

Equal Opportunity Cell
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
Terms of Reference

I Introduction

The kinds of inequalities and discrimination that prevail in society are also reflected in academic institutions. While there are various constitutional and legal provisions to deal with this, it is also important for individual academic institutions to actively create an atmosphere wherein there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, region, language, sexual orientation and different physical abilities and wherein everyone has an equal opportunity to carry out their work/study. In addition to following the required laws and policies (with regard to reservation, for instance), this would also involve recognition of the fact that discrimination may often be implicit and opportunities may be curtailed by attitudes and practices that are insensitive to the different spaces from which students and employees come.

The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) is committed to creating a just and enabling space for its students and employees. It is with this mandate and in accordance with relevant UGC Guidelines that the Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) has been set up. The EOC shall be the overarching body coordinating the functions of such a cell for ST, SC, OBC, Minority, and PWD groups. The EOC will not only be responsible for protective functions (such as redressal of complaints against discrimination) but also for promotional functions such as capacity building among the concerned social groups and sensitization of the larger CSSSC community.

II Composition and Procedure for Internal Functioning

1. The EOC will consist of two faculty members, two students, and two administrative staff.
2. At least three members will be from SC or ST or OBC or Minority or PWD groups.
3. The members of the faculty and administrative staff will be appointed by the Director in consultation with the Academic Council (in case of faculty) and Registrar (in case of administrative staff). Student members will be elected/selected by the student body.
4. The tenure of the EOC will be two years.
5. The Chair of the EOC shall be one of the faculty members. In the absence of the Chair, the other faculty member will act as the Chair.
6. Functions of the Chair:
 - (i) To keep records;
 - (ii) To convene meetings of the Cell;
 - (iii) To receive complaints about grievance redressal and to take necessary actions to organise hearings.
7. The Cell will meet at least twice a year.
8. Members shall be intimated of meetings in writing or by electronic communication at least five working days in advance except in the case of an Emergency Meeting.

9. Any member of the EOC may request the Chair to call an emergency meeting. A notice of one working day shall be required for such a meeting to be called.
10. A vacancy arising out of three consecutive absences without intimation /resignation shall be filled within eight weeks of the date of occurrence of the vacancy by the Director.
11. The Director will fill any vacancies that may arise upon retirement, resignation, disqualification, death or prolonged illness of members.

III Functions of EOC

1. To ensure that the Centre follows the relevant reservation policies with regard to student admissions (currently, Government of West Bengal policies) and appointments of faculty and administrative staff (Government of India policies) and that the relevant records for the same are maintained in the appropriate offices.
2. To make suggestions from time to time to ensure effective implementation of the reservation policies as per government norms.
3. To suggest measures to assist SC/ST/OBC/PWD/Minority students with admission formalities and to improve their academic performance through appropriate measures (such as additional classes, bilingual/multilingual teaching and reading material where possible). In the case of PWD students, the EOC shall coordinate with the appropriate authorities of the Centre to ensure that all relevant government orders with regard to additional exam time, access to technology, infrastructural requirements and so on are followed.
4. To organise interactive sessions and informal meetings with SC/ST/OBC/PWD/Minority students and employees in order to help them deal with any social and academic problems.
5. To organise meetings with the larger CSSSC community on the importance of an egalitarian and inclusive culture at the Centre.
6. To help create a socially congenial atmosphere and to encourage the growth of healthy interpersonal relations amongst students and employees from diverse social backgrounds.
7. To collect and circulate (to the appropriate offices in the Centre or by uploading on the Centre's website) government orders relevant to equal opportunity with regard to education and employment of SC/ST/OBC/PWD/Minority students and employees as well as information related to schemes and programmes for particular groups (e.g., scholarships).
8. To deal with the redressal of grievances and complaints pertaining to discrimination or barriers to equal opportunity (discussed in detail in Section IV).

IV Grievance and Complaint Redressal:

1. SC/ST/OBC/PWD/Minority students and employees of CSSSC can approach the Chair of the Cell for redressal of any grievance or complaint regarding academic, administrative or social problems faced in CSSSC.
2. Any grievance or complaint received by members should be immediately forwarded to the Chair.
3. If the grievance is of a general nature related to equal opportunity which is to do with the overall working of the institution (as against a complaint of discrimination against

a specific individual or unit/office within CSSSC), the EOC will meet to discuss the grievance, hold wider consultations if necessary, and make appropriate recommendations to the relevant authority within a month.

4. Complaints of discrimination made against specific individuals or units/offices within CSSSC may be oral or in writing. If the complaint is oral, it would be converted into a written form and authenticated by the complainant under her/his dated signature or thumb impression as the case may be as soon as possible.
5. All relevant details, including the date, time, and place of any specific incidents as well as context (if relevant) must be recorded.
6. Any complaint received by members other than the Chair should be immediately forwarded to the Chair.
7. If the complaint falls within the purview of the Cell, it should be taken up within a week of receipt of the complaint.
8. In case of complaints that fall outside the scope of the Cell, a written communication shall be made to the complainant with an explanation and if possible, suggestions on the competent authority to approach.
9. If the complainant so desires, the EOC may, before initiating an enquiry, attempt to take steps for mediation between the complainant and the respondent.
10. The terms of any settlement arrived at (which *cannot* include any monetary settlement) would be recorded and copies provided to both parties.
11. In case a settlement is arrived at, no further enquiry shall be conducted by the EOC except if the terms of the settlement are not complied with by the respondent.
12. In case of an enquiry process, the EOC shall complete the enquiry in the shortest possible time, not exceeding three months from the date on which the complaint is referred to it.
13. The EOC shall enquire into the complaint, observing the principles of natural justice and maintaining sensitivity towards issues of caste, gender, ethnicity, religion and different physical abilities.
14. The complainant and the respondent shall be given a reasonable opportunity to present and defend their case. But the complainant and the respondent cannot bring lawyers on their behalf.
15. Witnesses may be called if deemed necessary.
16. The enquiry committee shall also have the power to ask the relevant authorities for any official papers or documents pertaining to the complainant as well as the respondent.
17. In case the respondent fails to attend consecutively for three hearings, the enquiry may be terminated and the decision may be taken on the complaint on an ex-parte basis.
18. Records of all evidence gathered in the course of the enquiry shall be maintained.
19. Enquiry proceedings shall be confidential.
20. On completion of an enquiry, the Cell will submit a detailed report of its findings to the Director. If the respondent is found guilty, the report should indicate the gravity of the offence and suggestions for action.
21. The Director shall take necessary action within a month of the submission of the enquiry report and communicate the same to the EOC.
22. In case no action is taken by the Director within a month of the submission of the enquiry report, the EOC may write to the Director seeking information about the follow-up to the report.