions

Role and Functions

In order to provide better services to the open school learners at the Study Centers, NIOS has appointed Academic Facilitators (AFs) in different regions/parts of the country. The role and functions of the AFs are as follows:

- To monitor admission process with a view to ensure that there is no discrimination and other irregularities like overcharging of fees etc.
- To ensure that learners are adequately counseled about choice of subjects.
- To check that the AIs have received the complete sets of study material and the same are distributed to the learners in time.

- To observe the conduct of PCP at the AI, interact with learners and teachers and impress upon them the relevance of interactive learning strategies and importance of self-study.
- To find out whether the requisite number of assignments have been given to the learners and whether the responses have been received back and assessed properly.
- To check whether audio/video materials supplied by NIOS are being used during PCP.
- To provide feedback to NIOS on training needs of the Teachers, Coordinators and other personnel.
- To review the records maintained by the AI about NIOS learners, teacher etc., and advise the Coordinator about their proper maintenance.
- To interact with learners and provide them localized help in solving their problems connected with TMA, PCP tutorials, examination etc.
- To understand the problems and difficulties, if any, of the AI, provide localized help and send feedback to the Regional Center and NIOS Headquarter for effective functioning of the AI.
- To ensure availability of qualified teaching staff and suitable infrastructure for running NIOS Study Center.
- To assist in fair conduct of Examinations.

Terms of Reference

- Academic Facilitators are required to visit the allotted study centers (usually more than one) in nearby locality. Each study center may be visited seven times in an academic year. He/She will be required to visit the AI twice during admission, three times during Personal Contact Programme(PCP) and twice during examinations.
- The feedback report of each visit is to be submitted in prescribed proforma to the Regional Center immediately after the visit.
- An amount of Rs. 400/- per visit is paid on submission of the visit report along with the pre-receipted signed bill for payment by the Regional Center.
- The Academic Facilitator may be assigned other related activities of NIOS, if necessary.
- Analysis and synthesis of all reports of the AFs need to be prepared

in the concerned Regional Center. The consolidated report is sent to SSS Department.

Status in 2005-06

During 2005-06, 161 Academic Facilitators (AFs) were appointed all over the country covering 654 AIs. The AFs are retired school/college principals, senior teachers and specialists in the field of education. Region wise the number of Academic Facilitators appointed is given in the Table 6.10

Table: 6.10 Region-wise Status of Academic Facilitators (AFs)

S.No.	Regional Centre	Total No. of AFs	Total No. of AIs
1.	Allahabad	23	99
2.	Bhopal	5	18
3.	Chandigarh	14	75
4.	Sub Centre Dehradun	14	97
5.	Delhi	51	156
6.	Guwahati	7	33
7.	Jaipur	15	39
8.	Kochi	7	29
9.	Kolkata	8	37
10.	Patna	8	35
11.	Pune	8	34
Total		161	654

6.7.3 Identification of Training Needs of the NIOS Functionaries

NIOS functions through a network of study centers called Accredited Institutions (AIs). These are generally the schools of the formal education system. As such, the teachers, Coordinators and other functionaries associated with NIOS work at the AIs are mentally orientated towards the formal system, and the Open and Distance Learning system followed by NIOS is a new concept for them. Therefore, for an effective and efficient transaction of NIOS courses, these field functionaries require training about the Open Schooling system and its functioning.

In order to identify the training needs of Teachers and Coordinators of these AIs, NIOS in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has

taken up a project. Under this project during 2005-06, about 218 AIs having sufficient length of experience with NIOS were identified and two separate bilingual questionnaires, one for the coordinators and other for the teachers/tutors, were administered. The questionnaires were developed with the assistance of the COL Consultant Prof. B.N. Koul. The filled up questionnaires were analysed and a report was prepared by Prof. Koul. The report was discussed with the NIOS officials also to get feedback for further improvement.

Based on the findings, a two day workshop was organized on March 16 and 17, 2006 to discuss appropriate training strategies. As an outcome of the workshop, future plan of action was drawn for the development of training package and delivery thereof.

6.8 Monitoring and Quality Control

6.8.1 Identification of Quality Indicators for Student Support Services.

A one day National workshop for identification of Quality Indicators in Open Schooling System was organized by the Department of SSS, NIOS on 29th November, 2005 at CIET, NCERT, New Delhi. The basic objectives of the workshop were to identify the quality indicators, to draw out a scheme of categorization of AIs based on the quality indicators identified, to suggest measures to improve the quality of support services, and to work out a mechanism for effective monitoring of the Student Support Services in NIOS

Eminent Educationists from different institutions including the coordinators of some of the study centres of NIOS participated in the workshop. The participants were of the view that development of quality parameters particularly for Student Support Services was really a challenging task. It was pointed out that quality in education was not negotiable at any cost and quality assurance in distance education system must run like a business. From the deliberations and discussions, a framework to identify pin pointed indicators was formulated and further plan of action was drawn.

6.8.2 Review of the Existing Norms and Procedure for Accreditation

In order to ensure the quality and standard of the Accredited Institution, a Committee consisting of experts from CBSE, NCERT and nominated officials from NIOS reviewed the existing Norms and Procedure for Accreditation of Institutions for Academic Courses. The Committee reviewed the existing 'Norms and Procedures for Accreditation of Institutions' keeping in view the feedback from various Screening Boards (SBs) held over the years for scrutinizing the applications for accreditation. After thorough discussion on various issues like eligibility criteria for accreditation, necessary infrastructure

required and the teaching staff etc., the committee recommended certain changes, which were placed before the Departmental Advisory Board for approval.

6.9 Planning Meetings

6.9.1 Meeting of the Regional Heads of NIOS

In order to have face to face discussions between Regional Heads and officials at NIOS Headquarters, a meeting of Regional Heads of NIOS was held on 1st December, 2005. All the Heads of Departments, the Regional Heads and other senior officers of NIOS were present in the meeting. The basic objective of the meeting was in-depth discussion on issues for proper planning, monitoring and effective implementation of NIOS programmes.

The important issues and activities of Regional Centers were also discussed in detail. The Regional Heads were given opportunity to share their experience regarding the difficulties faced in functioning of NIOS Regional Centers and the support required from the Headquarters. It was also decided that the facility of EDUSAT needs to be used extensively in future.

6.9.2 Meeting of Departmental Advisory Board (DAB) of Student Support Services

The first meeting of the Advisory Board of the Department of Student Support Services of NIOS was held on 30 November 2005. The DAB comprised of the experts from IGNOU and COBSE, and all Regional Heads of NIOS. The main objectives of the DAB meeting were to review the role and functions of the SSS Department and to get suggestions for improving the effectiveness of Student Support Services from admission to certification. The activities of SSS Department were reviewed and discussed at length and several suggestions were given. The proposed Plan of Action for the year 2006-07 for SSS Department was placed before the DAB. The programmes were deliberated upon and approved. It was decided that DAB meeting should be held twice a year and RCs should also hold RCAC meetings two times in a year.

6.10 National Open Science Congress for NIOS Learners

The NIOS in collaboration with the National Council for Science & Technology Communication, (Department of Science & Technology), Govt. of India, has taken up a science popularisation project namely 'National Open Science Congress' for NIOS learners. The project is on the lines of the National Children Science Congress organised by DST for formal schools. The Project aims at promoting creativity and innovativeness and

more particularly the ability of NIOS learners to solve societal problems experienced locally using scientific methods. This was a unique opportunity for NIOS learners to participate in such activities. During 2005-06, besides identifications of the AIs in different regions, the necessary resource material like Project Guidelines and Activity Guide were developed.

In this project, the participating students are required to work on some investigatory projects on the topics of their choice related to the theme of the year. Three tier activities will be organized at cluster level, Regional Center level and finally at the national level.

6.11 Employment Opportunity for NIOS Students

Eight NIOS students were employed by Blue Dart Express Ltd., in the capacity of “Territory Service Representatives”.

6.12 Awards for Aspirants of Geography

NIOS has introduced an annual award in the name of ‘Ms. Santosh Rastogi Scholarship for Excellence in Geography’ at Senior Secondary level from the academic session 2005-06. The modalities for this award were worked out. The award of Rs.500/- each will be given once in a year to 5 students of the NIOS selected on the basis of their achievement in the Geography in the April/May and October/November examinations of the year.