

Swachhata Hi Sewa Campaign - University Grants Commission

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Short Communication

UGC Guidelines for Banning Plastic

Plastic waste has become one of the most significant environmental challenges, adversely affecting soil, water, human health, and overall well-being. Excessive plastic consumption, coupled with inadequate waste disposal systems, has overwhelmed urban waste management infrastructure and polluted rivers and water sources in rural areas. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, the Government has launched a nationwide campaign to curb plastic use, particularly single-use plastics, and promote environmentally friendly alternatives.

Higher educational institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and behaviours. With their extensive reach and influence, they can effectively educate students and communities about the importance of reducing plastic consumption. In alignment with this national initiative, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issues the following guidelines for all HEIs in India:

Guidelines for the Use of Plastic in Higher Education Institutions

1. Scope

1. These guidelines apply to all higher educational institutions (universities and colleges) across the country.
2. HEIs are encouraged to implement policies and practices that promote cleaner, plastic-free campuses.

2. Plastic-Free Campuses

All HEIs must systematically work towards making their campuses free of plastic by banning its use and adopting environmentally sustainable alternatives.

3. Institutional Responsibilities

Each HEI shall undertake the following measures:

1. Prohibit the use of single-use plastics in canteens, shopping complexes, hostels, and other institutional premises.
2. Organize awareness campaigns and sensitization workshops to educate students and staff about the environmental hazards of single-use plastics.
3. Mandate students to refrain from bringing non-biodegradable plastic items onto campus.
4. Encourage students to educate their families about the dangers of plastic pollution and promote plastic-free households.
5. Install necessary alternatives such as water stations to reduce dependence on plastic water bottles and promote eco-friendly options like cloth and paper bags instead of plastic bags and packaging materials.

4. Community Engagement

HEIs participating in the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan must extend their plastic-free initiatives to adopted villages, conducting awareness campaigns and promoting the use of sustainable alternatives until these villages become plastic-free.

Campaign to Reduce/Eliminate Littered Single-Use Plastics

A. Prohibited Items

The following single-use plastic items must not be used:

1. Disposable plastic or thermocol (polystyrene) cutlery, including plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives, trays, straws, and stirrers.
2. Thermocol decorations.
3. Plastic flags.
4. Plastic wrapping or packing films are used for gifts and invitation cards.
5. Plastic or PVC (flex) banners of less than 100 microns in thickness.

B. Discouraged Items

The following items should be discouraged, with a preference for sustainable alternatives:

1. Plastic carry bags.
2. Artificial plastic flowers.
3. PET plastic water bottles, particularly those with a capacity of less than 1 litre.
4. Plastic folders.
5. Any other plastic products for which eco-friendly substitutes are available.

By implementing these guidelines, HEIs can contribute significantly to the national effort in reducing plastic waste and fostering a cleaner, healthier environment for future generations.

References

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