

## **SURVEY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

- COUNTRY PROFILE** *Iran is an islamic republic located in the southwestern Asia. It has an area of 636,300 square miles (1,648,000 square kilometres) and is bounded on the north by the Soviet Union and the Caspian Sea, on the east by Pakistan and Afghanistan, on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and on the east by Turkey and Irag. Iran also controls about a dozen islands in the Persian Gulf. More than 30% of its 4,865 miles boundary is seacoast. The capital is Tehran.*
- Economy, Population and Demography:* A growing market economy. The population is 58 million in 1991 with the growth rate of 3.2%.
- Language of Instruction:* Persian
- Educational System:* The educational system comprises of conventional educational system and distance educational system. The conventional educational system consists of general education from pre-school to higher education while the distance education system is presently available in higher education. There are more than 60 national and private universities with 73 new institutions which are being established. All universities are under the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education while medical universities, since 1986, have been under the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education.
- Communication Infra-structure:* Iran has efficient communication media and postal service, but telephone is not yet generalized in the rural areas.
- OVERVIEW OF DISTANCE EDUCATION:** Distance education in Islamic Republic of Iran started in 1971 with the establishment of a correspondence school at Abooreihane Birooni University and then expanded into two schools. In 1977, the Azad University of Iran was founded as a distance education institution of higher learning. However, in 1980, all scientific activities of the distance education system were terminated. All distance education students were transferred among existing conventional universities and higher educational institutions. In 1987, a distance education university, Payame Noor University (PNU), was established providing programmes leading to Bachelor's degrees.

<i>Factors Leading to Establishment of Distance Education Programmes:</i>	Limited capacities in conventional higher learning institutions to absorb the number of secondary school graduates. In 1990, the national rate of admission to all state and private universities was 25% of the total applicants who sat for the National Entrance Examination. Of the 6.95 million of population aged 18-24, only 452,000 students are currently enrolled in existing colleges and universities.
<i>Year of Establishment:</i>	1987 by the establishment of Payame Noor University after the Islamic Revolution.
<i>Media for Distance Education:</i>	Printed self-instructional course materials and books supplemented by videocassette.
<i>Sources of Financial Supports:</i>	Mostly from the national budget (50%), students' tuition fees, donations from private firms and individuals, and profits from the sales of teaching materials. In 1991, approximately the annual budget for distance education was US \$19.87 million (using the competitive rate of \$1 = 600 Rials).
<i>Trends of Development in Distance Education:</i>	Increasing
<i>Legal Status:</i>	The legal status of distance education in the Islamic Republic of Iran was approved in the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, the 94th Session (November 18, 1986) and the 97th Session (December 16, 1986). For the Payame Noor university, the Fundamental Law of Payame Noor University was enacted by the 99th and 100th joint sessions of the Commissions of the Revolutionary Council of Cultural Revolution on November 22, 1988 and November 29, 1988 respectively.
<i>Aims:</i>	The aims and objectives of the distance education university, are generally: (1) To provide cultural and scientific qualification of the society. (2) To offer a chance to people who live in remote areas and have no way of improving and continuing education. (3) To create opportunity for the people with family and work commitments who are unable to further their studies at conventional universities. (4) To accelerate the economic and social development by means of cultural revolution.
<i>Control and Management:</i>	As a national establishment under the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, the PNU is controlled by three main bodies: the Board of Trustees presided over by the Minister, the Council of the University, and Chancellor of the University. The Chancellor is nominated by the Minister and approved by the Supreme Council of

Cultural Revolution. The Chancellor is assisted by four Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs, Administration and Financial Affairs, Research, and Students' Affairs.

<i>Instructional System:</i>	The PNU employs (1) self-instructional course materials, printed correspondence texts and/or books as references, (2) face-to-face tutoring at study centres, (3) face-to-face counselling at study centres, (4) television programmes and videocassette for basic courses, (5) practical work at study centres or cooperating conventional universities. Students have to sit in mid-term examinations, submit projects and/or take-home assignments, and take the final written examinations.
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Nation-wide coverage through currently 62 active study centres and 25 study centers to be completed as of 1992.
<i>Research Activities:</i>	Still limited as the PNU is new. However, a Vice-Chancellor in Research was appointed to conduct both academic and institutional research for the University development.
<i>Enrollment and Graduates in Distance Education Programmes:</i>	Since 1988, approximately 51,958 students have been enrolled at the PNU. The enrollment increased from the initial intake of 8,118 in 1988/89 to 24,616 in 1991/92. There have not yet been any graduates from the PNU.
<i>International Affiliation and Cooperation:</i>	The PNU is a member of Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU). The PNU also has a close cooperation with UNESCO for assistance and facilitation of educational and professional resources.
<i>Problems and Constraints:</i>	The need to maintain quality of the delivery system and to overcome the deficiency of the budget and the shortage of faculty staff.

**LIST OF  
DISTANCE  
EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS:**

\*1. Abooreihane Birooni University's Correspondence School (Established in 1971 with 1,779 Certificate level graduates and 1,305 Bachelor of Science graduates. The school was closed in 1980)

\*2. Azad University of Iran (Established in 1977, also terminated in 1980 without any graduates)

3. Payame Noor University

*\*Survey data not included*

**PAYAME NOOR UNIVERSITY (PNU)**  
**MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**INSTITUTIONAL  
DATA**

*Year of  
Establishment:* 1987

*Name of Head:* **Dr. Hassan Zohoor**  
*Position:* *Chancellor*  
*Address:* Lashkarak Road, P.O. Box 19395-4697  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

*Telephone:* (9821) 280925  
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*Fax:* (9821) 288511

**Nature of institution:** Distance teaching institution only

**Educational levels  
provided for  
DE programmes:** First Degree: Bachelor's Degree

<b>Titles and levels of DE programmes:</b>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Level</i>
	1. Bachelor of Art	First degree
	2. Bachelor of Science	First degree.

**Governance:** A national establishment under the Fundamental Law of the Payame Noor University of 1987.

**Objectives:**

1. National development: For achieving an integrated and coherent nation, enhancing the level of education, and helping to build society.
2. Life-long recurrent education: For providing self-education and a continuous learning opportunity in cultural or technological development for adults after basic education.
3. Expansion of educational opportunity: For expanding educational opportunities for secondary school graduates.
4. Equality of educational opportunity: For ensuring the right to education in all forms for all citizens.

5. Teacher Education and Training: For upgrading school teachers' knowledge and skills in new curricula and teaching methods.
6. Personal development: For developing individual capacities in order to assist the individual reach his/her personal goals.
7. Economic development: For collective economic and technical development.
8. Cost-effectiveness: For providing education at a lower cost than full-time formal education.
9. Compensatory nature: For providing compensatory education and literacy programmes for those who have not received formal basic education.
10. Vocational development: For developing individual career and vocational capacities in order to assist the individual find a place in the economy that he/she desires.

**Sources of financial support of DE programmes:**

*Tuition and Fees:*

1. Students are required to pay US\$33.0 in tuition charges per semester and US\$3.30 per credit.
2. Sales profits from teaching materials and income from providing professional services to other institutions support students' fees.
3. Subsidies/donations from private persons, bodies, or foundations.
4. National budget.

*Budget:*

Approximate annual national budget for distance education of this institution for 1991 was US\$ 19,868,417.

(There are three rates for currency exchange: Official rate: US\$1=65 Rials, Competitive rate: US\$1=600 Rials, and Floating rate: US\$1=1,350 Rials approximately.)

**Trends of development of DE resources and activities:**

*Expanded:*

Financial provision  
 Distance education programmes  
 Local study centres  
 Telecommunication equipment  
 Study materials and textbooks  
 Teaching force  
 Variety of courses offered  
 Broadcasting programmes

Audio-visual media  
Face-to-face sessions  
Library resources

*Decreased:* None

**Trends of enrollment  
in DE Programmes:** Increasing

**Number of current  
DE students:** Approximately 51,958

**Number of annual  
intake of DE  
students:** Approximately 24,616 in 1991

	<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Enrollment Figure</u>
<b>Number of students currently enrolled in each DE level:</b>	First degree	51,958

**Number of annual  
DE graduates:** None, since it is a newly established university.

**Accumulative  
number of DE  
graduates:** None, since it is a newly established university.

**Components of  
personnel in DE:** All faculty members are full-time employees.  
A mix of full-time and part-time faculty staff. Faculty members share their work duties between a conventional university and the distance education institution.

**Number of full-time  
staff:** Academic: 228  
Supporting: 1,044  
Total: 1,272

**Number of part-time  
staff:** Academic: 1,412  
Non-academic: 3  
Total: 1,415

**Number of courses  
and programmes:** Number of courses offered: 276  
Number of programmes offered: 14 (ten of which also lead to teacher training programmes)

**Production of  
teaching  
materials/media:** Teaching materials and media are produced by the Bureau of Course Production (Academic staffs, illustrators, editors, and educational technologists). Teaching materials are produced by a team of experts. The stages are (1) Develop course syllabus for approval by the High

Council of Planning affiliated with the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution; (2) Design of formats and course component by the Bureau of Course Production; and (3) Produce self-instructional materials by academic staff, educational technologists, illustrators, editors, and designers.

**Regional/Study Centers:** Available

*Number of regional and local study centers:* 62

*Operators of these centers:* Run by Deans appointed by the Chancellor of the PNU

*Sources of financial support:* The sources of financial supports are from the National Budget and students' tuition fees.

*Major functions of these centers:* Major functions of these centers are: Registration, distribution of course materials, running tutorial sessions, examinations, counselling, face-to-face teaching, and administrative affairs.

<b>Overall Student Profile:</b>	<i>Years:</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
<i>Age distribution:</i>	Under 21	8.61
	Between 21-30	64.38
	Between 31-40	25.16
	Between 41-50	1.62
	Between 51-60	0.03
	Over 61	-
	Not indicated	0.20
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

<i>Gender distribution:</i>	<i>Sex:</i>	<i>(%)</i>
	Male	67.00
	Female	33.00
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

*Income Level:* Data not available

*Geographical distribution:* Data not available

**Occupational and Ethnic Composition of DE Students:** *Ethnic Composition:* Out of 62 study centres, 2 are in Balooch area, 4 are in Kordish area, 3 are in Lor area, 1 is in Torkish area and 7 are in Turkish area.

*Occupational distribution:* 60.75% of the students are government employees.

**Future development:** Possible distance education development in the next 5-10 years are:  
(1) To establish 6 new study centres and three new programmes in 1992; (2) To increase the number of degree programmes and study centres during 1993-96.

**Major obstacles for implementing distance education:** The shortage of self-study materials.

**Affiliation with regional and international DE organizations:** AAOU (Asian Association of Open Universities)  
UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)

**PROGRAMMES OF INSTRUCTION, MEDIA, METHODS, & EVALUATION:** List of Programmes:  
First degree programme



**PROGRAMME : FIRST DEGREE PROGRAMME**

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**Level:** First Degree.

**Titles of programmes offered in this level:**

1. Bachelor of Arts.
2. Bachelor of Science.

**Courses or programmes of instruction:**

*Commercial and Management Studies:*  
Accounting  
Public administration

*Languages and Literature:*  
\*English language  
\*Literature: Persian literature

*Educational Studies:*  
Education

*Humanities:*  
\*Islamic theology  
Psychology

*Physical Science:*  
\*Chemistry  
\*Geological sciences  
\*Applies physics

*Biological Science and Technology:*  
\*General biology

*Mathematics:*  
\*Mathematical sciences

*Social Sciences:*  
\*Geography  
\*Social sciences

\* *These programmes also lead to First Degree in teacher training.*

**Length of course:** *Minimum number of study hours per week per course:* 1-4 hours.

*Total number of weeks per course:* 17 weeks.

*Total number of courses making up programmes:*  
Approximately 50 courses (142-146 credits).

**Media and methods:** *Most dominant:*  
Printed texts  
Face-to-face tutoring  
Face-to-face counselling  
Regional services  
Study centers  
Weekend schools.

*Dominant:*  
Practical work  
Television programmes.

*Least dominant:*  
Audio-cassettes  
Kits .

**Language of instruction:** Persian.

**Admission requirements:** Before entering the distance education program, the student must meet the following admission requirements: (1) Holding a high school diploma, and (2) passing a competitive entrance examination and gain a minimum required grade, and (2) Completed high school diploma.

**Number of students:** 51,458.

**Annual intake of DE students:** 24,616.

**Evaluation system:**

*Continuous assessment:* Written assignments for submission (25%)  
Written intermediary examinations  
Attendance of regular lab sessions at the other institution  
Attendance at the local study centre.

*Final course assessment:* Written final examinations (75%).

**Educational and employment arrangements for graduates:** No educational and employment arrangement but upon completion of their degree programmes, employed students will be promoted by their employers, and those seeking jobs will be employed at a higher position.

<b>Profile of students in this level:</b>	<i>By Educational Background:</i>		<u>Proportion</u>
			(%)
	Secondary/High school leavers :		100.0
	<u>Total:</u>		<u>100.00</u>
	<i>By Employment:</i>		(%)
	Full-time public employees:		61.0
	Private employees or non-employees:		39.0
	<u>Total:</u>		<u>100.00</u>
	<i>By types of career:</i> Data not available		
	<i>By gender:</i>		(%)
Male:		67.0	
Female:		33.0	
<u>Total:</u>		<u>100.00</u>	

**Acceptance of final award, certificate, and degree:** The final Bachelor's degree awarded by this institution is accepted as equal to a comparable award given by a non-distance education institution.