

University of Peradeniya

Policy name: Policy on Curbing Ragging

Policy number:

Date of Approval:

Supersedes:

Approving Authority: The Council, University of Peradeniya

Administrative Responsibility: Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Deans of Faculties, Proctor, Deputy Proctors of Faculties, Senior Student Counsellors, Wardens, Director/Accommodation, Sub Wardens, Rag Prevention Committees of University and Faculties, Chief Marshal

Monitoring Responsibility: The Council, University of Peradeniya

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I. Overview

Ragging has been in existence in the University system all over the world from time immemorial especially as a social unacceptable method of acquaintance amongst students. In Sri Lankan Universities, ragging had caused severe mental and physical torture to the fresher students resulting in permanent physical and/or mental disabilities or even death of fresher students in the past. In addition, ragging has been intentionally used to either cause torture to certain selected groups or classes of students or infuse various political ideologies into the minds of the fresher students.

Overall, the ill effects, particularly the life threatening incidences have far exceeded the socialization or other benefit claims put forward by the promoters of ragging and high incidences of ragging related complaints made during the period of enrolment of fresher students to the HEIs, have led to introduction of a new Act has been introduced in 1998, titled "Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in educational institutions act, no 20 of 1998". In terms of the said Act, ragging means "**any act which causes or likely to cause physical or psychological injury or mental pain or fear to a student or a member of the staff of an educational institution**". According to the Act, any person who commits or participates in ragging, is liable to rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years to ten years, according to the nature of the violation. The convicts may also be required to pay compensation to victims. In 2010, the University Grants Commission introduced a special circular (UGC commission circular No. 919) with guidelines recommending to curb the menace of ragging in the universities or higher education institutes.

In spite of all these actions, ragging is still being reported in all universities in different scales. Some of the reported incidents recently and in the past few years have crossed the

limits of decency, morality and humanity. The highest challenge in controlling ragging is the reluctance shown by the victims to provide evidence of ragging incidences.

This policy must be reviewed and confirmed after five years to maintain its relevance.

Policy statement:

The University of Peradeniya doesn't tolerate and degree of ragging or any other form of behaviors that may be interpreted as ragging or violence against another student or group of students that may be cause any physical or mental harm that can have short-term or long-term impact on the student.

II. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the principles on which the university approach;

- (a) To promote and maintain a culture at the University of Peradeniya in which the dignity and equality of all persons are respected;
- (b) To formulate measures to eliminate ragging in all its forms and to create a ragging free environment in the University of Peradeniya;
- (c) To implement prompt, effective, and fair complaints mechanism for persons affected by ragging;
- (d) To facilitate adequate and appropriate support for victims of ragging.

III. Definitions

- a) "Act" means, the Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in educational institutions act, no 20 of 1998
- b) "Circulars" means, Guidelines to be introduced to curb the menace of ragging in the universities, UGC Circulars No.919 and No.946
- c) "Academic year" means the period from the commencement of admission of students in any course of study in the institution up to the completion of academic requirements for that particular year.
- d) "Commission" means the University Grants Commission;
- e) "Council" means a governing body of the university so constituted by the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978.
- f) "Fresher" means a student who has been admitted to an institution and who is undergoing his/her first year of study in such institution.

IV. Procedures

IV(A) Ragging and any form of student misconduct, one or more of any of the following acts

- a) Any conduct by any student or students whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness a fresher or any other student;

- b) Indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities by any students or students which causes or is likely to cause annoyance hardship, physical or physiological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in any fresher or any other student;
- c) Asking any student to do any act which such student will not in the ordinary course do and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame, or torment or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of such fresher or any other student;
- d) Any act by a student that prevents, disrupts or disturbs the regular academic activity of any student or a fresher;
- e) Exploiting the services of a fresher or any other student for completing the academic tasks assigned to an individual or a group of students;
- f) Any act of financial extortion or forceful expenditure burden put on a fresher or any student by students;
- g) Any act of physical abuse including all variants of it; sexual abuse, and lewd acts, gestures, causing bodily harm or any other danger to health or person;
- h) Any act that affects the mental health and self-confidence of a fresher or any other student;
- i) Unnecessary meetings and activities;
- j) Denied access and use to common facilities and joining societies;
- k) Peer pressure and ragging;
- l) With or without an intent to derive a sadistic pleasure or showing off power, authority or superiority by a student over any fresher or any other student;
- m) All other offences following from the definition of "Ragging".

IV(B) Disciplinary Action

In University of Peradeniya if any student is found indulging in any activity, which comes in the category of ragging and any form of student misconduct, then he/she becomes liable to any or all of following punishments:

- a) A written warning or a severe reprimand,
- b) Suspension from the University,
- c) Withdrawal of residential Facilities and accommodation,
- d) Withdrawal, cancellation or suspension of any financial benefits, assistance or award under the "Mahapola scheme",
- e) Debarring from representation in events,
- f) Disqualification from sitting any university Examination for a specific period,
- g) Suspension of the release of the results of any university examination for a specific period,
- h) Expulsion from the University, or
- i) Anything which the Disciplinary Committee finds suitable as per the enquiry conducted.

A subsequent offence of a similar nature found to be perpetrated by the same offender/s shall carry an enhanced penalty. The Council of the University of Peradeniya may determine and impose an appropriate penalty on the student/s found guilty, on the recommendation by the Board of Discipline, in accordance with *By-Laws (No. 01 of 1996) made by the Council of the University of Peradeniya under Section 29 (n) read with Section 135(1)(d) of the University Act. No. 16 of 1978.*

IV(C) Required Procedures

The form and procedure to be followed in making a complaint and the procedures to be followed at the preliminary inquiry, and/or formal inquiry are governed by the By-laws (*No. 01 of 1996, Sections 27, 28, 31, 32 & 33*).

All procedures followed pursuant to this policy shall be impartial, fair, prompt, and confidential, having regard to due process requirements including safeguarding the rights of the student/s victimized of prohibited conduct.

IV(D) Appeals

In the event of the University not taking action on a complaint, or if the complainant or respondent is dissatisfied with the disciplinary action taken by the University authorities, student/s shall have the right of appeal. On receipt of the appeal, the Vice Chancellor shall appoint a committee to hear the appeal, in line with existing disciplinary procedure. The "Appeals Committee" shall report to the Vice Chancellor its findings and recommendations on the nature of the action to be taken on the appeal (*No. 01 of 1996, Sections 29*).

IV(E) Confidentiality

Confidentiality shall be maintained regarding all complaints. Interview recordings, if any, communications, documentations, and reports shall be divulged only to authorized persons.

V. Preventive Measures to Eliminate Ragging

a) This Policy shall be accessible to the entire university community and shall be made available in Sinhala, Tamil and English, and be included in student handbooks, the university calendar and the university and faculty websites;

b) University Rag Prevention Committee (RPC) shall be formed every year under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor. Faculty Rag Prevention Committees shall be formed as per in UGC Circular No.919;

c) A separate committee of senior students shall be formed each year to assist the Faculty Rag Prevention Committee;

d) Separate meetings of academic staff and student counsellors with first year and second year students shall be held in the very beginning of the session and then periodically to brief them against ragging;

e) The Policy shall be discussed at all relevant student orientation programs conducted by the University/ a Faculty;

f) The student mentoring programme shall be designed to assist students in successfully adapting their university life. The purpose of this program is to enhance students' chances of academic success and to create a sense of belonging at the university. To facilitate this process, each new entrance (mentee) is paired with an academic member (mentor) who can motivate and inspire the fresher, is entrusted with the task of guiding and helping them;

g) Formal interaction among first year and second students in the presence of academic staff shall be arranged and take them in confidence by apprising them of their rights as well as obligation to fight against ragging and to generate confidence in their mind that any instance of ragging to which they are subjected to;

h) Social and cultural activities with the joint participation of seniors and juniors shall be held periodically in the guidance of faculty;

i) The University shall prepare leaflets that draws attention to the Policy and the contact information of officials to be contacted for information, help and guidance for various purposes, keeping in view the needs of new entrants in the university, along with the addresses and telephone numbers of such officials, should be given to new-comers at the time of admissions so that the new-comers need not look up to the seniors for help in such matters and feel indebted to or obliged by them. Posters, notice boards and sign-boards-whenever necessary, may be used for the purpose;

j) At the commencement of the academic session, the university should constitute a proctorial committee consisting of Proctor, Deputy Proctors, Student Counsellors, Senior Academics, Marshals, Security Officers and hostel authorities like wardens and a few responsible senior students:

- i. To increase the number of the senior student counselors, in order to improve the efficiency of the rag prevention process and In the urgent matters, it would be important to have a center for communication among the senior student counselors.
- ii. To keep a continuous watch and vigil over ragging so as to prevent its occurrence and recurrence,
- iii. To promptly deal with the incidents of ragging brought to its notice and summarily punish the guilty either by itself or by putting-forth its

finding/recommendation/suggestions before the authority competent to take decision.

- iv. All vulnerable locations shall be identified and specially watched.
- v. The accommodation of new entrants will be limited to a single or minimum number of halls of residence. No senior students being assigned to them;
- vi. The hostels/accommodations where new-comers are accommodated shall be carefully guarded, and wherein the entry of senior students and outsiders shall be prohibited after specified hour of night and before except under the permission of the person in charge. Entry at other times may also be regulated.
- vii. An efficient mechanism should be evolved to ensure that the wardens do undertake on time actions accordingly.

k) The Constitutions of Student Associations of the University shall include a reference to the Prohibition on Ragging and All Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act;

l) The University shall provide a trained counselling service to address prevention and consequences of ragging and All Forms of misconduct;

m) Ragging, if it becomes unmanageable or amounts to a cognizable offence, the same may be reported to the police. However, the police should be called in or allowed entry in the university at the instance of the Vice Chancellor.

VI. Related By-Laws

- a) By-laws Promulgated under the Policy on Sexual or Gender-based Harassment and Sexual Violence University of Peradeniya
- b) By-laws on Student Discipline
- c) Policy on Sexual or Gender-Based Harassment and Sexual Violence University of Peradeniya

VII. Related Acts, Rules, Regulations, Key Circulars

- a) UGC Commission Circular No. 12/2019, Strategies/Actions to be implemented to combat Ragging and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in State Universities and HEIs dated 22 November 2019
- b) UGC Commission Circular No. 946, Common Guidelines on Student Discipline dated 10 February 2011
- c) UGC Commission Circular No. 919, Guidelines to be introduced to curb the menace of ragging in the Universities or HEIs dated 15 January 2010
- d) Act to Eliminate Ragging and other forms Violence and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading treatment, from educational institutes (Prohibition of Ragging and other forms of Violence in Educational Institutes Act, No. 20 of 1998)

VIII. Other Resources

1. University Grants Commission's Ragging Complaint Portal (විශ්වවිද්‍යාල ප්‍රතිපාදන කොමිෂන් සභාවේ නවක වදය හා සම්බන්ධ පැමිණිලි ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමේ බිහිදොර)
2. Call Center at the UGC which is operated 24/7
 - 0112 123456
 - 0112 123700
 - a) Students can log the complaint through the telephone operator at the Call Center.
 - b) Complaints can be logged via IVR (Interactive Voice Recording) which will get recorded as an audio file.
3. Complaints to be sent via email
 - helpme@ugc.ac.lk
 - ragginghelp@ugc.ac.lk
4. Marshal's Division – Direct (University of Peradeniya)
 - 081-2392423
5. On call Service (Rag Complain Obs Room) is operated 24/7 (University of Peradeniya)
 - 081-2388471