

UGC brings out new rules against caste discrimination

Higher education institutions may lose recognition if they violate the regulations; UGC brings OBCs within the ambit of new rules after their exclusion in the draft version evoked criticism

The Hindu Bureau
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The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified new regulations to address caste-based discrimination in higher education institutions across the country. The new rules mandate the setting up of equity committees on campuses and specify punishments, which can range from being debarred from offering degrees or programmes, for non-compliance.

The University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, notified on Tuesday, are an update on the anti-discrimination regulations in place since 2012. A draft version of the updated rules was put out by the UGC for public suggestions in February last year, inviting widespread criticism for the way it kept the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) outside the ambit of caste-based discrimination and the lack of specificity in the way it defined discrimination.

Further, the draft version of the regulations proposed a provision to "dis-

Strong measures

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, were notified on Tuesday

• Discrimination has been defined as "any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of them"

• Caste-based discrimination means "discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes"



• The new rules specify punishments, which can range from being debarred from offering degrees or programmes, for non-compliance

courage" false complaints of discrimination, suggesting fines for such complaints.

In the final notified version of the rules, the UGC has included OBCs within the ambit of "caste-based discrimination" and dropped the provision on false complaints. Further, its definition of "discrimination" has been expanded slightly to include some of the language contained in the 2012 regulations.

In the new regulations, the UGC has said that "caste-based discrimination" means "discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled

Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes". Further, it defines "discrimination" as "any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of them".

In borrowing from the definition in the 2012 regulations, the UGC added that "discrimination" would include "any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and, in particular, of imposing conditions

on any stakeholder or group of stakeholders that are incompatible with human dignity".

Equity committees

In the new regulations, the UGC mandates the setting up of equal opportunity centres (EOC) in each institution, to promote "equity and equal opportunity to the community at large in the higher education institutions (HEIs) and to bring about social inclusion". Under these, an equity committee is to be formed. These equity committees, chaired by the head of the institution, must have the representation of OBCs, persons with disabilities, SCs, STs, and women, the regulations said.

While the EOC will be expected to submit a bi-annual report of its functioning, the equity committees have been mandated to meet at least twice a year.

The UGC will put in place a monitoring mechanism to review the progress of the implementation of these regulations. It will set up a national-level monitoring committee with representatives of statutory professional councils and commissions, the regulations said.