

## **NON FORMAL ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION - A CASE STUDY BY IGNOU**

Title of The Programme: **CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME IN FOOD AND NUTRITION**  
(Abstract No. D4/CS/II60)

Sector in which nomination is made: Non Formal Adult and Community Education  
(A Case Study)

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Course Duration : Minimum 6 months and can be completed within 2 years.

Course Credits : 16 credits (50 % of the credits are for home based practicals)

Course Structure : It offers 3 courses with related practicals interwoven in them and an audio and a good video backup.

1. You and your food
2. Your food and its utilization
3. Economics of food

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Certificate Programme in Food and Nutrition - The programme of this nature was conceptualized after extensive action research for need assessment in order to know what women are expecting from an open university. The spontaneous response of the group was a literature that would help them rear their children better and also allow them to adapt themselves to the biological changes as they come. Certificate Programme in Food and Nutrition (CFN) was thus launched to fulfill the needs of the said learner groups.

Statistics reveal that women report more morbidity and require health services at higher rates than men do. A very unpleasant reality in large parts of our country is that the levels of women's education are among the lowest in the world and while the levels of maternal mortality are amongst the highest in the world. Hence, female literacy and especially health education programmes are crucial in this regard. The Certificate Programme in Food and Nutrition is a simple, non-formal approach of transforming women's lives by empowering them with knowledge to protect their own family's and community's well being.

Given the influence that adverse nutritional status has on overall health of women, it is crucial that concepts of food and good nutrition be made an integral part of their lives. The purpose of this programme is to cover the biological, personal, psychological, social and environmental aspect of women's healthy development through all stages of life.

Relevance in present scenario:

In the developing world with people becoming more health conscious, the role of food and nutrition cannot be underestimated. CFN is an awareness level programme, which provides the current state of the art knowledge related to foods and nutrition. It caters to the needs of that group of people who have no formal education. Eating is so much a part of our life that we tend to assume we know everything about food, its science and functionality. Our concern is to inculcate good food habits and ensure good nutrition from the foundation stage of life so that health and efficiency are ensured for future lives. It is mandatory that the youth of today understand the value of nutrition since they are at the threshold of entering into a new phase of life, which poses a great demand for the sound nutritional status and their future productivity.

The basic objective of the programme is to acquaint the learner with the importance of food for healthy living for self, family and community, hence making them healthy, promising and responsible citizens of tomorrow.

CFN - A Non-Formal approach towards Nutrition Education:

India is a democratic country. The effectiveness of the democratic process depends upon the education of its citizens. To impart basic education and to provide to them a certain degree of awareness is the responsibility of the Government, society and individuals. In a vast country like ours with varying cultural ethos, regional moulds, linguistic spectrum, ethnic milieu, social scenario and economic landscape IGNOU has been able to host courses such as CFN and has been able to churn out concrete results to the large segment of women and young adolescents. CFN is a non formal, out-of-school education programme that focuses on improvement of social and personal living and self care capability. It is a type of course that would help to bring about awareness and specific learning experiences to the learners. In our attempt to impart nutritional awareness at various levels, the programme is mainly focused on women and their children so that the foundations of healthy living are laid at an early stage.

This programme has considerable relevance and use to all those who need to have the knowledge, understanding and skills with regard to food and nutrition. It is open to anyone who has basic reading and writing skills. Those having a concern for health of family and community can enroll for this course since there is no prerequisite for any conventional Degree or Diploma. This programme is unique and flexible. No equivalent programme is available in this form in any school, college or university. However the applicant must be in the age group of 15-18 years and above.

The material is simple, richly illustrated and has been brought out in a number of booklets covering the subject supported with pictorial presentations which makes learning simple. In order to provide effective link between the learners and institution, adequate provisions have been made through tutorial and counselling facilities at the study centres with the specific purpose of answering questions and clarifying doubts. These sessions unlike usual classroom lectures emphasize on individualized counselling and problem solving.

The profile of student enrollment over the past years reflects the wide scope and sustainability of this programme. Right from those who can read or write to qualified medical professionals enroll for this versatile course. On one hand those who have no formal education can be enlightened while on the other qualified professionals can further enhance their competence by strengthening their basics.

The course has been offered in English and Hindi all over the country. Besides it is also being offered in Gujarati, Assamese, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Bengali, Urdu, Telugu and now Kashmiri language (under preparation). The University thus endeavors to reach out to masses in different regions of the country. In the year 1989-90 the programme was sent to the ministry of Mauritius for the benefit of its multilingual population.

Duration and outcomes:

The sustainability can be further complimented by the short duration and minimal investment required by the programme. The programme can be completed in 6 months to 2 years based on the capacity, pace, time and convenience of the learner.

This programme provides additional competence for enrollment in the Diploma Programme in Nutrition and Health Education offered by the university widening the scope of employment.

In brief, this programme helps the learners become well informed about nutrition, acquire skills for the maintenance of family and community health, manage food safety and economics of food, be aware of income generation programmes, become well informed consumers and learn to live healthy.

Creative treatment of subject matter:

The course structure has been designed in such a manner that it caters to the health and nutrition needs of all age groups and all levels of people. The focus of the programme is to enable the learners to make the optimal choice for meeting the nutritional needs of their family.

While preparing the course material adequate emphasis has been laid on explaining the developmental changes taking place in adolescence and the importance of adequate nutrition through all stages of life. Old age nutrition also has been adequately emphasized.

Course Structure:

The certificate programme in Foods and Nutrition offers three courses with related practical interwoven in them. These courses are:

1. You and your food
2. Your food and its utilization
3. Economics of food

The first course entitled You And Your Food talks about the concept of food, health and nutrition, the three basic food groups, the nutrients within their functions, assimilation its effect on growth and activity. The course provides an insight into the choice of right kind of foods, its safety and preservation. The units further discuss the criteria for the selection and preparation of the numerous varieties of foods offered. This would help to make a sound choice from their versatile uses in different food preparations so as to derive maximum nutritional benefits.

The second course discusses what happens to food in our body, the process of digestion, absorption, utilization and its effect on growth and development right from infancy to old age. The concept of growth and development are described in detail to enable the learner to relate to the physiology of growth to the nutrient requirement . The concept of normal nutrition and malnutrition are explained highlighting the effect of poor nutrition on health of individuals of all age groups and physiological conditions including pregnancy and lactation. The role of food in supporting our activities are discussed in context of energy requirements of body.

Food is a requirement throughout life from the time of conception till death. The importance of food and nutrition are discussed in detail, through life cycle. The nutritional needs of the aged are explained keeping in mind their lowered capacity to utilise nutrients and their psychological state related to retirement and lowered income, their physical problems like loss of teeth, decreased activity levels and other needs. With this awareness, the learners can pay extra attention to the nutrition of the elderly and bring happiness to them in the evening of their life. Finally food habits and its misconceptions are discussed so as to inculcate good food habits and reach the goal of health at all stages of life. Citing an example - the units talk about the misconceptions during pregnancy regarding certain foods to be avoided. these fads have been discussed in the text and attempt has been made to solve the misconceptions. With these real life examples cited in the text the learners can relate to their own lives and thus grasp the subject better.

The third course talks about the economics of food, its budgeting that will help to make the right kind choice of food to derive optimum nutrition. The government policies and programmes with regard to production of food from land resources to the agricultural inputs and programmes for training farmers for better food production are explained in detail. This will help to educate us to select the quality foods and participate in the prevention of adulteration.

The programme offers a unique format. The written material has been designed in a creative manner citing examples from real life situations, which makes the textual understanding easier. Citing an example of promotion of kitchen gardens and usage of Janata Refrigerator for preservation of foods from the text can substantiate this. This would not only equip people to acquire sound nutritional status using local resources but also contribute towards environmental safety. For example, the deficiency symptoms are illustrated in the study material in a manner that is easy to understand. Also how to prevent and correct these symptoms are explained. Further suggestions are given in the text to prepare the foods recommended and also cultivate fruits and vegetables in the kitchen

gardens using local resources that can help to improve the nutritional status on the community. The course covers a wide range of relevant topics. Right from traditional recipes to modern junk and convenience foods are discussed. The poor nutritive value of junk foods and their harmful effects on health is very well explained and appropriate alternatives are also mentioned.

The study material has been brought out in such a manner that at the end of each unit some questions "Check your progress" are framed, which enable the student to assess their learning and can be used as a study tool to keep the learner on the right track as they go through the units. Apart from a simple, well designed written material supported with examples and illustrations, the learning is further complimented by videos related to the text. These videos further show the importance of adequate nutrition for all age groups keeping in mind their needs e.g. Nutrition during pregnancy, lactation, old age etc have been explained in the videos. The learning package thus provides utilitarian and pragmatic education which is scientific and authentic and not merely an adhoc knowledge.

Sensitivity to the needs of learners:

The uniqueness of the programme is reflected by the varied counselling methods adopted. A mix of counsellors were appointed to talk to the learners which included Gynecologists, Pediatricians, Social workers, Child psychologists etc. This exposure helped the otherwise shy women folk to voice their problems and get adequate advice from the competent persons. This strategy helped disseminate knowledge to the underprivileged, disadvantaged and the deprived groups.

CFN was the only programme to be put on cable network that reflects the innovative use of latest means of communication. For this purpose keeping the convenience of the women folk in mind the afternoon slot was allotted. Care was also taken to telecast the programme on weekdays so that the women could utilize their exclusive time and derive maximum benefits.

CFN programme is in line with the objectives of the University. Those areas where there were no study centres women learners were asked to assemble in an informal setting at the Panchayat house. This provided a comfortable and congenial environment to interact with each other in presence of the counsellor. Home based practicals are arranged to help the learners to relate the theoretical knowledge to real life situations.

The University through this programme endeavored to reach the geographically remote areas by mobile counselling but this could not be achieved due to certain financial and other constraints.

Another unique attempt which further strengthened the programme was the pretesting which was undertaken before the launch. Subsequent feedback reports were also obtained after the initiation of the programme. This helped the course designers to modify the content to suit the needs of the target group.

The written material has been designed in a very creative manner making use of innovative methods of teaching. The learning package consists of self-instructional material which builds the teacher in the text and simulates a class room situation along with a sound audio and video backup.

Our learning strategy involves a multimedia approach, which in addition to teaching through printed material incorporates the use of audio and videocassettes and radio and T.V. programmes in the learning package. The audio and video programmes facilitate extra student support for correct contextual understanding. The video programmes have been produced using varied approaches like drama, the art of animation, demonstrations etc. which makes learning more interesting. Also plays have been incorporated in the programmes which depict real life situations and ways of tackling them. This helps the learners to relate to their own lives. To further support the learner the innovative and latest technology of teleconferencing has also been adopted. Use of telephones to solve student queries from time to time further supports the learning.

CFN is a step towards empowering the learners (especially women) and providing them the strength. In other words it is a post literacy awareness raising programme, which tries to reach out to women (even in remote areas and poverty groups) aimed at enhancing their self confidence, self image, initiate health seeking behavior and most importantly feel entitled to good nutrition and health care. Summing up, this Certificate Programme in Food and Nutrition is a programme with a difference with

primary emphasis on relevance of the course to our present day society, innovative methods of teaching, cost effectiveness, removal of rigidity and involvement of all sections of society in the education system.