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Engineering students can go online to air grievances against colleges

VOICE IT Institutes which don't have a grievance redressal mechanism in place likely to lose AICTE approval Students welcome

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Students and faculty at engineering and technical institutions can air their grievances against delay in results or fee refunds after withdrawal of admission and re-evaluation.

The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has made it mandatory (from February 20) for all its affiliated institutions to put grievance redressal mechanisms in place so that "each institute is able to receive and dispose of grievances online."

It has also directed the institutes to indicate the details of online grievance redressal mechanism names, contact numbers and e-mail IDs of members of the grievance committee on the college notice board to assure students that help is at hand.

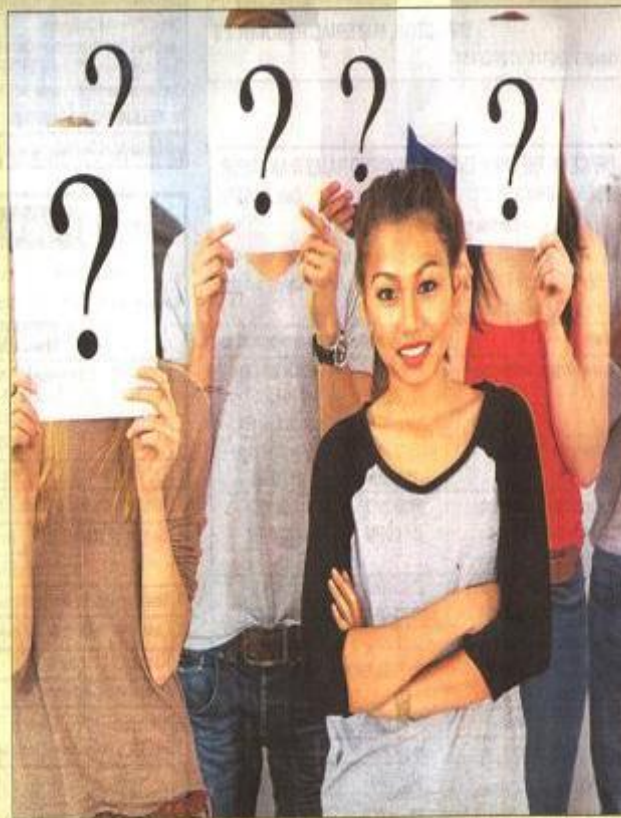
For effective monitoring, the Council has directed institutes to submit an online monthly status report regarding the number of grievances received, disposed of and the ones pending on the last day of the previous month.

The decision was taken about two weeks ago after directions from the ministry of human resource development that such mechanisms needed to be put in place urgently.

The Council, while granting approvals and during accreditation, will also take into account the performance of an institute in dealing with complaints and its effectiveness in solving grievances.

According to Anil D Sahasrabudhe, chairman, AICTE, redressal of grievance is mandatory irrespective of whether an institute wishes to get accredited or not. Grievance redressal will get linked to approval for an institution eventually.

On the idea behind the directive, Sahasrabudhe says students do complain, but "Some are



The All-India Council for Technical Education has taken serious action in the past on technical institutes violating norms for grievance redressal.

SHUTTERSTOCK

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ANIL D SAHASRABUDHE, chairman, all-india council for technical education

addressed, some delayed and others not addressed. We were flooded with mails both on our portal and the government's Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System portal. So the government decided that all grievances should be addressed in a time-bound manner. This will ensure transparency and students will be benefitted. Students will

feel confident and good institutes will get better branding."

Non-compliance would mean institutions losing approvals - but that might not happen immediately. "First, we want to bring in transparency. We have to test its efficacy. We will also see if students are misusing the mechanism to trouble strict colleges. Thereafter, we

will connect it to approval and accreditation," he adds. Earlier, in 2012, AICTE had notified the grievance regulations which defined the need for appointment of an ombudsman and also prescribed provisions for consequences for violation, which includes withdrawal of recognition and grants. Experts say the 2017 directive itself admits that several institutes have violated the regulations.

"The existing grievance redressal system in some colleges is not working to the satisfaction of students and faculty. What is the action taken against

the erring institutes for violation," asks Ravi Bhardwaj, a legal expert.

The Council has taken serious action in the past against violating institutes. "Whenever complaints are received, inspections are conducted to verify the truth and based on the gravity of the situation, penalties are imposed ranging from seat reduction to cancellation of admission," says Sahasrabudhe. The Delhi High Court recently directed the University Grants Commission to ensure that all universities have a similar mechanism in place.

NEW RULES

What's mandatory for engineering colleges?

- The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has made it mandatory for all its affiliated institutions to indicate the details of online grievance redressal mechanism, including contact details of members of the committee on the college notice board

- For effective monitoring, the Council has directed institutes to submit an online monthly status report regarding the number of grievances received, disposed of and the ones pending on the last day of the previous month

How it will help students

- According to the 2012 AICTE gazette regulations, students can file a complaint if a college makes admission contrary to merit or against its admission policy

- They can also raise an issue if there is delay in conduct of exams or declaration of results beyond that specified in the academic calendar

AICTE support on complaints

Students have lauded the move by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) that directs institutions to have an online grievance redressal mechanism in practice.

"It is a good step as there are many cases of admission cancellation, delay in exams, irregular classes and delay in disbursement of scholarships by colleges. Students will get a chance to voice their concerns and will be reassured knowing their problems will be addressed," says a student of a Delhi-based engineering college.

According to the 2012 AICTE gazette regulations, students can file a complaint if a college makes admission contrary to merit or against its admission policy.

They can also raise an issue if there is irregularity in the admission process adopted by the institute, or demands fee in excess of what is specified in the admission policy.

Students seeking admission under the reserved categories can also file a complaint if there is a breach of the policy for reservation in admissions.

A grievance can be filed if there is a delay in disbursement of scholarships, conduct of exams or declaration of results beyond that specified in the academic calendar. Students can also make a case if they are not satisfied with the facilities offered to them in college or if the facilities are not enough as per what was promised to them during admissions. Other instances include non-transparent or unfair evaluation practices; sexual harassment and refund of fees on withdrawal of admissions.

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