

Unraveling High Dropout Rates in an Online Upskilling Platform

A root cause analysis identifying why mid-course dropout rates spiked 45% on an Indian ed-tech platform and proposing data-driven retention strategies.



Clarifying Questions



Understanding Learner Disengagement

Why are a significant number of learners losing motivation and dropping out mid-course, despite initial enrollment?



Evaluating Technical and Support Barriers

Are technical issues, platform usability, or the availability and effectiveness of academic support hindering completion rates?



Dropout Rates Across Courses

Are dropout rates uniform across all courses or higher in specific modules or subjects? Are there differences in completion rates between free and paid courses?



Learner Demographic Mix

What is the learner demographic mix (students, working professionals, geographies)?



Assessing Course Content and Structure

Is the curriculum's difficulty, relevance, or presentation contributing to learners feeling overwhelmed or unprepared?



Aligning Expectations with Outcomes

Do learners perceive a clear value proposition and tangible career benefits from completing the upskilling courses?



Dropout Trend Over Time

Is the dropout spike recent or consistent over time?



Point of Disengagement

At which point in the course do most learners disengage?

Identify Possible Causes

Internal Factors

1

Content Quality

Advanced modules lack interactive elements or examples.

2

Mentorship Gaps

Limited availability of doubt-clearing sessions or feedback.

3

Platform UX

Cluttered interface, confusing navigation, or buggy progress tracking.

4

Scheduling

Live sessions at inconvenient times for working professionals.

5

Onboarding & Motivation

Weak early engagement—no gamification or community.

6

Communication

Insufficient reminders or nudges when learners go inactive.

External Factors

1

Learners' Time Constraints

Balancing full-time jobs or academic commitments.

2

Competing Priorities

Exams, family events, or new opportunities.

3

Market Alternatives

Cluttered interface, confusing navigation, or buggy progress tracking.

4

Connectivity Issues

Live sessions at inconvenient times for working professionals.

5

Economic Factors

Learners drop out when budgets tighten.

Analyze the Causes

Pareto Insight

- 70% of dropouts occur in weeks 3–5 → points to engagement decay after onboarding.

Survey Results (Mock)

- 55% cite “lack of mentor support,” 30% cite “content feels too advanced.”

Support Tickets

- Spike in “cannot attend live sessions” complaints from working professionals.

Competitor Benchmarks

- Rival platforms offer flexible recorded Q&A sessions and peer discussion groups, achieving 20% higher completion.

Plan and Implement Solutions

Mentorship & Support Improvements

- Introduce asynchronous Q&A boards with guaranteed mentor responses in <24 hrs.
- Schedule live Q&A at multiple times or provide recorded replays.

Content & Engagement Enhancement

- Add interactive quizzes and micro-projects to advanced modules.
- Implement gamification early (badges, streak counters in week 1).

Proactive Communication

- Send personalized reminders when activity drops.
- Celebrate milestones (“You’re in the top 20% of learners!”).

Pilot Programs

- Test with one course to validate reduced dropout before scaling.

Monitor & Analyze

KPIs

- Increase course completion rates by 20% in 3 months.
- Reduce mid-course dropout from 45% to <30%.
- Improve learner satisfaction (CSAT) scores by 15%.
- Decrease support tickets on scheduling issues by 25%.

Methods

- Weekly dashboards tracking engagement.
- Post-course surveys and mentor feedback.
- A/B testing different reminder messages and gamification triggers.