



SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKIRT, KALADY

POLICY ON EQUITY, INCLUSION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY



SSUS Policy on Equity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity

Educate, agitate, organize...

Ambedkar

The UGC Regulations 2012 published in January 2013 on Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions defines equity as “a level playing field for all students in respect of the entitlement and opportunity for enjoyment of all legitimate rights”. In accordance with the ethical spirit of the UGC guidelines for the creation of equal opportunities; and the constitutional policies on social justice, equity and inclusion, SSUS has framed its policies of equity to promote values of democratic inclusion, social diversity and accessibility to higher education for various challenged sections of the society. This social thrust of equal opportunity and inclusion in higher education has become crucial in the context of new educational and economic policies gaining currency through privatization, sabotaging the social justice paradigm in an unprecedented way.

Policy Frameworks and Schemes for Equity and Equal Opportunity

Following the UGC Regulations SSUS has given emphasis in enhancing participation of socially challenged, culturally excluded and historically marginalized or subordinated people like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Minorities, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), physically challenged individuals or Persons with Disabilities (as defined in the PWD Act, 1995) and Women in higher education. A policy initiative for trans-sexual and LGBTQI community is also to be incorporated along with this as the institutions of higher education in Kerala have begun the inclusion of trans-gender students.

Some of the notable schemes of the UGC for nurturing social equity for various beneficiary categories in vogue are Indira Gandhi Post Graduate Scholarships for Single Girl Child, Residential Coaching Academies for Minorities, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships for SCs & STs, and Maulana Azad National Fellowships for Minorities, Post-Doctoral Fellowships for SCs, STs, and Women etc. Various initiatives launched by the UGC towards enhancing access with equity through various fellowships, post-graduate scholarships, coaching schemes, residential coaching academies for minorities, support to institutions with relatively higher proportion of SCs, STs, Minorities, capacity expansion for OBCs, support to persons with disabilities, empowerment of women, etc are modeled and implemented. The

tutorials and remedial teaching are given to the weaker sections within the departments and special coaching for competitive tests, communication and soft skills are imparted from the Career Guidance Bureau. The regional centres are also giving coaching for UGC and other tests for students from various social sections, providing an inclusive and empowering platform. A centre for studies of social exclusion and inclusion may also be established in the manner of a number of Central, State and Deemed to be universities. Women's hostels in centres especially in minority concentration districts as in Tirur RC requires urgent completion. Various training programmes for capacity building among OBC students also need attention.

There are useful links to students' grievances portal, ICC, Anti Ragging Cell within the student zone in the SSUS website. Equal opportunity Cell and its functions may be further enhanced. There are ramps and entrances for physically challenged persons in major new buildings of the university. Toilet facilities for them may also be done in future. SSUS promotes inclusive schemes and tries to materialize the policy perspectives on equity to the maximum with an inclusive social vision and ethical mission.

Concrete Action Plans for the Present and Future of Equity and Inclusion

As the policies of affirmative action and democratic inclusion are to be materialized and implemented by the bureaucratic machinery, educating the administrative officials and teachers who handle the admission processes and student services is essential. The student-teacher, student-student and student-administrator interactions and exchanges must be amicable and human. Any sort of social discrimination or harassment must be identified and rectified. The delaying of fellowships and humiliating remarks or attitudes of the administration towards the students from the challenged sections must be strictly curtailed. Special orientation classes or grooming on civil and constitutional rights may be given to officials in this regard, especially on the reservation policies of the state (CPRHE 2017). Awareness or orientation on legal and constitutional rights may also be given to the students and their parents.

Basic democratic literacy that we are a democracy rather than a conservative or elite "meritocracy" must be rendered clear in the campus among the officials, teachers and students. Gender and caste discrimination or humiliation must be strictly checked with adequate bodies and mechanisms as per the regulations of the UGC. Patriarchal or casteist surveillance, moral policing, ragging, intimidation, shaming etc. may be erased from the

campus and multiculturalism, diversity, dissent, critical consciousness, cultural and artistic activism with ethical and political awareness leading to equality and justice at large may be encouraged in the campus.

References

1. UGC Regulations on promotion of Equity in HEI 2012. *The Gazette of India*, Jan 29, 2013. https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/2147890_gazetteequity-Eng.pdf
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3. CPRHE Policy Briefs on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education 2017. https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/0373387_CPRHE-POLICY-BRIEF-3-Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-HE.pdf