

Ragging redefined for engineering colleges

AICTE EXPANDS SCOPE Students found guilty of race, religious, sexual slurs face cancellation of admission, suspension or expulsion

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NEW DELHI: Engineering students can be expelled for mocking the caste, ethnicity or sexual orientation of college mates, as the regulator has expanded the definition of ragging ahead of the new academic session.

Ragging is rampant in such colleges where freshers are often humiliated by senior students and even abused physically. There have been instances when students have died or ended their lives unable to bear the pressure.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has identified a set of pejorative words in a notification released on February 22, a copy of which is with HT.

The notification defines ragging as "any act of physical or mental abuse (including bullying and exclusion) targeted at another student (fresher or otherwise) on the ground of colour, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, appearance,

STRICTER NORMS

The definition of ragging will now include:

- Any act of physical or mental abuse on the grounds of colour, race, religion, caste, and ethnicity
- Gender-specific abuse included. Move to protect transgenders too
- Abuse related to sexual orientation, appearance, nationality, regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth, economic background

nationality, regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth, place of residence or economic background".

The guilty could be barred from classes for a certain period, thrown out of the college or in extreme cases, lose admission, which will make the student ineligible to study engineering anywhere in the country.

Over the last few years, uni-

versities and colleges reported a sharp rise in discrimination on grounds of region or caste, AICTE sources said.

More than two million students are enrolled in AICTE-approved 10,000 institutes in the country.

The notification would act as a deterrent, Delhi joint commissioner of police (operations) Robin Hibu said, adding students often complained to him about name-calling and taunting.

"Such cases happen because of the lack of awareness and concern about other communities," said Hibu, also the nodal officer for Northeast residents who often face harassment in the Capital.

The notification holds for all engineering and technical colleges — government, government-aided and private — across the country.

This is the first expansive definition of ragging by AICTE after it came out with a set of rules in 2009 to check the widespread menace.

CONTINUED ON P8

Ragging

Colleges offering technical education, engineering technology, including MCA, architecture, town planning, management, pharmacy, hotel management and catering, and such programmes will have to follow the directive.

Last year, the University Grants Commission, the higher education regulator, barred use of such words in central universities.

“It is a good move. It is necessary to make students aware and conscious about how they behave with other students and do not indulge in any act of harassing or bullying,” an official from Delhi’s Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology said on condition of anonymity.

The city’s Indian Institute of Information Technology director Pankaj Jalote said it was necessary to sensitise students on issues of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

“While rules can be made and should be made, sensitising and educating students should be a priority,” Jalote said.

*(With inputs from
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