



## UGC Guidelines and Course of Action by Pondicherry University to Serve Disabled Persons

### KEYWORDS

University Grants Commission, Educational Institutions, Disabled Person, Rehabilitation Council

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### INTRODUCTION

UGC has implemented various schemes for serving Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the form of many Guidelines through circulars time and again. These initiatives include providing financial assistance for construction of barrier-free buildings in Universities and Colleges, implementation of Teacher Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) and special allowances for visually handicapped teachers. This paper has endeavored to throw light on the schemes and guidelines of UGC serving PWDs and programmes implemented by Pondicherry University to implement these measures.

### TEACHER PREPARATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION (TEPSE)

The Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 has asserted that disabled children should have access to education without any discrimination at all levels. However, the sad fact is that not more than 5% of disabled children have been covered by the formalized school system. Rehabilitation Council of India's Report on Manpower Development exposes that in excess of one lakh special teachers will be required to cater to the school-level educational needs of disabled children in the forthcoming decade. The objective of "Education For All" can be attained only if disabled children are brought into the education ambit, for which many teachers are needed and more Bachelor's and master's level teacher training programmes are absolutely essential. Integrated Education programmes are the need of hour to bring more and more disabled children into the education ambit. Selected departments of Universities and Colleges shall be provided financial assistance by the UGC to enable them provides special education for disabled children.

Need for providing special education programmes for disabled children and infra structure for such children in education institutions was realized by the UGC during the ninth five year plan, which saw the implementation of Teacher Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (Differently-abled Persons) (HEPSN) schemes. The programmes aimed to provide quality education to disabled children by creating a barrier-free environment, facilitating them to access classrooms, labs and toilets in education institutions.

### OBJECTIVES OF TEPSE

1. To encourage higher educational institutions to promote teacher preparation programmes in the field of special education for disabled children;
2. To provide equal higher education opportunities to disabled children;
3. To create awareness among education authorities about specific educational needs of disabled children;
4. To ensure educational institutions are accessible for disabled children;
5. To enhance sustainability of PWDs in higher education by offering financial assistance;

6. To facilitate placement of educated disabled in suitable jobs;
7. To strictly observe implementation of all disability related legislations and policies.

Assistance is provided to educational institutions recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India and having a Model school of its own. Further, the institution should have a minimum of five years experience in running B.Ed. programme and should enroll a minimum of ten disabled children every academic year. Such institutions shall be given salary grant by the UGC to accommodate one Professor, one Associate Professors and three Assistant Professors for B.Ed. Programme and one Professor, One Associate Professor and three Assistant Professors for M.Ed. programme. An additional annual non-recurring grant of Rs.2,00,000 shall be provided for purchasing special implements and magazines and journals for running the special programme. The grant shall be doubled in case of the institution running both B.Ed. and M.Ed. programmes.

### HIGHER EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (HEPSN)

This scheme was implemented by the UGC during the ninth five year plan to provide equal opportunities for disabled children to access quality education by assisting educational institutions provide suitable infra structure facilities to disabled children by rendering the institutions accessible for them. The scheme aims at creating awareness about capabilities of disabled children and purchasing equipments to enrich learning experiences of such children. The Scheme provides for the establishment of an exclusive Enabling Unit, which shall ensure that all legislations and policies for the welfare of disabled are adequately implemented.

Educational institutions which have enrolled a minimum of ten disabled students and those which are approved by the UGC under Sections 2(f) and 12(B) are eligible for getting assistance under the three components of this scheme. The three components are enumerated as under:

### I. ESTABLISHMENT OF ENABLING UNIT FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Resource units shall be established in Colleges and Universities for spreading awareness about disabled persons in higher education system and to provide necessary guidance and counseling to disabled students. These centre's shall be known as "Enabling Unit" and they shall discharge the following functions:

- a. Provide counseling to differently-abled students on the types of courses they could study at the higher education institutions.
- b. Facilitate ensure admission of maximum differently-abled students as possible through the open quota and also through the reservation meant for them.
- c. Gather orders dealing with fee concessions, examina-

tion procedures, reservation policies, etc., pertaining to differently-abled persons.

- d. Assess the educational needs of differently-abled persons enrolled in the higher education institutes to determine the types of assistive devices to be procured.
- e. Conduct awareness programmes for teachers of the institute about the approaches to teaching, evaluation procedures, etc, which they should address in the case of differently-abled students.
- f. Study the aptitude of differently-abled students and assist them in getting appropriate employment when desired by them after their studies.
- g. Celebrate important days pertaining to disability such as the World Disabled Day, White Cane Day, etc., in the institute and also in the neighbourhood in order to create awareness about the capabilities of differently-abled persons.
- h. Ensure maintenance of special assistive devices procured by the higher education institute under the HEPSN scheme and encourage differently-abled persons to use them for enriching their learning experiences.
- i. Prepare annual reports with case histories of differently-abled persons who are benefited by the HEPSN scheme sanctioned to the higher education institute.
- j. Create awareness about the needs of differently-abled persons, and other general issues concerning their learning.
- k. Circulate Government of India and Commission's decisions and to collect regularly, on an annual basis, information regarding course-wise admissions of differently-abled candidates in universities and colleges for different courses, and to take follow-up action, where required.
- l. Circulate Government of India and Commission's decisions, and to collect information with respect to appointments, training of persons with disabilities in teaching and non-teaching posts in the universities and colleges, and take follow-up action where required.
- m. Collect reports and information regarding Government of India orders on the various aspects of education, training and employment of differently-abled persons for evolving new policies or modifying existing ones.
- n. Analyse information so collected, under 1 to 3 above, and prepare reports and digests for onward transmission to the Ministry of Human Development/UGC and any other authorities as may be required.
- o. Deal with representations received from differently-abled persons regarding their admission, recruitment, promotion and other similar matters in universities/colleges.
- p. Function as a unit to redress grievances of differently-abled students and employees of the institution, and render them necessary help in solving their academic as well as administrative problems.
- q. Maintain a register of employment for differently-abled persons for various posts in the respective universities/colleges.
- r. Perform any other work assigned from time to time to promote higher education among differently-abled persons.
- s. Do all such things as may be deemed conducive for the welfare of differently-abled students, teachers and non-teaching employees.

There shall be an honorary coordinator and a honorary placement officer for the unit who shall be paid Rs. 4000 and Rs. 3000 every month respectively. Three student volunteers are also permitted to act as office bearers for the unit and they may be paid Rs. 1000 every month. The Unit is allotted an annual grant of Rs. 50000 for maintenance and organizing various programmes. The UGC shall also provide an annual grant of Rs. 40000 for organizing awareness programmes concerning disability in any institution in the locality.

**II. PROVIDING ACCESS TO DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PERSONS**

Disabled students in educational institutions have different

needs particularly regarding accessibility of the buildings. In order to overcome the architectural barriers of buildings in educational institutions, it has been mandatory for all institutions to provide for barrier-free environment such as providing for ramps, rails and special toilets. To facilitate the educational institutions in this regard, they were provided a one-time grant of Rs. 10,00,000 during the eleventh plan period. Such barrier-free environment shall be created in accordance to guidelines spelt out by the Office of Chief Commissioner for Disabilities, Government of India.

**III. PROVIDING SPECIAL EQUIPMENT TO AUGMENT EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PERSONS**

PWDs shall lead an independent life if they are provided with some special aids and appliances. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing various schemes, under which PWDs can get these appliances freely. Similarly, educational institutions may also require special learning devices for providing quality education to disabled students. Visually impaired students need the services of Readers, Computers with screen-reading software, scanners and mobility devices to have a good learning experience. The UGC has provided a one-time grant of Rs. 8, 00,000 to Colleges during the eleventh plan period to enable them to procure such special appliances. Further, Colleges may utilize the UGC grant provided for procuring library books for purchasing Braille typewriter/Dictionary and Cassette recorders to facilitate visually challenged students.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO VISUALLY IMPAIRED TEACHERS**

Visually challenged permanent teachers of Colleges/Universities are provided an annual grant of Rs. 36000 to hire the services of readers to assist them in their teaching and research work and for purchasing Braille books, recorded materials, etc.

**CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE FOR DISABLED CANDIDATES APPEARING FOR UGC'S NET EXAM**

Disabled students appearing for UGC's NET exam are provided the following concessions:

1. Five marks relaxation in qualifying PG exam for appearing for NET exam;
2. Five year relaxation for disabled candidates appearing for JRF Exam;
3. 5% relaxation in cut off marks for disabled candidates in NET Exam;
4. Additional half an hour time for disabled candidates writing JRF and NET Exams;
5. Minimum 3% reservation for disabled candidates in NET and JRF exams;
6. Provision of free scribes for visually impaired appearing for NET Exam;
7. 75% relaxation in NET Examination Fee to Disabled candidates.

**UGC CIRCULARS PERTAINING TO DIFFERENTLY-ABLED**

Universities, Deemed Universities and Colleges are well informed about reservations and other policy decisions relating to PWDs by the UGC through its circulars. The draft of Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 has also been circulated by the UGC to all educational institutions imparting higher education. A brief note of these circulars has been provided in the following table.

**Table 1: UGC Circulars Concerning PWDs**

Purpose	UGC Reference
Extending facilities of cassette recorders for Blind University students	No.F. 15-3/80 (CP) dt. 23.04.1980
3% compulsory reservation of teaching posts for PWDs.	No.F. 11 -5/95 (CPP II) dt. 14.10.1997

3% reservation for PWDs in the appointment of Lecturers, Readers and Professors	No.F.1-5/95 (CPP II) dt. 03.02.2000
3% Reservation for PWDs for admission to all courses	No.F. 11-5/95 (CPP II) (Vol III) dt. 18.07.2001, No.F. 6-1/2002 (CPP II) Vol. II dt 21.10.2005/1.11.2005
5% relaxation in Marks at Master's level for PWDs for appearing in the NET examination	No.F. 6-1/2002(CPP-II) dt 5.06.2002
Relaxation in Upper age limit (up to 5 years) to PWDs in Admission to various courses.	No.F. 6-1/2002 (CPP II) Vol. III dt. 02.08.2006
Directions to all universities to strictly follow the provisions of PWDs Act, 1995	No.F. 6-2/2002 (CPP II) dt. 02/13.02.2007
Establishment of Department of Disabilities Studies and Initiatives to make Institutions accessible.	F.6-1/2006(CPP-II) dt.29/30.9.2008

#### INITIATIVES OF PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY TO SERVE PWDs

2. Department of Disability Studies is proposed to be established in the forthcoming academic year.
3. The University has well exceeded the statutory requirement of 3% reservation for PWDs with the appointment of four visually challenged and nine orthopaedically challenged faculty members.
4. An exclusive floor in the library has been established for facilitating visually challenged to use computers with scanners and the required software.
5. Absolutely free education has been provided for all physically challenged students, with free boarding and mess facilities for them.
6. All newly constructed buildings are with ramp facilities and disabled-friendly.
7. Free book sharing facility is available for visually challenged students and faculties.
8. Enabling unit for the differently-abled has been constituted.
8. Disabled student admission into PG course is made as per the mandatory norms and steps have been initiated

to facilitate admission of physically challenged students to Ph.D. Programmes also.

9. Various awareness and sensitizing programmes have been organized periodically by the enabling unit for the benefit of physically challenged students.

Recognizing the services offered by Pondicherry University to PWDs, the Government of India conferred the best role model employer award to the University and the then Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor J.A.K. Tareen received the award. The award has been conferred to an educational institution for the first time in its history and this may mark the beginning of many more initiatives likely to follow for the benefit of PWDs.

#### CONCLUSION

UGC has formulated various guidelines for the benefit of PWDs to ensure that they get access to quality higher education and job opportunities. However, the agonizing fact is that these directions have seldom been implemented with letter and spirit by most of the educational institutions. The heartening fact is that Pondicherry University is making rapid strides in servicing PWDs and it is a matter of pride that a central University is taking such initiatives. Future may be optimistic with more and more institutions taking Pondicherry University as a role model and implement such measures which shall uplift the lives of PWDs.