

UGC Guidelines on Safety of Students on and off Campuses of Higher Educational Institutions

1. Preamble

University Grants Commission believes that a safe, secure and cohesive learning climate is an ineluctable precondition to quality education and research in HEIs. It should be the prime concern of educational administrators across the country to ensure that students are safeguarded against attacks, threats and accidents, both man-made and natural. With this in mind, the Commission has formulated guidelines on the ways in which the campuses of HEIs can be transformed into oasis of safety, security and study. All universities may make or amend their ordinances and other relevant statutory provisions accordingly to ensure that the directions contained in the guidelines are implemented in the best interests of students.

2. Safety of Students on Campus:

HEIs can play a significant role in ensuring the safety of the students by putting in place foolproof mechanisms and impregnable standards of safety. The key lies in institutionalizing the best practices and standard operating procedures that can substantively protect students from any threats and assaults, physical, social or psychological. Given below are some of the concerns that should be materialized by HEIs in the interest of students and institution.

- Any physical infrastructure housing students, whether HEI or hostels, should be secured by a boundary wall of such height that it cannot be scaled over easily. In order to further fortify it, a fence of spiraling barbed wires can be surmounted on the wall so that unauthorized access to the infrastructure is prevented effectively. The entry points to such housing units should be restricted to three or less and they should be manned by at least three security guards, sufficiently armed, CC TV cameras, identity verification mechanism and register of unknown entrants/visitors with their identity proofs and contact details. At least one woman security personnel should be deployed at such entry points so that physical security check of girl students or visitor can be undertaken. The bags and other belongings of students/visitors can also be examined, manually and/or by metal detectors, in order to secure a weapon-free and violence-free campus.
- Biometric way of marking student attendance, both in HEI as well as hostels, can be an effective way to overcome proxy. Such digital mechanism can enable HEIs to keep an eye on a student's movement and whereabouts in failsafe manner.
- Students and staff should be provided easily identifiable and authentic ID cards and wearing of such cards in the institutional premises must be made compulsory by administration.
- HEIs should flash at frequently visited junctions like canteen and notice boards, helpline numbers against ragging, sexual harassment, accidents, calamities and so on developed by UGC, State Govts. or HEIs so that students can record and use them as and when required. It is mandatory for all HEIs to abide by and implement all the provisions contained in UGC (Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher educational Institutions) Regulations, 2009.
- In order to ensure that campus community receives timely, accurate, and useful information in the event of a significant emergency or dangerous situation on campus or in the local area that

poses an immediate threat to the health and safety of campus community members, HEIs can install the emergency notification system through which emergency message can be sent via e-mail, telephone, cell phone and text messaging within minutes of the occurrence of an incident. The system developed by University of California, Berkley called WarnMe is a very good model to follow. The emergency information system can be supplemented by evacuation procedure to be followed in crisis condition so that stampede-like situations can be avoided. HEIs should take all necessary steps to ensure that these systems are adequately tested and publicized for efficacious execution.

- Setting up a university police station within the premises of the HEIs, wherever feasible, can go a long way in instilling a sense of security amongst students and scare amongst nuisance makers and petty criminals. Officials of such a station can not only handle any crisis situation in an instant but also prevent untoward happenings by security measures like night patrols and so on. Further, it is understandable that classes, study, research, meetings, films or concerts can keep students on campus late at night. To handle these situations, police officials can provide on-demand short-distance escort services to students as they walk down to hostel or nearest taxi or bus-stand etc. Student community of the HEIs can be encouraged to form a group of Community Service Officers (CSOs) to provide such service on rotation basis. HEIs can also provide Night Safety Shuttle facility to such students which offer door-to-door pick and drop service.
- All HEIs should ensure that provisions contained in UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2012 are observed by teaching & non-teaching staff, students and other stakeholders in letter and spirit. Discrimination, verbal or behavioral, based on the caste, religion, colour, nationality sex, gender, sexual orientation and social status is strictly prohibited and HEIs must do all it takes to ensure that such practices are nipped in the bud.
- HEIs should mandatorily put in place a broad-based “Students Counseling System” for the effective management of problems and challenges faced by students. It should be a unique, interactive and target-oriented system, involving students, teachers and parents, resolved to address common student concerns ranging from anxiety, stress, fear of change and failure to homesickness and a slew of academic worries. It should bridge the formal as well as communicative gaps between the students and the institution at large. Teacher counselors, trained to act as the guardians of students at the college level, should remain in close touch with the students allotted to them (batch of 25 students) though out the year, cater to their emotional and intellectual needs and convey their growth report and feedback on attendance, examination results etc to their parents at regular interval of time. Teacher counselors can coordinate with wardens of hostels and exchange personal details of students, academic record and behavior patterns for prompt pre-emptive or corrective action.
- HEIs should organize quarterly parents-teachers meet (PTM) so that grievances and gaps in system can be addressed and resolved. Online complaint registration system can also be launched so that issues can be addressed before they slip out of hands of authorities.
- On-campus medical facilities should be made available to student and at least one ambulance can be kept in ready mode for attending emergency and crisis situations.
- HEIs should install a fire safety system under which mechanisms for the detection of a fire, the warning resulting from a fire and standard operating procedures for the control of fire are evolved. This may include sprinkler systems or other fire extinguishing systems, fire detection devices, stand-alone smoke alarms, devices that alert one to the presence of a fire, smoke-control and reduction mechanisms and fire doors & walls that reduce the spread of a fire. Students and staff should be trained in the effective operation of firefighting devices. Mock drills for fire situation should be undertaken at least once in a semester.

- UGC has written to HEIs time and again about the introduction of a compulsory course on Disaster Management for all students. HEIs should see to it that this initiative doesn't end up in an academic ritual. In order to give students firsthand experience of tackling situations of disaster, HEIs should organize mock drills, workshops and awareness programmes frequently.
- Talks by officials of police and public administration departments and informative audio-video lectures should be arranged at least once in a semester covering issues related to the safety of personal belongings, vehicles, personal information, ATM, special event safety, defensive sprays and so on.
- Self-defense training for women studying and working on campus through tie-ups with training institutions / NGOs should be made a mandatory component of extra-curricular activities undertaken in HEIs. Physical defense training can follow instructions on rape aggression defense model that focuses on strategies like awareness, risk reduction and risk avoidance and hands-on self-defense techniques.
- In the face of the increasing cases of sexual harassment and violence against women, it is incumbent upon HEIs to institute a thoroughgoing support and education mechanism. HEIs can organize prevention programs in collaboration with student groups to:
 - Educate the campus community about sexual violence in the context of a university setting and engage people in a commitment to get involved when they observe risky situations.
 - Confront the oppressive stereotypes that are the basis for the disrespect that leads to interpersonal violence.
 - Talk about healthy relationships and healthy sexuality, emphasizing the importance of communication and respecting personal boundaries
 - Coordinate campus-wide awareness efforts, such as town hall meetings, lectures, and other open spaces for dialogue on sexual violence
- In case of food outlets, canteens and messes, HEIs should ensure that standards of quality and hygiene are strictly observed and the food on offer is certified through hygiene test report by expert doctor for foods, water and cleanings. This would be a strong and effective bulwark against food poisoning and spread of food and water born diseases.
- All universities shall prepare an exhaustive Code of Conduct for students enrolled in departments or affiliated colleges and display it on institutional websites for compliance. A reference to such document must invariably be made in prospectus of HEIs where the student is enrolled.

3. Safety of Students while they are on Excursion/ Tours/ Academic trips etc.

- HEI should make sure that expedition activities are undertaken under the guidance and supervision of at least two trained teachers, of whom one is a lady teacher. The number of students who can collectively embark on such expedition can be adjusted in accordance with the multiple factors like duration of the journey, the weather conditions, type of the route and manageability. In case number of students exceeds fifty, a qualified doctor with adequate supplies of medicines should be included in the entourage.
- Institutions should work out the itinerary and travel plan well in advance and circulate them amongst the parents/guardians of the students who are setting out on journey. Any representation or suggestions made by parents in these regards can be taken into consideration in the interest of the successful and safe organization of expedition.

- It is mandatory for institutions to elicit consent letters from the parents/guardians of the students who are embarking on tour. Further, no excursion/ tours shall be undertaken without such insurance as would indemnify students against the various emergencies and risks.
- Before proceeding on tour all the students should be properly briefed by the way of "training session" about the geography, climate, hazardous locations and risk zones existing in the proposed destination, codes on environmental protection, emergency procedures and basic first aid. Teachers should further remind the participants of the importance of safety precautions, team spirit and discipline.
- The institutions should ensure that each student is medically fit to be a part of the excursion tour.
- If the expedition involves camping, only such sites should be selected as are designated for the purpose by various government agencies concerned. Further, the site should be free from hazards such as flooding, dangerous slopes, falling rocks and dead trees etc.
- Prior permission should be obtained if tents etc are to be put up on private land. Tents should be erected sufficiently apart to prevent rapid spread of fire in the campsite.
- Students should be allowed to carry personal communication devices such as mobile phones and should be instructed to remain in constant touch with their parents / guardians. This would also facilitate casualty handling and communication in the event of an emergency.