

Lok Sabha

BACKGROUND GUIDE FOR DELEGATES

Committee	Lok Sabha
Agenda	Reviewing the Supreme Court Stay on UGC Equity Regulations 2026: Debating Discrimination Definitions and Inclusivity in Redressal Mechanisms
Conference	SCIMUN 2026 · The Eighth Edition
Venue	The Scindia School, Fort Gwalior
Dates	April 10–13, 2026
Theme	Pretia Imperii: The Cost of Power

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CHAPTER I

Letter from the Executive Board

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to SCIMUN'26. We are most looking forward to seeing what you, members of the committee, can bring to the table, both in terms of your ideas in debate and your creativity in crafting solutions.

The following Background Guide has been formulated keeping in mind various aspects of the agenda to be discussed in committee. Though this Background Guide lists out the broad facets of the agenda that we would like to see being debated upon in committee, let us highlight the fact that this document is NOT exhaustive and that further reading on the part of delegates is essential. Under no circumstances can the Background Guide be quoted or used as substantial proof in committee sessions.

Mr. Aditya Das, Chairperson · Mr. Granth Mehta, Vice Chairperson

C H A P T E R I I

Lok Sabha

The Lok Sabha, also known as the House of the People, is the lower house of India's bicameral Parliament. As a crucial part of the legislative process, it holds significant power in shaping India's laws and policies. The Lok Sabha consists of representatives who are directly elected by the people of India, making it the more populous house compared to the Rajya Sabha.

The Lok Sabha can have a maximum of 552 members, including up to 530 representatives of the states, up to 20 representatives of the Union territories, and not more than two members from the Anglo-Indian community, nominated by the President. Each member represents a specific geographical constituency and is elected for a five-year term.

The Lok Sabha has several functions, including law-making, controlling the executive branch, representing the people's views, and scrutinising the functioning of the government. It holds the executive accountable through mechanisms like Question Hour, Zero Hour, and various parliamentary committees. Bills, especially money bills, must be passed by the Lok Sabha to become law.

The Speaker, elected from among its members, presides over the Lok Sabha. The Speaker's role is pivotal in maintaining order during debates, ensuring the rules of procedure are followed, and representing the house in its relations with the President and the Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha's meetings are often lively and reflect India's diverse and dynamic democracy.

CHAPTER III

Keywords and Introduction

Keywords

Key Terms for This Committee

- **Substantive Equality:** A constitutional principle that seeks to address systemic and structural disadvantages rather than merely ensuring equal treatment in a formal sense.
- **Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC):** An institutional body mandated under the 2026 Regulations to promote inclusivity, provide support services, and facilitate grievance redressal in higher educational institutions.
- **Paper Compliance:** A situation where institutions formally comply with regulatory requirements in documentation but fail to implement substantive reforms in practice.

Introduction

The University Grants Commission (UGC), on 13 January, notified the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2026. These Regulations were issued under the UGC Act, 1956, and replace the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012, thereby marking a significant shift in the regulatory framework.

The 2026 Regulations aim to promote equity and inclusion and to eradicate discrimination, particularly against stakeholders belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), socially and educationally backward classes, economically weaker sections, and persons with disabilities in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

India's higher education enrolment has crossed 43 million students, according to the AISHE 2021-22 report. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, on 27 January 2026, assured that the rules would involve 'no discrimination against anyone' and would not be 'misused,' emphasising that they would remain strictly within constitutional limits.

On 29 January, the Supreme Court heard a petition challenging the 2026 Regulations and directed that they be stayed. In this context, it becomes necessary to analyse the Regulations and the Court's decision.

CHAPTER IV

Institutional Structure Under the Regulations

| A. Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC)

Every HEI must establish an Equal Opportunity Centre. The Centre is responsible for overseeing implementation of equity-related policies, providing guidance and counselling (academic, financial, social), enhancing campus diversity, maintaining an online portal for reporting discrimination, and coordinating with civil society, police, district administration, and legal services authorities.

Composition of the Equity Committee within the EOC:

- Head of Institution (Chairperson)
- Three Professors/Senior Faculty
- One non-teaching staff member
- Two civil society representatives
- Two student representatives (as special invitees)
- Coordinator of EOC (Member Secretary)

The Committee must include representation from SC, ST, OBC, Persons with Disabilities, and Women. The EOC must publish a bi-annual report including demographic composition of students and staff, dropout rates, and complaints received and their status. If a college does not have sufficient faculty to establish an EOC, the affiliated university's EOC performs its functions.

| B. Equity Committee Functions

- Enquire into discrimination complaints
- Meet at least twice a year
- Review action taken on complaints
- Protect complainants from retaliation

| C. Equity Squads

Each HEI must also constitute Equity Squads — smaller bodies tasked with maintaining vigilance on campus, visiting vulnerable areas, and reporting findings to the EOC Coordinator.

| D. Equity Ambassadors

Every department, hostel, library, or unit must designate at least one Equity Ambassador who promotes awareness of equity, acts as a nodal point for reporting violations, and coordinates with the EOC.

| E. Equity Helpline

Each HEI must establish a 24-hour Equity Helpline, accessible to any stakeholder in distress. The identity of the complainant can remain confidential. If a prima facie criminal offence is made out, the matter is forwarded to police authorities.

CHAPTER V

Complaint and Redressal Process

The Regulations prescribe a structured complaint mechanism with strict timelines:

1. Step 1 — Incident of Discrimination Occurs: A student, faculty member, or staff feels they have faced discrimination.
2. Step 2 — Reporting the Complaint: Through the online portal, email to the EOC Coordinator, or written complaint; or through the 24-hour Equity Helpline.
3. Step 3 — Equity Committee Meeting within 24 Hours: The Committee convenes within 24 hours of receiving the complaint, reviews the matter, and may refer it to another statutory committee if required.
4. Step 4 — Inquiry and Report within 15 Working Days: Equity Committee conducts inquiry and submits report to the Head of Institution; copy of report sent to the complainant.
5. Step 5 — Action by Head of Institution within 7 Working Days: Institution initiates action as per rules. If a criminal offence is involved, police are informed immediately.
6. Step 6 — Appeal within 30 Days: If complainant is dissatisfied, appeal to the Ombudsperson within 30 days. The Ombudsperson aims to dispose of appeal within 30 days.
7. Special Case: If complaint is against the Head of Institution, the Equity Committee is chaired by the EOC Coordinator, and the report is sent to the next higher authority.

CHAPTER VI

Current Challenges Raised

| 1. Institutional Autonomy and Central Oversight

The Regulations apply uniformly to all HEIs in India and mandate the creation of Equal Opportunity Centres, Equity Committees, Equity Squads, reporting mechanisms, and helplines. Some institutional stakeholders have expressed concerns that this expands central regulatory oversight into internal governance processes traditionally managed by universities. Academic commentary notes that uniform compliance requirements across diverse institutions may raise questions regarding institutional autonomy and administrative feasibility.

| 2. Administrative and Resource Constraints

The Regulations require institutions to establish and maintain multiple mechanisms, including 24-hour helplines, online complaint portals, and periodic reporting systems. Academic analysis highlights disparities in financial and infrastructural capacity between well-funded metropolitan universities and smaller rural colleges. Uniform mandates may create implementation challenges for resource-constrained institutions.

| 3. Scope and Definition of Discrimination

The Regulations define discrimination broadly, including both explicit and implicit conduct that impairs equality of treatment in education. Some student groups have expressed concern that expansive definitions may create ambiguity in distinguishing between discriminatory conduct and legitimate academic disagreement.

| 4. Fear of a 'Chilling Effect'

Academic analysis identifies what it describes as a 'fear versus equity' paradox, wherein strong anti-discrimination enforcement mechanisms may generate apprehension among certain groups regarding classroom discussions and social interaction. While the Regulations aim to eradicate discrimination, protestors argue that overcautious implementation could potentially discourage open dialogue on sensitive social issues.

| 5. Overlap with Existing Institutional Mechanisms

The Regulations allow referral of complaints to other statutory committees constituted under existing UGC regulations or applicable laws. Some stakeholders argue that this may create overlap with pre-existing grievance redressal bodies, leading to procedural complexity.

| 6. Due Process and Procedural Safeguards

The Regulations prescribe strict timelines for complaint handling. While these timelines aim to ensure timely redressal, protestors emphasise the importance of maintaining procedural fairness and adherence to principles of natural justice — balancing strong equity enforcement with safeguards ensuring fairness in inquiry procedures.

CHAPTER VII

Constitutional Foundation and Legal Analysis

| Constitutional Basis

The equity framework in higher educational institutions is firmly rooted in the Constitution of India. Articles 14, 15, 16, 17, and 21 collectively guarantee equality before the law, prohibit discrimination, abolish untouchability, and uphold the right to live with dignity. Articles 15(4) and 15(5) specifically empower the State to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, as well as SCs and STs, particularly in educational institutions.

Article 46 directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of SCs and STs and protect them from social injustice. Sections 3, 6, and 7 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandate non-discrimination and affirmative measures for persons with disabilities.

| Cases Tagged

▶ **Rohith Chakravarti Vemula v. Union of India & Ors. (2016)**

This case emerged following the death of Rohith Vemula, a Dalit research scholar at the University of Hyderabad, in January 2016. Allegations of institutional discrimination and administrative suspension triggered nationwide protests and parliamentary scrutiny. Significance: Brought structural discrimination within universities into mainstream constitutional and policy discourse.

▶ **AIIMS Caste Discrimination Complaints Matter (2016-2024)**

Multiple reports and internal reviews at AIIMS brought attention to allegations of caste-based discrimination in evaluation, mentorship, and institutional culture. Significance: Demonstrated that even premier national institutions faced allegations of structural exclusion, strengthening calls for uniform regulatory safeguards.

▶ **IIT Student Suicide Matters (Various Proceedings, 2010-2024)**

A series of student suicides across IITs led to public interest discussions concerning caste discrimination, academic pressure, and hostile campus environments. Significance: Reinforced the argument that informal grievance systems were insufficient and that standardised equity mechanisms were required.

▶ **State of Maharashtra v. Accused in Dr. Payal Tadvi Case (2019)**

Following the death of Dr. Payal Tadvi, a Scheduled Tribe postgraduate medical student, criminal proceedings were initiated. Allegations involved caste-based harassment by senior colleagues in a government-affiliated medical institution. Significance: Highlighted the need for institutional safeguards in professional and medical educational settings.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026 emerge within a complex constitutional and institutional landscape shaped by both tragic incidents of alleged discrimination and subsequent demands for stronger accountability mechanisms.

Together, these developments illustrate a constitutional dialogue rather than a unilateral policy shift. On one hand lies the mandate of substantive equality, dignity, and protection against discrimination under Articles 14, 15, 16, 17, and 21. On the other stands the need to preserve academic freedom, procedural fairness, and reasonable limits on delegated legislation.

The Supreme Court's stay and ongoing adjudication do not represent a final resolution but rather an opportunity to clarify the contours of equity regulation within India's higher education system. For the Lok Sabha, the central question is not merely whether the Regulations should exist, but how they should be structured to balance inclusion, fairness, institutional capacity, and constitutional legitimacy.

CHAPTER IX

The Executive Board

SPEAKER**Mr. Aditya Das**

BA (Hons.) Economics, Sri Venkateswara College. Alumnus of The Lawrence School, Sanawar. Accomplished MUN participant with multiple accolades and extensive experience mentoring and organising students across India.

DEPUTY SPEAKER**Mr. Granth Mehta**

'Power in a democracy is never absolute — it is questioned across the floor, defended through debate, and ultimately judged by the people it affects.' Deep interest in parliamentary debate, policy, and democratic accountability. Brings composure and procedural precision to the chair.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This Background Guide is a starting point for research — not an exhaustive account, and not a document that may be cited or used as evidence in committee. Delegates are expected to undertake independent research, verify facts through primary sources, and develop well-researched national positions. The quality of preparation will directly shape the depth and direction of debate.

The Lok Sabha at SCIMUN 2026 is designed not merely to test knowledge of the agenda but to develop the capacity for reasoned argument, diplomatic sensitivity, and genuine engagement with the issues at hand. Arrive prepared. Argue with precision. Negotiate with principle.

The Executive Board
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