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# NMC to med students: Avoid alcohol, seek help in case of substance abuse

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The National Medical Commission, in a new set of guidelines issued on Monday, has said that medical students should avoid alcohol, tobacco and other substances of abuse and also refrain from indiscriminately posting patients-related information on social media.

The guidelines on 'professional responsibilities of medical students' state that the learners are expected to seek treatment and counselling in case of substance abuse.



The guidelines, prepared by NMC's Ethics and Medical Registration Board (EMRB), also says, "Students must be aware of the ever expanding scope of social media with its usefulness as well as professional hazards associated with its indiscriminate use."

"It is expected that these guidelines will be used by teachers, medical education units and institutions to instil a sense of responsibility in medical students rather than using them for punitive actions," said EMRB member Dr Yogender Malik.

The guidelines also mention that medical students are expected to dress modestly and appropriately in all their professional endeavours. "Students are encouraged to organise regular environmental audits of the campus to identify the problem areas concerning environment and initiate suitable programmes like tree plantation, reduction of use of single use plastic, judicious use of water etc.," it adds.

It also states that students are expected to learn the local language so as to effectively communicate with patients during their studies.



# 'India needs a stronger NAAC with transparent, error-free functions'

*A stronger National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with transparent error-free functioning is the need of the hour, UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar tells TOI's Manash Gohain in an exclusive interview. NAAC assesses and accredits higher educational institutions (HEI). Excerpts from the interview:*

**There are some serious allegations against the functioning of NAAC?**

■ Accreditation and ranking are complex tasks requiring continual upgradation... do not consider aberrations as a norm. Having said this, I am mindful that the qualitative and quantitative methods used by NAAC need careful examination and improvements. We need to reinforce NAAC instead of discrediting it to stimulate our educational institutions to recast themselves to provide high-quality education. UGC and the education ministry are pursuing the issues raised about NAAC and will demonstrate robust education reforms in the coming time.

**A former chairperson of NAAC who stepped down recently alleged vested interest, malpractices, and nexus in the grading**

**process...**

■ NAAC is an autonomous body funded by UGC. Its executive committee evolves policies collectively for assessment and accreditation. In case of possible malpractices and nexus in the grading process, the committee has full autonomy to set up a panel and work out solutions to avoid undesirable practices eroding the system's transparency.

**An inquiry committee has red flagged several irregularities, including that the council's IT system was found to be compromised... assessors barely visited sites... and individuals without authority were provided full access to NAAC's internal system.**

■ NAAC's accreditation process has two steps—quantitative analysis based on data provided by the institutions and qualitative study based on a visit by an expert com-



## TOI INTERVIEW

mittee to the institution. The former has 70% weightage and the latter 30%. Recently, NAAC has brought in several changes in its online portal to simplify data uploading by institutions. For data validation and verification (DVV) of the qualitative analysis, NAAC has also roped in institutions of national importance, such as IITs, to strengthen the process. During expert visits to the institutions, if there are any complaints, such experts are debarred from participating in future visits. **CAG also found discrepancies in the inspections being carried out by NAAC which resulted in awarding inaccurate**

**grades to several institutions?**

■ The mechanism under NAAC takes any such feedback seriously and tries to tighten loose ends to safeguard the internal processes of NAAC. We need a stronger NAAC with transparent, objective and error-free functions. Finding a solid correlation between NAAC accreditation and NIRF ranking may not be possible in some cases since both systems have different parameters and processes. We observe this even in world university rankings. But there is no doubt that NAAC must continually improve its processes.

**Is the government planning to overhaul the accreditation process?**

■ The ministry of education has already constituted a committee under the chairmanship of K Radhakrishnan, former chairman of Isro, to strengthen the accreditation process. UGC also formed a committee headed by Surinder Prasad, former director of IIT-Delhi, and another committee headed by M K Sridhar, member of the EC of NAAC. These panels will help in strengthening NAAC.