

7.2 BEST PRACTICES (AQAR 2023-24)

7.2.1 Describe two Best practices successfully implemented by the Institution as per the NAAC format provided in the Manual.

BEST PRACTICE 1

1. Title of the Practice: Holistic Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework

2. Objectives of the Practice

The primary objective is to establish a supportive ecosystem fostering mental health and well-being among students, faculty, and staff of NLU Delhi. This includes

- a) providing timely mental health services,
- b) destigmatizing mental health conversations and seeking of support,
- c) enhancing overall resilience and emotional intelligence, and
- d) embedding mental well-being into the university culture.

The framework emphasizes preventive care, early intervention, and the integration of mental health into everyday university life. The initiative also seeks to create a replicable model for addressing student well-being in other educational institutions.

3. The Context

NLU Delhi recognizes the increasing mental health challenges faced by staff and students in demanding work and academic environments. Issues like academic stress, social isolation, and lack of awareness on mental health prompted the university to act decisively. Recognizing these challenges, NLU Delhi designed its programme to provide professional, accessible, and sustainable support mechanisms. The university also addressed gaps such as the unavailability of specialized counsellors and limited awareness among students and staff. By collaborating with specialist organizations, such as AIIMS, YOUR DOST, etc NLU Delhi is today one of the few Indian universities to institutionalize mental health practices comprehensively.

4. The Practice

NLU Delhi has implemented a multi-tiered approach to mental health:

- a) **Dedicated Counselling Services:** The University aims to ensure that counselling and psychotherapeutic services are easily accessible to all its students and staff members. It employs two full-time mental health counsellors and one Psychiatrist ensuring ready availability of professional support. Individual counselling sessions provide a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment for individuals to express themselves and explore their problems. Online and offline counselling sessions ensure accessibility for all students. These services ensure confidential support systems. The University has also partnered with Your Dost to offer free online counselling services to its students & staff members. ([here](#))

- b) **Workshops and Training:** Regular workshops, such as the 'Mental Health Workshop' are organised on focussing on coping mechanisms, stress management, and mental health awareness. NLU Delhi also organised specialized initiatives like the **Happiness Bootcamp**, aimed at promoting emotional resilience and holistic well-being. The bootcamp focuses on helping participants identify sources of happiness, practice mindfulness, and build strong social connections ([here](#)).
- c) **Resource Accessibility:** NLU Delhi has published a series of **mental health booklets** addressing topics like stress management, self-care, and mindfulness practices. These booklets are crafted with inputs from psychologists and tailored to the unique challenges faced by students in rigorous academic environments. They serve as accessible, evidence-based guides to promote emotional well-being. In particular a **Student Wellbeing Handbook** ([here](#)), has been distributed, offering practical advice and support mechanisms. Additionally, the university maintains a **Mental Health Resource List** featuring contact details for professional help, emergency services, and national helplines, ensuring students can access support outside campus hours.
- d) **Awareness Campaigns:** NLU Delhi has undertaken specialised initiatives focussing on mental health. It launched an **On-campus Happiness Campaign** to create a culture of optimism and positivity. The campaign involves interactive sessions, inspiring art installations, and group activities that encourage self-reflection and community bonding ([here](#)). The university established a **Wellness Board** to oversee and sustain mental health initiatives. The board includes faculty members, students, and mental health professionals to ensure diverse representation and effective programme implementation ([here](#)).
- e) **Peer Support Initiative** - The university has a specialized mentorship programme for first-year students, whereunder each first-year student is assigned a mentor from all the senior batches. The mentors engage with new students, encouraging them to ask for support whenever they require it. This approach helps the first-year students to feel comfortable, and creates a positive relationship among students.

A significant challenge came in the form of initial resistance to seeking help or even talking about it due to stigma. Many students hesitated to discuss mental health concerns openly, fearing judgment or lack of confidentiality. Overcoming these required persistent campaigns emphasizing the importance of seeking support and normalizing conversations about mental health. Efforts included targeted workshops, peer-led discussions, and trust-building measures with counsellors, gradually creating a more open and accepting atmosphere.

This framework is aimed to be holistic and focuses on incorporating mental health into academic culture. Its scalability and focus on preventive care set it apart in the Indian education sector.

5. Evidence of Success

NLU Delhi has observed measurable outcomes, including increased utilization of counselling services and positive participations in various mental health campaigns, and feedback on workshops and resources. The success is evident in increased utilisation by the students and staff, and reduced stigma associated with mental health discussions. Interactions with students reflect an improvement in the overall mental well-being of the student community as a whole, substantiating the framework's efficacy.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The primary challenge was finding and retaining qualified professionals. NLU Delhi addressed this by offering competitive remuneration packages and creating a conducive work environment for mental health specialists ([here](#)). Partnering with leading mental health organizations also helped bridge gaps in expertise. Additional resources required include:

- a) Budget for in-house psychologists and counsellors,
- b) Budget for workshops, materials, and external experts, and
- c) Technological infrastructure for virtual counselling sessions.

7. Notes (Optional)

This practice emphasizes that a healthy mind is foundational for academic and personal success. Its successful implementation demonstrates the importance of institutional commitment and resource allocation in addressing mental health. By integrating mental health into its academic and administrative framework, the university sets a benchmark for other higher educational institutions in India.

For detailed information, refer to the NLU Delhi's mental health initiatives and reports please refer to the following link: [here](#)

BEST PRACTICE 2

1. Title of the Practice: AKSHAR- Incentivizing Academic Publication by Students

2. Objectives of the Practice

The 'AKSHAR' initiative is designed to encourage and recognize student achievements in academic publishing. Its primary objectives are to

- a) incentivize research and academic writing among students,
- b) provide a tangible reward for scholarly contributions, and
- c) promote intellectual engagement in renowned academic platforms.

By offering financial rewards for publishing in SCOPUS-indexed, Web of Science, and UGC-CARE journals, the practice seeks to enhance the academic profile of students and cultivate research excellence.

3. The Context

Indian higher education institutions have historically struggled with fostering substantial student contributions to academic research and writing. Acknowledging the increasing global focus on research-based learning and the challenges students face in publishing, NLU Delhi introduced the 'AKSHAR' scheme. The policy addresses the need for a structured incentive system that rewards students for academic publications while encouraging the development of scholarly skills. Given the competitive nature of academic publishing and the pressures on students, this initiative serves as an essential motivator for students to excel in research and publication during their academic journey.

4. The Practice

'AKSHAR' is unique in Indian higher education as it directly incentivizes student research, an area often overlooked in traditional student programmes. The scheme offers an honorarium for each article published in recognized academic journals, such as SCOPUS-indexed and UGC-CARE journals. Unlike many other universities, NLU Delhi ensures that this practice is applicable across multiple academic programmes, including Ph.D., LL.M., and B.A. LL.B (Hons.). The process involves rigorous validation through submission proof, with further monitoring to ensure ethical academic practices like avoiding plagiarism and generative AI-assisted work. Notably, NLU Delhi's integration of this practice into the curriculum demonstrates its commitment to bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical scholarly engagement, empowering students to contribute meaningfully to legal academia. While the scheme is widely beneficial, constraints include the stringent conditions regarding eligible journals and the necessity for continuous administrative oversight to maintain academic integrity.

5. Evidence of Success

The 'AKSHAR' Incentive Scheme for Academic Publication has been a significant step towards recognizing and rewarding student contributions to academia. A key achievement of the scheme is the recognition of student publications in prestigious journals. A recent example of success under this initiative is the publication of a student article in the prestigious Cambridge Law Review titled '*Protecting Climate Migrants Through Regional Policies: Time to Move Beyond International Treaty Law*'. ([here](#)) This highlights the programme's impact on fostering academic excellence and scholarly contributions.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

A key challenge in implementing the 'AKSHAR' scheme was ensuring that students adhered to academic integrity standards, particularly regarding plagiarism and

reliance on generative AI technologies. While the programme has effectively incentivized students, additional resources are required for administering the verification processes to validate the authenticity of publications, to ensure continuous updation of the list of eligible journals and maintain effective communication with faculty mentors and students.

7. Notes (Optional)

For institutions looking to adopt a similar practice, it is crucial to establish clear guidelines for eligibility and ensure that the application process is straightforward. Collaboration with academic journals to ensure credibility is key, as well as integrating ethics and integrity checks in the submission process. This practice could serve as a model for other law schools seeking to enhance their research output while incentivizing students to engage in scholarly pursuits.