



UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

Commission Circular No. 919

No. 20, Ward Place,
Colombo 07.

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Vice Chancellors of Universities
Rectors of Campuses
Directors of Institutes

Guidelines to be introduced to curb the menace of ragging in the Universities or Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs)

Ragging has been in existence in the University system all over the world from time immemorial especially promoting good will and acquaintance amongst students. On the contrary, in Sri Lankan Universities quite alarmingly, ragging had caused severe mental and physical torture to the fresher students resulting in permanent physical and/or mental disabilities or else causing the death of few students in the past. In addition it is a well known phenomenon that in the majority of cases that ragging has been intentionally used to either cause torture to certain selected groups or classes of students or intended to infuse various political ideologies into the minds of the fresher students. Overall, the ill effects, particularly the life threatening incidences has far exceeded the socialization or naturalization claim put forward by the promoters of ragging. In view of the serious nature of the incidences that took place associated with ragging and high incidences of ragging related complaints made during the period of enrolment of fresher students to the HEIs, a new Act has been introduced in 1998 under the title **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'

Forms of Ragging

Any person who commits or participates in ragging within or outside an educational institution shall be guilty of an offence under this act.

a) Any person who whilst committing ragging causes sexual harassment or grievous hurt to

member of a staff of any higher education institution or to the person, reputation or property some other person in whom the victim is interested with the intention of causing fear in the victim or of compelling the victim to do any other act which the victim is legally not required to do or to omit to do any act which the victim is entitled to do,

- c) Any person who does any act by which the personal liberty and the freedom of movement of any student or a member of staff of an education Institution; or other person within such educational institution or any premises under the management and control of such educational institution, is restrained without lawful justification and for the purpose forcing such student, member of the staff or person to take a particular course of action,
- d) Any person who unlawfully obstructs any student or a member of the staff of an educational institution, in such a manner as to prevent such students or member of staff from proceeding in any direction in which such student or member of staff has right to proceed,
- e) Any person who unlawfully restrains any student or a member of staff of an education institution in such a manner as to prevent such student or member of the staff from proceeding beyond certain circumscribing limits,
- f) Any person who without lawful excuse, occupies by force, any premises of or under the management or control of, an education institution,
- g) Any person who causes mischief in respect of any property of or under the management or control of an education institution

However, it is observed that the powers vested or the provisions of the above Act had not been properly utilized by the Universities /HEIs during the last decade to curb ragging, causing more concern especially amongst fresher students and public outcry.

In view of the alarming increase of incidences of ragging of various forms that were reported and observed in the recent past in all Universities / Higher Education Institutions, in spite of having introduced the above Act in 1998, the following guidelines are prepared in order to facilitate strict immediate implementation of the provisions of the above Act. Thus, Universities / Higher Education Institutions are hereby required to adopt the following measures in three phases, namely Prevent, Perform and Punish in addition to the strategies adopted to suit the respective Institutions.

1. Prevent

- 1.1 The students should sign a declaration (Template in Annexure I), countersigned by the parent/guardian stating that they shall not initiate, aide, abate, perform or participate in any form of ragging or violence inside or outside the premises of the HEIs during the period of their registration at the HEI.
- 1.2 Appoint an Anti Ragging Committees (ARC) in all Universities/HEIs consisting of the VC and/or DVC, Deans, One Council Member representing the UGC nominees, Proctor if any, University Medical Officer, Student Counselors, sub-wardens, and SAR/AR Student welfare as the convener. This committee should meet at least twice a month during the preparatory and peak period and regularly report to the Council.

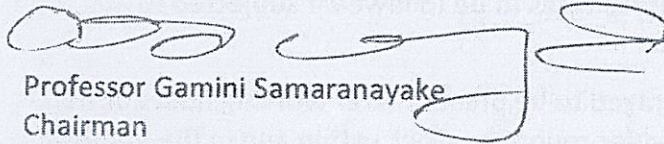
Universities/HEIs are encouraged to establish Faculty level Anti Ragging Committees depending on the needs of the individual Universities/HEIs.

- 1.3 Prepare a handout detailing the acts that could be considered as ragging together with the punishments that could be meted out under the provisions of the above Act.
- 1.4 Appoint Academic Staff of Senior Lecturer Grade II and above at least for a period of three months or more as Temporary Student Counselors (TSC) on the basis of one TSC not exceeding per 20-25 students.
- 1.5 Educate all Heads of Departments and other responsible unit heads on all aspects of ragging including the provisions of the Act.
- 1.6 Posters on all measures taken on ragging should be displayed in prominent places such as the libraries, student canteens, hostels and in the relevant notice boards.
- 1.7 All security staff should be detailed on the preventive measures.
- 1.8 All parents and new entrants should be informed about the features of the Act
- 1.9 Educate the seniors on the consequences of ragging
- 1.10 Admit the fresher students while the senior students are on vacation
- 1.11 Conduct an orientation/familiarization programme for fresher students educating them on the strategic locations and procedures to be followed if subjected to any form of ragging
- 1.12 All relevant officials should be encouraged to be present after working hours or during weekends to take part in vigilant activities round the clock within and in the immediate vicinity of the HEI
- 1.13 Keep the local police informed of the places and period in which ragging could likely to occur
- 1.14 Keep the mass media informed on the measures taken to curb ragging and create public awareness especially targeting the neighborhood
- 1.15 Encourage the presence of Student Counselors and sub-wardens within the University premises for longer hours, may be on voluntary and roster basis
- 1.16 Initiate innovative University specific programs or activities that could provide a safer and student friendly environment for the fresher students to get familiarized with the University environment and culture
2. Procedures to be followed in the event of ragging
 - 2.1 Record all complaints related to ragging and provide facilities to lodge open complaints or under 'confidential' basis if needed
 - 2.2 Encourage submission of evidence as much as possible, written forms of complaints, material evidence, injuries, witnesses, circumstantial, tape-recorded (audio) and photographs or videos
 - 2.3 Report all cases of ragging to the relevant Police Station to be followed under the Ragging Act No 20 of 1998.
 - 2.4 Refer for medical or psychiatric examination and request medical reports if necessary
 - 2.5 In case of grievous injuries or on punishable acts as prescribed in the Penal Code and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Act No 22 of 1994, report to the police

- 2.6. Obtain details of the damages caused to University or public property as a result of ragging
- 2.7 Follow the procedures prescribed in the Prohibition of Ragging Act No 20 of 1998.
- 2.8 Report all incidences of ragging and the punishments meted on the basis of the Ragging Act No 20 of 1998 to the University Grants Commission on a weekly basis during the period of the first three months of the enrollment of fresher students.

3. Punishment

It is emphasised that many of the offences listed under the above Act are unbailable and liable to rigorous imprisonment, up to ten years. It is also possible that a student if found guilty under the provisions of the above Act could be expelled from the Institution and also liable to pay compensation for any damages to property or injuries caused on the victims.


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Chairman

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