

University of Peradeniya

Policy name:	Policy on Curbing Ragging
Policy number:	UoP-P 014
Date of Approval:	30/11/2021 (Approved by the 510 th Council)
Supersedes:	Not relevant
Approving Authority:	The Council, University of Peradeniya
Administrative Responsibility:	Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deans of Faculties, Proctor, Heads of Departments, Deputy Proctors of Faculties, Senior Student Counsellors, Wardens, Director/Student Accommodation, Sub Wardens, Rag Prevention Committees of University and Faculties, Chief Marshal
Monitoring Responsibility:	The Council, University of Peradeniya

Overview

Ragging has been with us from the time of the inception of the University in various forms. It has cost the university community heavily with loss of lives, serious physical injuries & intense psychological trauma to students and other adverse effects. It resides within a culture of tolerance for undemocratic practices that are unfortunately a part of the university system and has instilled a culture of fear and intimidation among students. The culture of ragging has persisted, despite its pernicious quality, owing to the existence of a mainstream culture of indifference with an exceptional level of tolerance in the university system in general.

Overall, the ill effects of ragging, particularly the life-threatening incidences, have far exceeded the so-called socialization or other benefits claimed by ragging promoters. The high incidence of ragging related complaints during the enrolment of fresher students led to the introduction of Act No. 20 of 1998, titled "Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in educational institutions". 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, depending on the nature of the offence. The convicts may also be required to pay compensation to victims. In addition, the University Grants Commission also introduced several circulars with guidelines for curbing the menace of ragging in universities and higher education institutes.

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

crossed the limits of decency, morality and humanity. The biggest challenge in controlling ragging has been the reluctance of the victim students to provide evidence of ragging incidents.

Policy statement

The University of Peradeniya adopts a policy of zero tolerance to ragging and other forms of violence and harassment that may be interpreted as ragging against another student or a group of students that may cause any physical or mental harm with a short-term or long-term impact on the victim students.

Purpose and Scope

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

- (a) to formulate measures to eliminate ragging in all its forms and to create a ragging/harassment free environment at the University of Peradeniya;
- (b) to implement a prompt, effective, and fair complaint mechanism for victims of ragging; and
- (c) to facilitate adequate and appropriate support for victims of ragging.

Key Policy Principles

1. Procedure

The form and procedure to be followed in making a complaint and the procedures to be followed at the preliminary and formal inquiry are governed by the By-Laws Relating to Student Discipline.

A Rag Prevention Committee has been established at the university to overcome and monitor ragging incidents. The University Rag Prevention Committee (RPC) shall be re-formed every year under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor. In addition, Faculty Rag Prevention Committees shall be formed as per the UGC Circular No.919.

(A). Appeals

In the event of the relevant authorities not taking action on a complaint, the victim student has the right to bring it to the notice of the Rag Prevention Committee of the University.

On receipt of such notices, the Proctor shall, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor, immediately take steps to initiate inquiries as the case may be. The Rag Prevention Committee shall ensure that the process is transparent.

If the accused student(s) is/are dissatisfied with the disciplinary action taken by the university authorities, such student(s) shall have the right to appeal. Upon receiving such appeals, the Vice-Chancellor shall follow the procedure laid out in the By-Laws Relating to Student Discipline to hear the appeal.

If the victim students are not satisfied with the disciplinary action, they have a right to appeal.

The institute will inform the stages of the ongoing process to the victim student to make him/her aware of the present status of the process.

(B). Confidentiality

Confidentiality shall be maintained regarding all complaints. Interview recordings, if any, communications, documentation, and reports shall be divulged only to authorize persons. If a person involved in the investigation is found to have breached the confidentiality requirement, s/he shall be reported by the chairman of the investigation team to the Vice-Chancellor with a recommendation for removal from the investigation.

2. Preventive Measures to Eliminate Ragging

The University, in addition to the preventive measures stated in the UGC circulars, shall take the following 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) The Rag Prevention Committees of faculties will be constituted in a way that ensures transparency and accountability;
- c) A separate committee of senior students shall be formed each year to assist the Faculty Rag Prevention Committee;
- d) A Faculty Complaint Portal shall be established that will immediately notify the Dean and the Deputy Proctor of complaints to initiate an investigation;
- e) Separate meetings of academic staff and student counsellors with senior students shall be held at the very beginning of academic years and then periodically to brief them against ragging;

- f) The policy shall be discussed at all relevant student orientation programs conducted by the university/ faculty;
- g) The University/Faculty shall organize workshops and seminars to enhance students' perception of the treatment of fellow humans with dignity and the respect required towards the diversity experienced at the University;
- h) The student mentoring programme shall be designed to assist students in successfully adapting to university life. This program shall enhance students' chances of academic success and create a sense of belonging to the University. In the mentoring programme, each new entrant (mentee) shall be paired with an academic staff member (mentor) who can motivate, inspire, guide, and help the mentee;
- i) Formal interaction among first- and second-year students in the presence of academic staff shall be arranged to facilitate better relationships between the students of the first and second year batches;
- j) Social and cultural activities with the joint participation of first-year and senior students shall be held periodically with the guidance of the faculty;
- k) All functions/events organized by university/faculty societies that involve freshers must be held under close observation of the Senior Treasurers of the respective societies. All functions/events need to be conducted under the prior approval of the Dean of the Faculty if held within the Faculty or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor if held at other common university premises. Upon approval, if first years are involved in the event, the Proctor/Deputy Proctors must be informed of the function/event.
- l) The University shall prepare leaflets that draw attention to this policy and include the details of officials to be contacted for information, help and guidance.
- m) The University shall constitute a Proctorial Committee consisting of the Proctor, Deputy Proctors, Student Counsellors, Senior Academics, Marshals, Security Officers, and hostel authorities such as Wardens and a few senior students at the commencement of the academic year.

The Proctorial Committee shall;

- i. have a high number of senior student counsellors in order to improve the efficiency of the rag prevention process;
- ii. establish a central mechanism (Centre) of communication among the senior student counsellors to handle urgent matters;

- iii. keep a continuous watch and vigil over ragging to prevent its occurrence and recurrence;
 - iv. 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 Vice-Chancellor facilitating prompt decisions;
 - v. identify all vulnerable locations and have those under monitoring;
 - vi. accommodate new entrants in a single or a minimum number of halls of residence. No senior students shall be assigned to those;
 - vii. monitor the hostels/facilities where newcomers are accommodated to which the access of senior students/outsideers are not permitted after a particular hour at night without permission from the person in charge;
 - viii. ensure that the wardens do their tasks on schedule and act appropriately;
 - ix. observe the improvement of the canteen in halls of residences where the freshers reside and have restricted access to senior students;
 - x. establish a procedure to quickly attend to maintenance work that could compromise the security of freshers, e.g., Door locks in the halls of residences;
 - xi. make arrangements for a special shuttle bus service to transfer freshers to and from the faculty and halls of residence at set times throughout the day.
 - xii. restrict freshers from leaving the halls of residents without prior permission from the person in charge.
- n) The Constitutions of Student Associations of the University shall include a reference to the Prohibition of Ragging and All Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act;
- o) The University shall have a professional counselling service to prevent and address consequences of ragging and all forms of misconduct;
- p) The University shall make staff members aware of this policy at recruitment and hold them accountable for measures established to prevent ragging on the campus;
- q) The University shall make all staff members aware of ragging and maintain a uniform stance on the subject. Any staff member of any category should not support conducting or promoting ragging;
- r) The University/Faculty societies and sports clubs/teams should ensure that no promotion/encouragement of ragging and harassment occurs within their society/club/team.

Definitions

- a) "Act" means the "Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in educational institutions Act, no 20 of 1998";
- b) "Circulars" means the guidelines and other regulations introduced from time to time to curb the menace of ragging in universities;
- c) "Academic year" means the period from the commencement of admission of students to any program of study in an institution to the completion of academic requirements for that particular year;
- d) "Commission" means the University Grants Commission;
- e) "Council" means the 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;
- g) "Victim student" means any student affected by ragging;
- h) "Accused student" means a student alleged to have committed an act of ragging;
- i) "Ragging" means an act which involves or is likely to involve abuse, humiliation, undue force or harassment which causes physical or psychological torture, injury or mental pain or fear in a student of an educational institution;
- j) "A Higher Educational Institution" means a university, campus, the Open University, a university college or institute of higher learning established or deemed to be established under the Universities Act.

Related By-Laws and Policies

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

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 universities or HEIs, dated 15 January 2010.
- d) Act to eliminate ragging and other forms of violence and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment at educational institutes (Prohibition of Ragging and other forms of Violence in Educational Institutes Act, No. 20 of 1998).

Ragging Helplines

1. Ragging Complaint Portal of the University Grant Commission (UGC)
2. The UGC has a call centre open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
 - 0112 123456
 - 0112 123700
 - a) Students can log complaints through the telephone operator at the Call Center.
 - b) Complaints can be logged via IVR (Interactive Voice Recording), which will record an audio file.
3. Complaints can 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 Complaints Observation Room) is operated 24/7 (University of Peradeniya) -081-2388471

Savings

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 by prohibited conduct.

Repeal

The Council shall possess the sole authority and power to exercise its discretion with respect to any or all of the clauses of this policy and provide for any interpretation, modification, or amendment to the policy that shall be made from time to time.

Review

The policy must be reviewed and confirmed by the Council after five years to maintain its relevancy.
