



Maharashtra Student Safety, Protection and Mental Wellbeing Policy, 2025

**महाराष्ट्र विद्यार्थी,
सुरक्षा, संरक्षण व मानसिक कल्याण धोरण, २०२५**

**Higher & Technical Education Department
Government of Maharashtra**

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Higher and Technical Education Department,
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PREFACE BY THE HON'BLE MINISTER, HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

I am pleased to present the Maharashtra Student Safety, Protection and Mental Wellbeing Policy 2025 a milestone document that reflects our State's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the emotional, psychological, and physical safety of every learner. Education is not merely a pathway to employment; It is a journey of self-discovery, dignity, and purpose. Our students carry dreams that shape families, communities, and the future of Maharashtra. It is the responsibility of institutions, educators, administrators, and the Government to ensure that these young minds are nurtured in environments that are safe, compassionate, and empowering.

This Policy has been developed through careful consultation with experts in psychiatry, psychology, higher education governance, law, and student welfare. It responds directly to judicial directions, national guidelines, and the lived realities of our campuses. More importantly, it gives a unified framework for prevention, early identification, timely intervention, and coordinated support across all higher education institutions in the State. I commend the State Expert Committee for its rigorous work, and I appreciate the support received from universities, medical institutions, schools, boards, student counsellors, civil society partners, and frontline educators. Together, we reaffirm our collective duty to protect life and build campuses where every student feels seen, heard, valued, and supported.

This Policy is a beginning. The true strength of our commitment will lie in sustained implementation, accountability, and compassion at every level. Let us move forward with conviction and humanity, ensuring that Maharashtra remains a model for the nation in student wellbeing and Institutional responsibility.

Shri. Chandrakant Dada Patil
Minister, Higher and Technical
Education Government of Maharashtra

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PART – I

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1: PRELIMINARY

- 1.1. This Policy shall be called the Maharashtra Student Safety, Protection and Mental Wellbeing Policy, 2025.
- 1.2. It shall come into force from the date of its notification by the Higher and Technical Education Department, Government of Maharashtra.
- 1.3. It shall apply to all public non - agricultural Universities, Affiliated Colleges, Recognized Institutions and Private Universities in the State (hereinafter referred to as HEIs).
- 1.4. This Policy shall apply to all students, faculty members, counsellors, officers, wardens, non-teaching staff and any person interacting with students within institutional premises or systems.
- 1.5. This Policy shall be made publicly accessible on the official websites and notice boards of HEIs.

SECTION 2: POLICY CONTEXT, RATIONALE AND POLICY IMPERATIVE

2.1 Context and Rationale

- 2.1.1. Higher and Technical Education marks a formative stage where young adults engage with aspiration, identity-building, and intellectual growth. Their potential can be realised only within a campus environment that upholds, safety, respect, and psychological wellbeing.
- 2.1.2. Considering contemporary academic, social, and emotional pressures, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must ensure safe, inclusive, and diversity-sensitive environments that promote resilience, life skills, healthy peer interactions, and mental wellness.
- 2.1.3. Excessive academic pressure, competitive cultures, and examination-centric practices have adversely affected student wellbeing. HEIs must adopt approaches that balance academic rigour with emotional safety.

2.1.4. Campuses today are complex social ecosystems comprising students from diverse socio-cultural, economic, and psychological backgrounds. Their experiences are shaped not only by academics but also by peer dynamics, identity factors, and personal vulnerabilities.

2.1.5. Invisible determinants such as disability, chronic illness, mental-health vulnerabilities, socio-economic disadvantage, gender identity, caste-based discrimination, first-generation learner status, and rural-urban disparities significantly influence student experiences and require institutional sensitivity and structured support systems.

2.2 Policy Imperative

2.2.1 A coordinated system is essential to ensure that no student suffers in silence, and that emotional crises are addressed with empathy, speed, and professionalism. The policy must mandate prevention, support, intervention, and accountability to safeguard life and uphold Maharashtra's commitment to student safety and protection.

2.2.2 This Policy consolidates essential standards, protective measures, and grievance-redressal mechanisms required to ensure a safe, inclusive, gender-sensitive, and disability-responsive educational environment.

2.2.3 HEIs shall implement comprehensive measures across the following three core domains:

2.2.3.1 Physical Safety and Security Protocols;

2.2.3.2 Mental Health, Counselling, and Wellbeing Systems;

2.2.3.3 Suicide Prevention, Risk Identification, and Crisis Intervention.

PART II
LEGAL POLICY MANDATE, SPIRIT AND INTENT OF THE
POLICY,
AND
CORE OBJECTIVES

SECTION 3: LEGAL POLICY MANDATE

This Policy is Issued under binding judicial, statutory, and regulatory mandates governing student safety, mental health, and institutional accountability.

3.1 Supreme Court of India

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has directed all States to establish robust student-protection systems, mental-health frameworks, and suicide-prevention mechanisms within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.1.1 Special Leave Petition (SLP) No. 3177/2025 – Sukhdev Saha vs. State of Andhra Pradesh and Others

3.2 Ministry of Education, Government of India

3.2.2. Circular dated 08.08.2025

Mandates States and Universities to implement comprehensive mental-health services, grievance-redressal structures, and institutional support systems for student wellbeing.

3.3 UGC and AICTE Regulations

3.3.1 UGC Guidelines for Promotion of Physical, Mental and Emotional Well-being of Students (2022).

3.3.2 AICTE Student Development and Mental Wellness Framework (2023).

These regulations require HEIs to provide counselling, early-warning systems, safety structures, and inclusive campus environments.

3.4 Constitutional and Statutory Responsibility

3.4.1 Article 21 and Article 21A Right to Life and Right to Education.

3.4.2 The Maharashtra Public Universities Act, 2016 – mandates student welfare, grievance redressal, and institutional accountability.

3.4.3 The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 – mandates accessible, inclusive, disability-sensitive support in HEIs.

3.4.4 National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 – promotes holistic student development, wellbeing, and safe learning environments.

3.5 Mental Healthcare Act, 2017

3.5.1 This Policy adopts the rights-based approach under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, guaranteeing accessible, affordable, non-discriminatory, confidential mental-health care and crisis support, consistent with national suicide-prevention directives.

3.6 National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), 2014

3.6.1 This Policy aligns with NMHP's emphasis on promotive and preventive care, community-based mental-health systems, early identification, stigma reduction, and integration with district-level mental-health resources.

3.7 National Youth Policy, 2014

3.7.1 This Policy is harmonised with the National Youth Policy's focus on youth wellbeing, life-skills education, substance-use prevention, and creation of safe and supportive educational environments.

SECTION 4: SPIRIT AND INTENT OF THE POLICY

4.1 This Policy aims to guide HEIs in establishing safe, responsive, and student-centric environments through actionable, feasible, and accountable institutional structures.

4.2 This Policy seeks to safeguard the emotional, social, academic, and personal dignity of students and ensure robust mental-wellbeing systems across all higher and technical education institutions.

4.3 This Policy aims to prevent student suicides, harassment, abuse, discrimination, and institutional negligence by establishing proactive, continuous, and protective systems.

4.4 This Policy mandates accountable mechanisms for grievance redressal counselling, crisis intervention, early-warning systems, and emotional safety.

4.5 This Policy promotes compassionate and responsive campuses through structured awareness programmes and capacity-building of faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

4.6 This Policy ensures inclusive and equitable support for all student groups tribal, rural, urban, LGBTQIA+, disabled, economically or socially disadvantaged so that no student is denied safety, dignity, or institutional care.

4.7 This Policy establishes uniform standards and mandatory duties ensuring that HEIs function with empathy, accountability, fairness, and a student-centric approach at all times.

SECTION 5: PROBLEM STATEMENT

5.1 Rising Emotional Distress Among Students

The State of Maharashtra is witnessing an alarming increase in student stress, anxiety, depression, emotional isolation, and academic pressure across Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Students are struggling silently with intense performance expectations, financial hardships, socio-cultural transitions, relationship issues, and digital toxicity factors that have significantly eroded emotional resilience. The absence of structured emotional support mechanisms has further aggravated this distress.

5.2 Increasing Student Suicides and Urban Vulnerability

Student suicides in Maharashtra have emerged as a critical public health and educational governance issue. Urban centres such as Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur reflect disproportionately high numbers due to competitive environments, high-stakes academic ecosystems, migration for education, hostel isolation, and escalating digital harassment. These tragic deaths highlight systemic gaps in:

5.2.1 Early identification of at-risk students;

5.2.2 Preventive safeguarding;

5.2.3 Timely crisis response;

5.2.4 Post-crisis care.

The current institutional mechanisms remain inadequate in anticipating and addressing the emotional emergencies that can lead to suicidality.

5.3 Absence of Trained Mental Health Professionals

Most institutions lack trained counsellors, psychologists, or mental health professionals capable of providing preventive care, trauma-informed counselling, or crisis intervention. Faculty members, hostel wardens, administrative staff, and student leaders remain largely untrained in recognising red flags, responding sensitively, or handling emotional crises. The fragmented nature of existing grievance redressal systems often bureaucratic, slow, or intimidating discourages reporting and leaves vulnerable students unsupported.

5.4 Inconsistent Accountability and Institutional Negligence

There is no uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) across institutions to address emotional distress, harassment, digital exploitation, or behavioural emergencies. Existing systems suffer from:

5.4.1 Inconsistent documentation;

5.4.2 Poor communication flows;

5.4.3 No real-time monitoring;

5.4.4 Limited institutional accountability.

In several cases, negligence, untrained responses, or delayed action have escalated student vulnerabilities. Many incidents go unreported or unresolved, and students fear reprisals, stigma, or administrative apathy.

5.5 Growing Digital Threats and Psychological Harm

Deepfakes, screenshot misuse, cyberbullying, academic blackmail, trolling, and online shaming are rapidly increasing among youth. Many students face coercion through digital means, but hesitate to report due to shame, fear, or lack of clarity. HEIs currently lack robust digital safety cells, cyber-psychological support, or rapid redressal systems.

5.6 Vulnerable Groups at Higher Risk

Tribal students, LGBTQIA+ youth, rural migrants, first-generation learners, female students, and those with disabilities face heightened emotional, social, and systemic challenges. Insensitivity, cultural gaps, and lack of inclusive support structures deepen their vulnerability and isolation within campuses.

5.7 Urgent Need for Unified, Enforceable State Policy

There is an urgent need of a State-level policy which is comprehensive, compassionate, standardised, enforceable and student-centric, addressing inconsistent implementation, institutional gaps and preventable tragedies. This policy shall integrate.

- 5.7.1 Student Safety;
- 5.7.2 Mental health;
- 5.7.3 Protection from harm;
- 5.7.4 Crisis care;
- 5.7.5 Digital safety;
- 5.7.6 Hostel security;
- 5.7.7 Accountability mechanisms;
- 5.7.8 Institutional responsibility.

SECTION 6: CORE OBJECTIVES

Objective	Policy Commitment
Safety Protection	Preserve emotional, social and personal Safety of every student
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Establish Wellness Centres, counsellors, helplines and peer support
Zero Tolerance	Against ragging, bullying, abuse, discrimination, cyber harassment
Safe Campus Ecosystem	Security, reporting mechanisms, emergency crisis protocols
Grievance Justice	Transparent, time-bound resolution through institutional committees
Capacity Building	Training for faculty, wardens, administrators in mental health and sensitization
Community Participation	Engagement of parents, alumni, NGOs and professionals

SECTION 7: GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

7.1 Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

7.1.1 All mechanisms put in place shall be transparent, non-discriminatory, and aligned with constitutional values of dignity, equity, compassion, and justice.

7.1.2 HEIs shall ensure strict confidentiality of all mental-health, disability-related, and psychosocial information of students or staff.

7.1.3 Records shall be accessible only to authorised personnel, and institutions shall establish clear protocols for secure storage, restricted access, and responsible dissemination of sensitive information.

7.1.4 Stigmatising labels or identity-based derogatory terminology such as "suicide case", "LD girl", "depressed student" are strictly prohibited and constitute professional misconduct.

7.1.5 Discussions involving student cases must anonymise personal details to maintain privacy and respect.

7.2 Documentation Standards

7.2.1 HEIs shall maintain standardised templates, registers, and SOPs for documenting mental-health concerns, disability-related accommodations, and other sensitive issues.

7.2.2 Such data may be used without compromising identity for institutional planning, capacity building, programme development, and research aligned with ethical norms.

7.3 Informed Consent

7.3.1 Written informed consent is mandatory for availing counselling or confidential wellbeing services.

7.3.2 For students under 18 years, consent shall be obtained from a parent or lawful guardian.

7.3.3 HEIs shall develop uniform consent procedures for counsellors and student-support units.

PART III
CORE POLICY FRAMEWORK

SECTION 8: INSTITUTIONAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Tribal and Rural Students

HEIs shall ensure:-

- 8.1.1. Appointment of Regional-language counsellors;
- 8.1.2. Linguistic Bridge support;
- 8.1.3. Foundation/bridge programmes;
- 8.1.4. Hostel peer-buddy system;
- 8.1.5. Digital literacy assistance;
- 8.1.6. Cultural adaptation orientation;
- 8.1.7. Community liaison support;
- 8.1.8. Emergency travel facilitation.

8.2 LGBTQIA+ Students

HEIs shall ensure:-

- 8.2.1 Zero discrimination;
- 8.2.2 Confidential reporting mechanisms;
- 8.2.3 Gender-neutral institutional forms;
- 8.2.4 Trained and sensitised counsellors;
- 8.2.5 Safe spaces on campus;
- 8.2.6 Inclusive hostel allocation.

8.3 Students with Disabilities / Neurodivergence

HEIs shall ensure-

- 8.3.1 Accessible counselling rooms;
- 8.3.2 Sign-language/communication support;

- 8.3.3 Visual/audio learning modules;
- 8.3.4 Reasonable accommodation in academics;
- 8.3.5 Mobility and transport assistance;
- 8.3.6 Assistive technologies.

8.4 Economically Marginalised / Orphaned Students

HEIs shall ensure-

- 8.4.1 Food security measures;
- 8.4.2 Fee waivers/concessions;
- 8.4.3 Access to welfare schemes;
- 8.4.4 Essential-item support;
- 8.4.5 Emergency financial aid.

8.5 Students in Distress or Bereavement

HEIs shall ensure-

- 8.5.1 Immediate counselling access;
- 8.5.2 Activation of trauma-support protocol;
- 8.5.3 Non-penal academic flexibility;
- 8.5.4 Peer support leader (PSL) assistance;
- 8.5.5 Guardian/parent coordination where required.

8.6 Establishment of Student Wellness and Mental Health Centres

Every HEI shall establish a Student Wellness and Mental Health Centre as a permanent unit providing-

- 8.6.1 Professional counselling;
- 8.6.2 Crisis intervention;
- 8.6.3 Stress-management and resilience programmes;

8.6.4 Peer-support activities;

8.6.5 Referral pathways to medical/psychiatric services.

8.7 Mandatory Appointment of Mental Health Professionals

Each HEI shall appoint-

8.7.1 A qualified counsellor or clinical psychologist (full-time/visiting);

8.7.2 A psychiatrist on call or on Institutional panel;

8.7.3 Partnerships with DMHP, NIMHANS, TISS, or accredited mental-health agencies.

No Wellness Centre shall function without certified personnel.

8.8 Student Helplines and Digital Support "24 × 7"

8.8.1 HEIs shall operate 24 × 7 toll-free helplines with multilingual assistance.

8.8.2 A rapid-response protocol shall be activated for distress calls.

8.8.3 HEIs may deploy ethical AI-based monitoring systems solely for early-warning signals such as absenteeism, academic decline, or social withdrawal.

8.9 Suicide Prevention Protocol (Identify – Intervene – Protect)

All HEIs shall adopt the following three-tier intervention model-

8.9.1 Identify: Recognise red flags using trained personnel.

8.9.2 Intervene: Provide immediate psychological first aid and counselling.

8.9.3 Protect: Ensure safety, supervision, emergency referral and follow-up.

No student under distress shall face disciplinary threats or academic penalties.

8.10 Gatekeeper Training

8.10.1 All faculty members, wardens, NSS/NCC officers, and student advisors shall undergo annual Gatekeeper Training.