

UGC AND AICTE HAVE TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS TO CURB CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS-HRD MINISTER

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Ministry of Human Resource Development

UGC and AICTE have taken several steps to curb Caste Based Discrimination in Higher Education Institutions-HRD Minister

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Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)/Universities are autonomous bodies which are governed by their own Acts and the Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations. The Acts of the respective Universities stipulate that the University shall not discriminate on grounds of caste, religion, etc. The Universities are competent to take all administrative decisions including to prevent all kinds of harassment and discrimination against any section of students. Total Number of cases reported by University Grants Commission (UGC) in various University/Colleges on Caste Based Discrimination during the year 2017-18 for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students are 66 and 6 respectively. Cases are handled and disposed off by the concerned Universities and Colleges, as empowered under their respective Acts. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) reported that no such complaints have been received by them from AICTE approved Institutions

The Central Government as well as UGC have issued several instructions from time to time to all State Governments and Centrally Funded Education Institutions to curb discrimination of any kind in HEIs. Recently, UGC on 26th June, 2019 has advised all the Vice-Chancellor of all Universities to constitute a committee to look into the discrimination complaints received from the SC/ST/OBC Students/Teachers and non-teaching staff.

Major initiatives undertaken in this regard are:-

(i) In order to check discrimination and harassment of any section of students and to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism, the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2012.

(ii) University Grants Commission (Grievance Redressal) Regulations, 2012 has been formulated. These Regulations intend to give effect in letter and spirit to the provisions of the Constitution and other statutory provisions and policies for prevention of discrimination on the grounds of caste and to safeguards the interests of the students belonging to the Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Regulations also seek to provide for advancement of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students through setting up of Equal Opportunity Cells in each Higher Educational Institution.

(iii) In order to make the universities/colleges more responsive to the needs and constraints of the disadvantaged social groups, the UGC is giving financial assistance to all eligible Colleges/Universities to establish Equal Opportunity Centres. The aim and objective of this Scheme is to oversee the effective implementation of policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups, to provide guidance and counselling with respect to academic, financial, social and other matters and to enhance the diversity within the campus.

(iv) UGC has also approved establishment of SC/ST Cells in various Universities with a view to safeguard the interests of SC/ST students.

(v) Other initiatives include provision of Anti Discriminatory faculty advisors for SC/ST students who look into their problems and advise accordingly, appointment of Student Counsellors to address personal, academic, psychological and family related problems, providing sports and extra curricular activities, setting up counselling centres, provision of anxiety helpline, and setting up disciplinary action committee to take urgent action in case of any complaints of reported ragging, discrimination based on caste, creed, religion and gender etc.

AICTE has also framed strict norms to prohibit such incidents in technical institutions, which are as under:-

(i) For protection against harassment and discrimination of Scheduled Castes in AICTE Approved Institutions, it is essential for all AICTE approved institutions to Establish Committee for SC/ ST (As per the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, No. 33 of 1989, dated 11.09.1989).

(ii) As per AICTE norms each (AICTE approved) Institution shall upload the number of complaints and grievances received and action taken on their Web site and update AICTB through the monthly online status report.

(iii) In case of receipt of any complaint(s) about an Institution, the same shall be processed by Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC) of AICTE established to dispose of the complaint cases.

(iv) AICTE takes action against such institutions (AICTE Approved) for violation of AICTE

norms as mentioned in Chapter VII of the Approval Process Handbook (APH) of year concerned and punishes them as appropriate.

The information was given by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

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