



## University Grants Commission

### **Guidelines for Promotion of Physical Fitness, Sports, Students' Health, Welfare, Psychological and Emotional Well Being at Higher Educational Institutions of India**

#### **Background**

Higher education is a key pathway for social transformation and social mobility along with the upliftment of individuals, households, and in turn communities. Considering its importance, NEP-2020 addresses this issue and provides that to ensure the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of the students, support centres and career counsellors are to be made available for all students in the higher education institutions (HEIs).

The key challenge lies in creating institutionalized provisions and practices and standard operating procedures that can ensure comprehensive protection to students from any threat and assault, physical, social, discriminatory, cultural, and linguistic causing psychological distress among students. The responsibility of HEIs is to provide complete protection to ensure the well-being of students to work and study in a congenial environment.

The UGC has already issued guidelines for physical safety like fortifying the campuses, hostels, playgrounds, cafeteria, library, and other student activity spaces. The entry points must be manned either by security personnel or technological devices in order to provide access to only authorized and bonafide students (details can be seen on [www.ugc.ac.in](http://www.ugc.ac.in)).

In order to comprehensively examine all issues relating to mental health of students and their physical, psychological, and emotional well-being in the campuses of higher education institutions and frame the appropriate guidelines, the Commission had constituted an Expert Committee. The Committee has suggested following Guidelines which are to be implemented by all the institutions of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) under the purview of UGC.

#### **Objectives**

To ensure equitable access to quality mental health services to all the students enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) with special emphasis on (1) promote physical fitness and sports activities for students (2) creating safeguards against academic pressure, peer-pressure, behavioral issues, stress, career

concerns, depression and other issues pertaining to mental health of students; (3) to inculcate positive thinking & emotions in student community and (4) to promote positive and supportive network for students.

All HEIs in India may make or amend their Ordinances, regulatory provisions, and other rules accordingly to ensure that the directions given in these guidelines are implemented in the best interest of students.

## **Guidelines**

1. **Vibrant campus life** – A lively campus life for students is also an essential component of good teaching-learning environment, judicious assessment systems, and fair and equitable treatment to all. In view of these goals, students will be given plenty of opportunities to understand their inner calling and realize their aspirations and dreams. It may come through opportunities related to academic as well as co-curricular activities besides having linkages with society and ecology through field training, job placement activities, educational tours, and summer internships. The various spaces for cultural activities should also be created for community services and building national spirit with a larger humanistic perspective.
2. **Students Services Centre (SSC)** –
  - (i) Every HEI shall have a Students Services Centre (SSC) responsible for dealing with and managing the problems related to stress and emotional adjustment. It shall have the standardized, systematic arrangements within the relevant provision of Ordinances to provide requisite support to students especially from rural backgrounds, female students, students from divergent cultural backgrounds, and students with special needs.
  - (ii) The SSC must have necessary resources like competent physical and mental health counsellors, physical and mental health experts, and physical / physio-psychological assessment tools to inform the students, assess them, guide them and provide necessary counselling interventions to make them feel enabled, energised and independent functionaries capable of pursuing their career goals.
  - (iii) The SSC will be managed by a Director/ Dean level position equivalent to Professor's rank from a discipline like Psychology, Physical Education and Sports, Psychiatry, Social Work, Sociology. The modality of such an assignment shall be decided by respective HEIs. In case college/institution does not have these disciplines, tie up and collaboration with other institutes/ universities departments may be explored.

- (iv) The SSC will carry out counselling, guidance, physical and mental health services in the online mode, in person, through a telephone helpline, or in group counselling sessions depending upon the circumstances. The SSC will have access to the database of the student's profile/ demographic details.
  - (v) The SSC will also maintain separate records of students appearing to be more vulnerable and stress-prone for further support and resilience-building exercises. This way the dropout rates can also be checked. Subsequent interventions can be designed accordingly.
  - (vi) The SSC will work as a single-window system to address relevant student issues.
  - (vii) The SSC will have at least some dedicated professional counsellors who will work under its Director or In-Charge. The counsellors can also be taken from the Psychology and Physical Education Departments of respective institutions in a project-driven mode. It is assumed that students' mental health and well-being-related issues will need greater attention during the transitional phases of students' life such as examinations and different stages of their careers. In order to make it a serious business, a reasonable ratio of counsellor and students can be worked out.
  - (viii) The SSC should have adequate number of male and female trainers/counsellors in the HEI.
  - (ix) The SSCs will ensure effective coordination with the health center of the HEI. It is generally observed that physical and psychological health issues are interrelated in intricate ways.
  - (x) The SSCs will work in close collaboration with psychiatrists and other mental health professionals of the medical institutions located in the vicinity. The HEIs are encouraged to have liaisons with such resources and the related information should be shared.
  - (xi) Details of student support system for physical and mental health of students must be properly highlighted on the website of respective HEIs and their admission brochures.
  - (xii) The coordination of SSC with various centres like EOC, SC/ST cell, Gender Equity Centers, Student Welfare Committees should be ensured by HEIs.
3. **Physical Fitness** - Besides educating students, HEIs must focus on physical activity for all students so as to help them stay physically fit and mentally healthy. Fundamentally brain is a huge problem-solving organ which is more active and precise when we physically mentally involve. It is

well known phenomenon that how the exercise, physical activities enhance the performance of human body as not only neuro-muscular level even psycho-physiological, socio-emotional aspects with wide range. It has been observed that the sedentary lifestyle is contributing to obesity and diseases like diabetes that put our bodies at risk. A key remedy is exercise and therefore physical activity is required. Since body and mind are deeply interconnected healthy bodies foster healthy minds. It has been demonstrated that physical activity of an hour a day reduces the risk of obesity and helps to be smart, happy, and less prone to depression and other mood disorders. Indeed, vigour comes from being fit and the challenge is to make exercise necessary and fun. Knowledge of any area implanted in an unfit student will not benefit the society. The physically fit learner will imbibe more knowledge in his cognitive domain and will also be able to effectively apply and implement that knowledge for the benefit of the society a lot more than an unfit student. The more emphasis on all time reading, writing, thinking for expanding the knowledge base of students in higher education students with no importance given to participation in physical activity is affecting very adversely the health status of the students. Foremost requirement of an individual is good health only than with the knowledge gained by him in higher education institutions, he is an asset for the society, otherwise with poor health resulting out of sedentary life style he becomes a liability for the society.

4. **Physical activity programs and provisions** – Currently, physical activity is not mandatory in spite of higher education institution having sufficient human resources and infrastructure for physical and sports activity. It is a great irony that sports fee is charged from each of the student admitted in the institution but participation in sports activity or utilisation of sports facility is done by only 1 or 2 % of the total strength of the students in a higher education institution. Physically inactive campus life for the students leads them towards various psycho-somatic disorders.
  - (i) The HEIs need to nurture an atmosphere in which students are asked to be physically active.
  - (ii) The NSS and NCC and other avenues to engage students meaningfully should be strengthened.
  - (iii) The HEIs need to create the necessary outdoor and indoor sports facilities and infrastructure on the campus.
  - (iv) The Sports Council, along with Physical Education and Yoga Departments needs to create programs and opportunities for physical fitness and ensure its monitoring on a regular basis.
  - (v) The student hostels too should be equipped with minimum facilities for the students.

- (vi) Keeping in view the fact that sufficient physical activity is indispensable for developing a healthy body, participation in physical or any sports activity needs to be ensured for each student of the institution.
- (vii) Having good quantum of knowledge is a great thing but application of that knowledge for the benefit of the society is only possible through good robust healthy body. Participation and scoring in physical activity should be made part of credit system for evaluation for promotion to next semester.
- (viii) For a healthy body optimal level of speed, strength, endurance and coordinative abilities are required. The level of these functional components in an individual determines his health status. The development of these functional components requires regular participation in physical and sports programs. Assessment of these functional components needs to be made part of evaluation process for promotion to next class so that each student of HEI would be bound to participate in physical activity programme, in turn will develop in himself an optimal level of health and fitness. The test batteries suggested for implementation can be 'American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation' (AAHPER) youth fitness test, Canadian physical fitness test, 12-minute cooper run or walk test or any other test suitable to local conditions.
- (ix) The institutions should made provisions for organisation of weekly intramural sports tournaments. Participation in these weekly tournaments should be encouraged and made lucrative with rewards and honours. The institutions should regularly organise training camps for students willing to participate in various levels of inter-university, state or national level tournament of sports activities in AIU list. The teams should be regularly sent for participation in these tournaments and winners of these tournaments should be felicitated with honours and scholarships.
- (x) We have a rich heritage of holistic physical activity in the form of yoga. Learning of a set of yogic asanas with forward bending, backward bending, sideward bending and twisting of spine should be promoted among all the students of HEIs. Likewise, pranayama with heart-based meditation should also be initiated among the students.
- (xi) Also, the HEIs should strive for
- Organising general to specific type of indigenous and recreative activities
  - Promote local/ nearby adventure and excursion activities
  - MOU with premier sports/ physical education/ yoga institutes
  - Increase the number of sports trainers/ physical education/ yoga professional

5. **Opportunity to Reform** - The students entering universities embark on a new phase in life. Many are often removed from their comfort zone and the secure environment of their homes to face the challenges of independent life. At times, these new challenges can be intimidating and create apprehension in the minds of the young adults which may lead to deviant behaviours. Generally, the HEIs, without objective analysis of such deviant behaviours, resort to punitive measures, including disciplinary action such as suspension of the student for a specific or indefinite period. Such punitive actions may create a sense of dejection and frustration in young minds. Deviant behaviours among students have several educational implications. The HEIs need to avoid such punitive measures to the extent possible and take affirmative action through programs including taking the services of professional psychological counsellors and promoting wellness through yoga and meditation.
6. **Structured reform/self-development programs** may be initiated by the universities which can serve as catalysts for inducing behavioural change, inculcating values, and nurturing human strengths. A successful reform through self-development and rehabilitation can transform a possible danger into an asset for society. It is, therefore, important for university administration to ensure proper and regular monitoring of students' behaviour and adopt necessary preventive and pre-emptive measures to control deviant tendencies among the students. To this end amendments in the university, statutes may be carried out if deemed necessary.
7. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with premier Institutions** -The HEIs should plan for MOUs with institutions like, NIMHANS, HBAS, RINPAS, AIIMS and other institutions where departments of psychiatry are fully functional in case special pharmacological intervention or other medical interventions are required.
8. **Mental health professionals**-There is an acute shortage of trained and competent mental health professionals in the country. There is greater demand than supply of mental health professionals recognized by RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India). In view of this, the HEIs should start special courses to prepare mental health professionals to take up the responsibility of educating and training professionals as per UGC/AICTE/MCI provisions and guidelines.

### **General Guidelines**

1. The students' welfare provisions, which already exist in the institutions of HEI in India, will have an added responsibility of collaborating with SSC, Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC) and Gender Equity Centre, SC/ST Cell of the University in order to offer holistic and comprehensive services to students, teaching community, and staff.

2. In view of the provisions enshrined in the NEP-2020 mental health services form an integral part of education in higher learning. The faculty members of HEIs are to be encouraged to attend refresher course(s) on Counselling, Mental Health, Well-being, and Mentoring Skills and Competencies. Human Resource Development Centres (HRDC), Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers (PMMMNTs), and Teaching Learning Centers of the country are to take up the responsibility of offering such courses.
3. The HEIs must respect linguistic, religious, cultural and social diversity and accordingly ensure having counsellors with efficient linguistic skills to impart services to students and teachers. Special care may be taken for LGBT students.
4. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) may consider to assign certain points/grades for provisions of SSCs in HEIs.
5. The records of various activities of SSC must be maintained properly and be made available to NAAC, NIRF etc. as and when asked for.
6. HEIs and SSCs must ensure confidentiality of each case of student-teacher counselling on mental health issues.
7. Motivational lectures and other activities promoting positive thinking among the students should be regularly organised by the HEIs.
8. The course(s) on mental health may be included in the curriculum with some credits to be assigned for successful completion of the course.
9. Manodarpan initiative should be used as psychosocial support to students, teachers and families for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing. Under the initiative, Web-page named 'Manodarpan-Psychosocial Support for Mental Health & Well-being has been created on the website of Ministry of Education (MoE). The Web-page contains advisory, practical tips, posters, videos, do's and don'ts for Psychosocial support, FAQs and online query system. Also, a National Toll-free Helpline (8445440632) for a country-wide outreach to students from schools, colleges and universities has been set up which provides tele-counselling to address their mental health and psychosocial issues.
10. The HEIs should take appropriate steps to implement the guidelines considering the specific local, cultural, and educational requirements to ensure effective institutionalization of such mental health services.