MAINSTREAMING GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

December 2025

unicef
for every child

enfold

The Metropolitan Institute

MAINSTREAMING GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

December 2025

By Enfold Proactive Health Trust

Supported by

unicef for every child

In collaboration with

The Metropolitan Institute

Enfold Proactive Health Trust
No 42, 3rd main,
1st cross, Domlur 2nd Stage,
Bengaluru- 560071, India

+91 99000 94251

info@enfoldindia.org

Cite as: Enfold Proactive Health Trust, *Mainstreaming Gender, Sexuality, and Mental Health in India's Higher Education* (2025)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy brief has been made possible due to the combined efforts of many individuals. We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who contributed in their different capacities to this brief from its conception to completion.

Enfold Proactive Health Trust is thankful to UNICEF Hyderabad, for their valuable support that enabled us to write the policy brief, and to The Metropolitan Institute (TMI) for their collaboration and commitment in shaping the research design, analysis, and co-writing the brief.

We are deeply thankful to the diverse stakeholders who shared their time, experiences, and perspectives. Their contributions enriched this work and ensured that the recommendations are grounded in lived realities and practical expertise. These include representatives from non-governmental organisations, government departments, the legal community, and the healthcare sector, and others working at the intersection of child rights, gender equity, sexuality education, and personal safety. We are especially grateful to Dr. Aditya Goenka, IPS (Deputy Director, Training, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy), Advocate Anant Asthana, Faneesha (Teacher Education, DSERT Karnataka), Centre for Gender Justice Studies at Maharashtra NLU, Dr. Hima Bindu (Chairperson of AHA), Neetika Vishwanath (Square Circle Clinic), Dr. PM Nair, (IPS retd.), Paramita Banerjee (Founder, DIKSHA), Pooja Taparia (Founder, Arpan), Dr Rajesh Mehta (MO-CAH at World Health Organization-SEA Region), Ramya Anand (Co-Lead, TARSHI), Dr. Shaibya Saldanha (Co-Founder of Enfold), Shakila Singh (Professor at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) Shashank Shekhar (SC Lawyer, NGO Sambhavana), Shirish (Director, Prayas), Sonal (Programme Officer, SRHR, YP Foundation), Dr. Suresh Bada Math (Professor of Psychiatry, NIMHANS), and Vasudev Sharma M R Mamatha (Member, CWC).

Dr V Chandra-Mouli (MBBS, MSc, PhD (Doctor of Health), and former WHO employee with an extensive experience of working on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, guided us immensely to ensure the policy brief is rooted in credible research and grassroot realities.

The brief was authored by Dr. Sangeeta Saksena, Co-Founder, and Sanjana, Sr. Program Manager from Enfold's Prevention team and Kartik Saboo, Founder-CEO and Srikar Nagasubramanyam, Head of Policy and Research, from The Metropolitan Institute. We extend our appreciation to Enfold's Research team, Swagata Raha, Shruthi Ramakrishnan and Gopika Nangia for their review of the brief and valuable suggestions. We would also like to thank Pushpalatha M, Gururaj GG, and Likith from the Prevention team as well as Shyam Rathod from TMI for supporting us with the government interviews. Anupama Pradeepan from TMI, and Meesa Subramaniam, and Juhi Mathew from Enfold helped us with the research and curriculum analysis, supported by our interns, Disha Lahon, Ramavath Bhanusankar Naik, Ayishath Zainaba and Monisha. Khushi Kansal and Juhi Mathew from Enfold conducted the needs analysis study with university students. Dr. Divita Kothekar (Asst. Professor, MNLU, Nagpur), Abhay Trivedi (Student Coordinator, Centre for Gender Justice Studies, MNLU, Nagpur), Ankush Singh and Dipanshu Hood helped us in conducting the focus group discussions at Maharashtra NLU, Nagpur. Abha Indurkar helped us with valuable insights at the drafting stage of the brief. We are grateful for their support.

The formatting, layout and design were done by Rumjhum Gupta, Multimedia Designer from Enfold. The cover was illustrated by Sheryl John, Visual Content and Digital Media Designer from Enfold.

Finally, we express our gratitude to every individual and organisation working to build safer, more inclusive, and dignity-affirming learning spaces for children and young people. This policy brief is inspired by, and dedicated to, the children and youth of Bharat.

Glossary of Key Terms and Acronyms

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE): A curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that empower them to realize their health, well-being, and dignity. UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) outlines eight core concepts for CSE, including relationships, gender, and violence prevention.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Violence directed at an individual based on their biological sex or gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation. In higher education contexts, this often manifests as sexual harassment, stalking, or intimate partner violence.

Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), now renamed to Internal Committee (IC): A mandatory body that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and workplaces must establish under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013 and UGC Regulations, 2015. The Repealing and Amendment Act, 2016 changed the term ICC to Internal Committee (IC) in the POSH Act. The Committee is responsible for receiving and redressing complaints of sexual harassment and is legally required to implement gender sensitisation mechanisms.

Intersectionality: A framework for understanding how various social identities - such as gender, caste, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc - overlap to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. It highlights that individuals often face multiple, compounded forms of marginalization rather than singular issues.

IPPF: International Planned Parent Federation

ITGSE: International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education

Manas / Manasa Vyadhi: Terms derived from ancient Indian texts (such as the Rigveda and Ayurveda) referring to the "mind" (Manas) and "mental illness" (Manasa Vyadhi). These frameworks historically prioritized the treatment of Aadhi (mental anguish) as a precursor or companion to Vyadhi (physical illness).

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: A comprehensive framework approved by the Government of India to transform the education system. It emphasizes "Equitable and Inclusive Education," aiming to bridge social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school and higher education.

POCSO Act: The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. A legal framework that defines different forms of child sexual abuse, establishes special courts for trial, and mandates the reporting of such offenses, prioritizing the best interests and safety of the child.

POSH Act: The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. This legislation mandates that employers provide a safe working environment and establishes a redressal mechanism (Internal Commitee) for complaints of sexual harassment against women and promote a culture of safety and respect.

Restorative Approach (RA) / Restorative Justice: A pedagogical and disciplinary methodology that shifts focus from punishment to relationship-building, empathy, and accountability. Rather than strictly assigning blame, RA asks: "Who has been harmed, what are their needs, who caused the harm, whose obligation is it to make things right?" It encourages taking responsibility and accountability for one's actions. It is increasingly recommended for addressing bullying and conflict in educational settings.

SDG 4.7: Focuses on ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. This includes education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equity, peace, global citizenship, and cultural diversity.

SIECUS: The Sexuality Information and Education Council of USA.

SOGIESC: Acronym for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics. This comprehensive terminology is used internationally to address diverse identities and ensure inclusivity in legal, health, and educational frameworks.

UGC (University Grants Commission): India's statutory body set up by the Government of India in accordance with the UGC Act, 1956. It is responsible for the coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination, and research in university education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India is at a pivotal juncture, committed to empowering its youth by nurturing responsible citizens and a society characterised by safety, equity, and respect. [1] [2] The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative milestone in promoting gender inclusivity across all educational levels by emphasising "Equitable and Inclusive Education," and aiming to remove barriers for women and marginalised groups in higher education institutes (HEIs).[3] It also signals the integration of several aspects of sexuality, mental health, gender sensitivity, sexual harassment prevention, consent, digital safety, and well-being into the curriculum, while establishing a fund to provide targeted assistance to all learners including transgender individuals, and students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

India's higher education system is also making significant strides toward gender equity and mental health. The University Grants Commission (UGC), as India's apex educational authority, has established robust regulatory frameworks for preventing sexual harassment and ensuring women's safety through the UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment) Regulations, 2015. These regulations mandate all HEIs to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) with built-in gender sensitisation mechanisms. This foundation has led to numerous innovative initiatives across the country, including the SAKSHAM Portal for women's empowerment on campuses, comprehensive gender audit systems, and specialised support mechanisms for marginalised communities.[4] Similarly, UGC recently mandated that all HEIs have qualified counsellors or psychologists on campus for student support.[5] This runs parallel to its key initiative, the National Task Force on Students Mental Health,[6] and the National Wellbeing Conclaves conducted by IITs.

While substantial progress has been achieved through these policy frameworks, the critical imperative lies in implementing preventative and educational mechanisms that require cultural sensitivity, sustained commitment, and adequate resources. A 2018 audit at Delhi University revealed that one in four women had experienced sexual harassment, with 40% of cases going unreported.[7] This is compounded by a mental health crisis, evidenced by increasing suicide rates particularly among young men.[8] The foundational knowledge and skills necessary for challenging discrimination, understanding consent, and effectively navigating personal safety become increasingly crucial in our digitally connected world. India's youth require systematic education that equips them with the competencies to create healthy relationships, recognise harassment, and contribute to gender-equitable communities.

[1] Ministry of Education. (2022, January 28). National Task Force constituted for preparation of curriculum framework for school, early childhood, and adult education. Press Information Bureau, Government of India.
[2] World Economic Forum. (2019). Here's what young Indians really want from life.
[3] Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India.
[4] The UGC (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015
[5] India Today. (2024, May 8). UGC mental health guidelines higher education Supreme Court.
[6] National Informatics Centre (NIC). (2025). National Task Force on Student Mental Health. India.gov.in.
[7] Press Trust of India. (2018, April 26). 1 In Every 4 Women Studying At Delhi University Faced Sexual Harassment: Report. NDTV.
[8] Crime in India 2023, NCRB, Government of India

Gender diversity, sexuality, and mental health have been present as important subjects in ancient and classical Indian education systems, with their discussions often including nuanced and inclusive perspectives for their time.[9] Modern-day evidence-based research demonstrates that preventive education programs can be highly effective. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been shown to significantly improve knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes.[10] The Indian Institute of Technology- Bombay (IIT-B) has also recently introduced a landmark mental health curriculum.[11] Interventions have demonstrated protective effects in reducing unwanted sexual experiences by 67% and show sustained impacts up to two years post-intervention.[12] Furthermore, research shows that preventive education programs can be effective in increasing knowledge about consent and sexual violence, improving attitudes, increasing confidence to intervene, and promoting communication about sensitive topics in all learners.[13] The development of such skills also boosts students' employability as employers value empathy, communication skills, and improved managerial ability amongst other skills.[14] [15]

To address these interconnected issues, this brief advocates for the University Grants Commission (UGC) to mandate a compulsory undergraduate course structured around three core pillars: **Gender**, **Sexuality**, and **Mental Well-being**. A **restorative approach (RA)**[16] is recommended, integrated across all three themes, to foster empathy, accountability, and community-based solutions to harm. These practices can also be used in POSH cases to hold the perpetrator accountable for their actions while creating a safe and non-judgemental space.

This initiative aligns with the NEP 2020, Supreme Court mandates,[17] and takes over from where the existing national frameworks like the School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat end.[18] Crucially, it responds to a clear need identified by students themselves, with 86% of respondents in our study rating such education as important. "Gender, Sexuality and Mental Health" was a subject volunteered by students in our needs assessment.[19] By equipping students with these essential pillars, this course will not only create safer campuses but also boost employability and prepare graduates to be responsible citizens and future leaders.

---

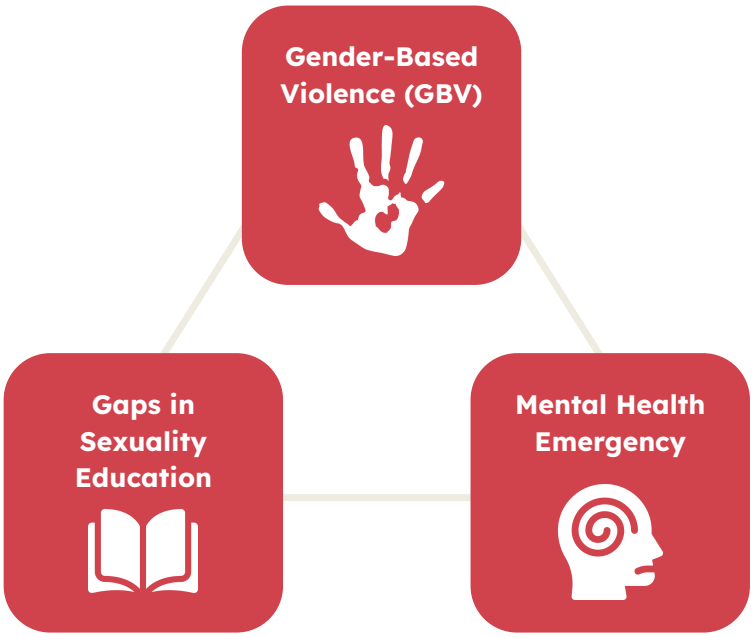
[9] Das K, Rao TSS. (2019). A Chronicle of Sexuality in the Indian Subcontinent. Journal of Psychosexual Health.
[10] Singh, S., & Sharda, A. (2025). The role of school social workers in promoting mental health awareness and interventions among adolescents in India. International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health.
[11] Express News Service. (2025, November). IIT Bombay makes mental health courses mandatory for first-year students. The Indian Express.
[12] Orchowski LM, Malone S, Sokolovsky AW, Pearlman DN, Rizzo C, Zlotnick C, Berkowitz A, Fortson BL. (2023, September) Preventing sexual violence among high school students through norms correction and bystander intervention: A school-based cluster trial of Your Voice Your View. J Community Psychol.
[13] Banyard, V. L., Moynihan, M. M., & Plante, E. G. (2007). Sexual violence prevention through bystander education: An experimental evaluation. Journal of Community Psychology, 35, 463-481.
[14] Varwandkar A and Deshmukh P (2013) 'Factors impacting employability skills of engineers' and address student well-being and safety adequately, International Journal of Science and Research, 2(4):30–32.
[15] Venkataiah, A., & Nagabhushan, B. (2017, March). Awareness of life skills for job sustainability amongst management students. Paper presented at the International Conference on Transformation of Business Management (ICTBM-2017), Bengaluru, India.
[16] Ghoshal, I., & Raghunath, A. (2024). A restorative approach for addressing workplace sexual harassment of women in India. Restorative Justice: An International Journal
[17] Legal Mandates in Annexure E
[18] Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2018). Operational guidelines on School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat. Government of India
[19] Appendix B

INTRODUCTION

Indian universities have always played a vital role in equipping young adults with skills for personal growth and economic mobility. Indian higher education has been home to vibrant intellectual environments such as the Gurukul system and prestigious universities like Nalanda and Takshashila, where social diversity and open discourse were often encouraged. Gender studies have been embedded in ancient texts and treatises with explicit recognition of multiple gender identities beyond the binary male-female, including references to 'third gender' individuals, in works like the Charaka Samhita and Buddhist literature.[20]

The Rigveda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Ayurvedic texts have addressed psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and mental illness in detail, often with a holistic and preventative approach. Concepts such as 'manas' (mind) and 'manasa vyadhi' (mental illness) received dedicated attention, and healing practices that integrated spiritual, emotional, and physical health were proposed. The importance of mental health is highlighted by their prioritization of the treatment of 'Aadhi' (mental illness) over 'Vyadhi' (physical illness) in ancient prayers. This legacy influenced education, as students received guidance on maintaining mental balance and managing psychological distress, often through dialogue, meditation, cognitive restructuring (as in the Bhagavad Gita), along with rituals.[21]

Today, many institutions have yet to adequately address student well-being and safety. The challenges emanating from this are clear and interconnected:



[20] Das K, Rao TSS. (2019) A Chronicle of Sexuality in the Indian Subcontinent. Journal of Psychosexual Health.
[21] Bhati R, Mandal M, Singh T. (2025, June) Ancient Indian perspectives and practices of mental well-being. Front Psychol.

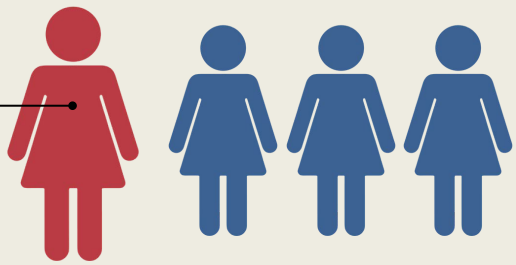
Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Safety: Empirical studies indicate that sexual harassment is a significant issue on college campuses, with a 2018 audit in Delhi University revealing that one in four women had faced sexual harassment. Alarmingly, **40% of harassment cases are never reported,** and only a small fraction lead to official complaints.[22]

This issue extends beyond university walls, with India registering **4,45,256 cases of crimes against women in 2022,** with a high proportion of women reporting physical and sexual violence from an intimate partner.[23] Furthermore, transgender, gender non-conforming and gender non-binary people in the Indian science education ecosystem have reported facing sexual and non-sexual forms of abuse and harassment.[24]

One in four women

had faced sexual harassment

according to a 2018 audit in Delhi University



Gaps in Sexuality Education: While select UGC model curricula in disciplines like Women's Studies and Law cover some aspects of sexuality and consent, there is **no comprehensive, universal course available** to all students. Key concepts like restorative justice, diversity in relationships, and consent receive **little to no coverage** across most curricula. This leaves a critical gap. Comprehensive sexuality education is proven to improve knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes, and can reduce unwanted sexual experiences that, for many, lead to social ostracisation and undermining of their academic potential.[25]

[22] A safety audit carried out by the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) across colleges affiliated to Delhi University in 2018 stated that one in every four women studying in the university has faced sexual harassment. Research suggests that 40% of harassment cases are never reported to anyone, and only 15.7% of victims file an official complaint with their Internal Complaints Committee or the police (Singhal, Anania et al., 2025)

[23] In 2022, India registered 4,45,256 cases of crimes against women with a crime rate of 66.4 per 1,00,000 women (Crime in India 2022, NCRB). The proportion of women in India who report having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime is 35%, much higher than the global average of 27% (WHO, 2021). Data on non-partner sexual violence is more limited, with a global estimate of 6% (WHO, 2021). This figure however, is acknowledged to be a significant underestimation due to the stigma surrounding this form of violence and methodological challenges in its measurement (Sardinha el al., 2024).

[24] Datta, S., Mukherjee, D., Gaikwad, P., Sridhar, S., Parekh, R. (2023). No Space for Some: Transgender, Gender NonConforming and Gender Non-Binary Persons' Access to Science Higher Education in India. TESF India, IIHS.

[25] Ibid.

Mental Health Emergency: There is a rising mental health crisis among young adults in the Indian higher education system.[26] Men account for 72.5% of all suicides in India,[27] and the suicide rate among men with school completion up to class 9-12 **increased by 66.4% between 2014–2021.**[28]

The Supreme Court's July 2025 Sukdeb Saha judgment requires HEIs to adopt structured mental health systems. Institutions must now implement uniform policies, hire counselors, and ensure accountability, moving beyond isolated initiatives to institutionalized student protection.[29]

In our experience, an insufficient understanding of self-esteem, gender, and sexuality contributes to these issues, alongside the stigma around discussing relationships and mental health.

The student needs assessment conducted for this brief specifically identified "Gender, Sexuality and Mental Health" as a desired new topic, highlighting its perceived importance.[30]

[26] Suresh K, Dar AA. (2025). Mental health of young adults pursuing higher education in Tier-1 cities of India: A cross-sectional study. Asian J Psychiatr..
[27] Crime in India 2023. (2025). NCRB, Government of India
[28] Changing pattern of suicide deaths in India Yadav, Suryakant et al. The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia, Volume 16
[29] Sukdeb Singh vs State of AP (2025)
[30] Appendix B

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our analysis is based on the following: A systematic review of the UGC model curricula across disciplines, focus group discussions with students and educators, key informant interviews of practitioners, literature review of secondary knowledge resources on the topics, international and domestic case studies, and national government schemes and policies.

The research methodology involved:

Needs Assessment

153 respondents from 24 universities and 16 Indian cities, along with 4 respondents from universities overseas (Australia, Canada, Singapore, Toronto), participated in an anonymous online survey.[31]

UGC Model Curriculum Review

Analysis of disciplines including General Graduation, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Anthropology, History, Home Science, Public Administration, Population Studies, Law, B.Ed, Special Education, Women's Studies, Environmental Studies, Zoology, Lifelong Learning, and Extension.

Benchmark of Analysis

UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE), covering 8 core concepts (Relationships, Values/Rights/Culture/Sexuality, Understanding Gender, Violence/Staying Safe, Skills for Health/Well-being, Human Body/Development, Sexuality/Sexual Behavior, Sexual/Reproductive Health), was used to correlate with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.[32]

Key Informant Interviews

9 practitioners from various sectors (government, academia, NGOs, lawyers, law enforcement, international development) were interviewed. Organizations included NCPCR, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, NIMHANS, NLSIU, Martin Luther Christian University, Arpan Foundation, and YP Foundation.

[31] Appendix A
[32] International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. (2018). UNESCO.

Focus Group Discussions

Conducted with students from Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU), Nagpur, and National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), Hyderabad, to assess gender and sexuality integration in coursework and identify shortcomings.

Desk Research

A comprehensive review of academic literature, government documents, and civil society reports on gender equity, sexuality education, and safety education was conducted to provide an overview of secondary data, policies, case studies, and legal obligations.

FINDINGS

Our curriculum analysis revealed significant opportunities for the inclusion of gender, sexuality, and mental well-being education in the current UGC curriculum across most disciplines.[33]

What the Model UGC Curriculum is doing well:

- Law and Women's Studies cover the highest number of themes, providing either comprehensive or partial coverage of foundational knowledge about sexuality and its social contexts, appropriate legal frameworks, consent, and child protection. Women's Studies comprehensively covers an understanding of sexuality, the definition of terms, diversity in gender and sexuality, intersectionality, sexual violence (adults and children), laws, and consent. Law courses comprehensively cover consent and laws relating to sexual abuse and gender-based violence.
- Sociology and Anthropology provide moderate coverage of select social and cultural facets, such as gender identity, sexuality, and intersectionality, with varying depth.
- Zoology covers biological aspects like diversity in sex and reproductive systems, and pubertal changes.
- Home Science covers body image and sexual development in children and adolescents.
- Social Work provides limited, issue-based coverage, particularly regarding gender bias, violence, and children's protection, and also covers consent.

Opportunities for Inclusion in the Model UGC Curriculum across Disciplines:

- Essential concepts such as sexual and gender-based discrimination, restorative justice to address sexual violence,[34] restorative practices to build empathy, consent, sexuality, responsibility, accountability, and marginalised groups receive little to no coverage across all curricula.
- Crucial issues like diversity in sexual relationships and practices, disabilities and sexuality, and pedophilia are consistently omitted.

[33] Appendix B

[34] Restorative justice to address sexual violence is a trauma-informed victim-centered justice process that shows significant benefits for victim-survivors (eg. meeting justice needs, supporting recovery), perpetrators (e.g. improved insight, community reintegration, reduced reoffending), and their wider communities (e.g. encouraging accountability, addressing harmful beliefs). (Bremer, Charlie et al., 2025)

Biggest Unfilled Gaps in the Model UGC Curricula:

- Disciplines such as Psychology, Economics, Education, Public Administration, and Population Studies show limited or no coverage for most topics, indicating a lack of a structured approach to these issues within current UGC curricula.
- There is minimal or fragmented inclusion of intersectionality, special groups, disabilities, and diversity, instead of a comprehensive, universal course for gender, sexuality, and mental well-being across various streams.

Learnings from the Assessment

A significant majority of respondents in our needs assessment - 86% (*n*=131) - rated the inclusion of CSE in higher education as *important* or *extremely important*. This reflects strong student support for the relevance of such a course.

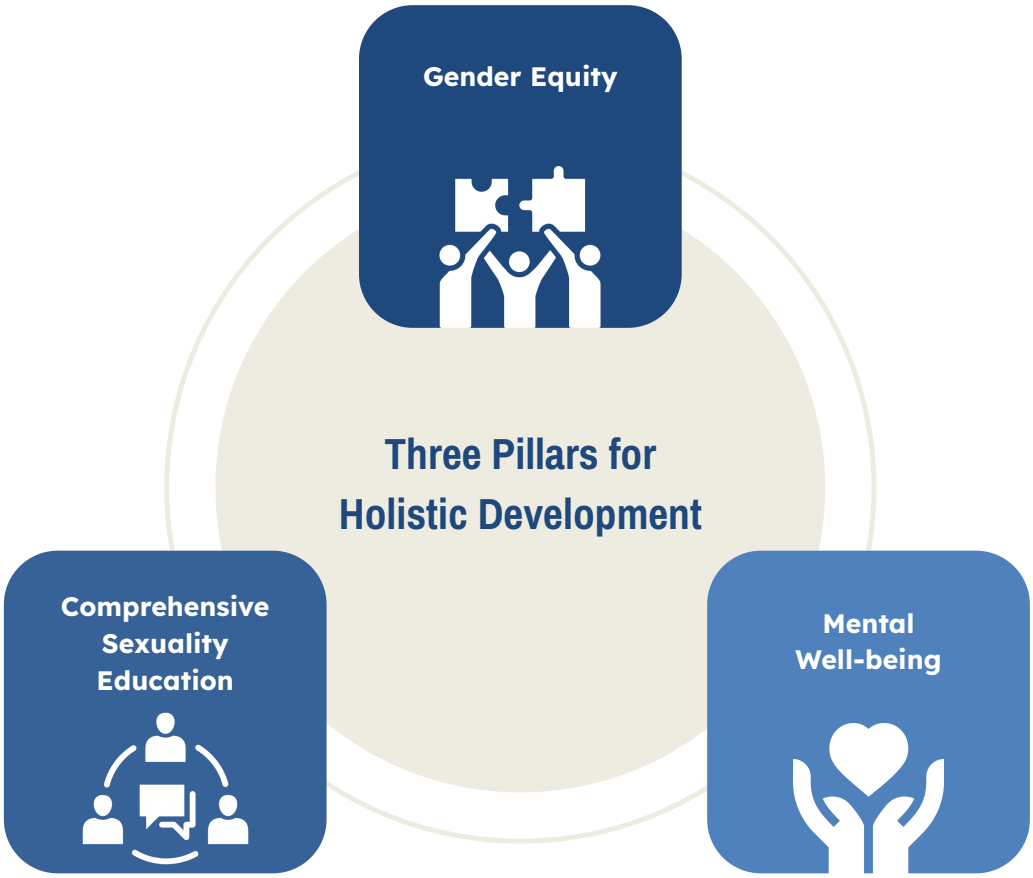
83% (*n*=127) of respondents in our needs assessment expressed support for a credited or mandatory (non-credited) CSE course (see Figure 1). These findings point to a strong endorsement for institutionalising CSE in higher education curricula, with minimal opposition.

The current UGC curriculum demonstrates topic-based, albeit non-linked treatment of sexuality-related topics in most disciplines, highlighting a substantial need for broad-based and integrated curriculum reforms that span biological, psychological, social, legal, and cultural frameworks across disciplines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Proposed Framework: Three Pillars for Holistic Development

We propose a **mandatory, credit-bearing course for all undergraduate students built on three integrated pillars,** using a restorative approach as an underlying methodology.



Pillar 1: **Gender Equity**

This pillar would have a strong focus on preventing gender-based violence (GBV). It would equip students with a thorough understanding of diverse gender identities, gender roles, stereotypes, discrimination, and human rights. A core component would be legal literacy, with a specific focus on frameworks like the **Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act** and the UGC's 2015 regulations. This education allows students to be empowered potential bystanders rather than just victims or perpetrators, enabling them to recognize and intervene in practices that promote discrimination and violence.

Pillar 2: **Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Building on the foundation of the School Health and Wellness Programme, which often avoids direct terms like "sex" or "sexuality," this pillar would address critical gaps for young adults. It would provide a scientific and rights-based understanding of sexuality, covering topics such as sexual and reproductive health, sexual diversity, relationships, consent, and safe online engagement. This aligns with strong student demand, as 83% of surveyed students supported a mandatory credited course on these topics.

Pillar 3: **Mental Well-being**

This pillar directly responds to the national mental health crisis and the results of our student needs assessment. It would normalize discussions on mental health, providing students with frameworks for building self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and healthy relationships. The curriculum would cover coping strategies for stress, bullying and ragging, understanding and managing emotions, and recognizing the intersection of mental health, gender, and sexuality. Such skills are directly transferable to professional settings and improve employability. IIT-Bombay's recent introduction of a mandatory mental health course for first-year students is a great example of how this could be done.[35]

The UGC possesses the statutory authority to mandate this essential reform under Section 12 of the UGC Act, 1956, which empowers the UGC to "take all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and coordination of university education" and Section 26 to "frame regulations on key matters such as curriculum standards". This authority has been successfully exercised to establish mandatory courses and standards across Indian HEIs.

[35] Express News Service. (2025, November). IIT Bombay makes mental health courses mandatory for first-year students. The Indian Express.

The Restorative Approach: Healing, Accountability, and Community Building

The Restorative Approach (RA), inspired by indigenous practices like India's panchayats and now widely adopted in countries such as the USA, UK, Australia, and Hong Kong, shifts the focus from punishment to relationship-building, empathy, and accountability. Instead of asking, "Who is to blame and how should we punish them?", colleges could start asking, **"Who has been harmed, what are their needs, and how can we make things right together?".**

RA is being increasingly recognized not just as a disciplinary framework but also as a pedagogy for building inclusive and empathetic learning communities.[36] UNESCO highlights that restorative practices such as community circles, dialogues, and collective problem-solving help students reflect on the impact of their actions, repair harm, and cultivate empathy. Global studies show that educational institutions adopting restorative models see reduced bullying and fighting, improved attendance, stronger teacher-student relationships, and enhanced emotional well-being, as well as a decrease in zero-tolerance disciplinary measures that often push students out of learning.

RA could thus be the core pedagogical approach across all three pillars. RA processes can be used to heal and move forward in a good way - with responsibility and accountability - when harm occurs.

This approach can be applied in response to specific issues on campus, for example:

- In a POSH Case: While not replacing the formal ICC process, restorative practices can supplement it. A restorative circle could provide the survivor a space to express the harm's impact directly to the responsible person and the community. This process encourages genuine accountability from the perpetrator and involves the community in reinforcing institutional values of safety and respect while making it an obligation of the perpetrator to repair the harm.
- In Cases of Bullying or Ragging: Instead of solely punitive measures, restorative meetings can bring together those who were harmed, those who caused harm, and other affected community members. These facilitated dialogues aim to help the person who did the bullying understand the real-world impact of their actions, repair relationships, and reintegrate individuals into the community, thereby addressing the root causes and preventing reoccurrence.

> **"As both a survivor and a long term restorative practitioner, my experience with young people shows that restorative approaches create space to speak about the harm they've faced, and it helps those who've caused harm to take responsibility and engage in accountable, transformative actions."**
>
> – Sujatha Baliga, attorney and restorative justice practitioner and MacArthur fellow

[36] Enfold Proactive Health Trust. (2025, September). Restorative approaches as a pathway to good schools: A white paper

Suggested Roadmap

We strongly recommend that the UGC, under its authority in the UGC Act, 1956, take the following steps:

1. **Mandate a Compulsory Course:**
Introduce a mandatory, credit-bearing course for all undergraduate students integrating the pillars of **Gender, Sexuality, and Mental Well-being** using a **restorative approach**.

2. **Develop a Standardized, Adaptable Curriculum:**
Partner with subject matter experts, civil society organizations, and institutions with existing programs (like Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong) to design a comprehensive curriculum that can be adapted to diverse institutional contexts. The proposed curriculum outline in Annexure A provides a starting point.

3. **Invest in Teacher Preparedness:**
Implement robust training for faculty and tutors to handle sensitive content effectively and facilitate restorative processes, addressing the deep-seated attitudinal work required around gender, sex, and rights.

4. **Adopt a Phased Rollout:**
Begin with pilot programs in interested universities to refine the course structure and pedagogical approaches before a nationwide rollout.

Anticipated Dividends and Long-Term Impact [37] [38]

Implementing this course will yield substantial benefits at individual, interpersonal, and societal levels. Students will gain improved mental health, enhanced relationship skills, and a clear understanding of consent and boundaries. Graduates will become more empathetic professionals in fields like law, health, and education, and safer adults within their families and communities. In the long term, this initiative will contribute to a cultural shift toward gender equity, reduced prejudice, and a society that supports survivors while holding perpetrators accountable.

By taking this decisive action, the UGC can champion a critical educational reform, and revive India's ancient tradition of inclusive education that will significantly contribute to building a safer, more equitable, and informed Bharat.

[37] Kim EJ, Park B, Kim SK, Park MJ, Lee JY, Jo AR, Kim MJ, Shin HN. (2023) A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programs on Children and Adolescents. Healthcare (Basel).
[38] Eva S. Goldfarb, Lisa D. Lieberman. (2021). Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education, Journal of Adolescent Health, Volume 68, Issue 1, Pages 13-27.

APPENDIX A
The Proposed Mandatory Course, drawing from multiple experts

Unit 1: Understanding Sexuality - Biological and Socio-Cultural Perspectives

Connects with the national and state frameworks on building upon "Growing Up Healthy," "Reproductive Health," and addresses gaps like "sexual diversity" and "contraceptives".

- Definition of terms: Sex, Gender, Gender Identity, Sexuality, Sexual orientation.
- Attitudes towards sex and sexuality.
- Diversity in Sex: Evolution, diversity, and common origins of sexual and reproductive systems.
- Structure and Function of Sexual and Reproductive Systems - building respect for all organs and functions
- Pubertal Changes: common to all sexes; diversity in onset, duration, and extent of changes.
- Diversity in Gender and Sexuality: Factors that impact the development of gender identity and sexual orientation; understanding and respecting diversity.
- Sexual Activity: various practices, pregnancy, delivery, abortion, and contraception.
- STIs and Safer Sex.

Unit 2: Attitudes towards Sexuality and its Impact on Special Groups

Connects with the national frameworks on "Body image and media influence" and addresses "diverse identities" with explicit inclusion of "Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) content".

- Self-esteem and body image: Influence on sexuality.
- Sexual development in children (birth–9yrs) and adolescents (10–18yrs).
- Sexuality and disability.
- Sexual relationships: diversity in living arrangements.
- Sexual preferences and practices.
- Pedophilia.

Unit 3: **Sexual and Gender-based Discrimination and Violence**

Connects with the national and state frameworks on deepening "Gender Equity," "Safety and Security Against Violence and Injuries," and addresses aspects of "Discrimination and stigma".

- Gender bias: the origins of gender bias in agricultural societies, gender roles, stereotypes, and violence, Its effect on different genders, working towards gender equity and human rights.
- Sexual violence against adults: from stigma, shame, and blame to healing and accountability.
- Sexual violence against children: addressing core issues for child protection and safety.
- Sexual violence against victims belonging to the disadvantaged communities.
- Intersection of gender and sexuality with other social identities.

Unit 4: **Providing Personal Safety Education to Children**

Reinforces the national and state frameworks on "Good/bad touch, GBV, No-Go-Tell strategies" and offers practical skills for future parents/educators.

- How to talk to children (2-10 yrs) about personal safety.
- Naming Private parts: anatomical names and culturally unambiguous respectful names.
- Clothing, Touching, and Talking Rules: Identifying Safe and Unsafe behaviours, Exception to rules; Confusing behaviours, No-Go-Tell Personal Safety Guide; Safe Adults.

Unit 5: **Crimes and Restorative Justice; Consent.**

Connects with the national frameworks on expanding on "Laws and help-seeking behaviour" and fills the explicit "Consent" gap.

- Laws relating to sexual abuse and gender-based violence (POCSO, PoSH, Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005).
- Restorative Practices: Building trust in relationships and communities, restoring a sense of justice.

APPENDIX B.1

Needs Assessment Report: Comprehensive Sexuality Education for College and University Students

Aim of the Needs Assessment

To understand the perspectives, interests and preferences of university students in relation to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

Objectives

1. To identify topics related to sexuality that students find relevant or meaningful.
2. To gain insights into how topic preferences vary by discipline.
3. To gain insights into how topic preferences vary by educational level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate).
4. To assess students' perceptions of the importance of CSE in higher education.
5. To generate insights that will inform the content and structure of the CSE course.

Methodology

A Google Form was created and circulated via social media (Annexure 1 details the list of questions). It garnered 155 anonymised responses from individuals who were currently enrolled in a university or had completed their degree. The data was cleaned, and 153 responses accounted for the final data set. Microsoft Excel was used to process the data and convert it into tables and charts.

Profile of Respondents

This needs assessment engaged 153 respondents from approximately 24 universities and 16 cities/towns across India, including institutions such as Delhi University, IIT, NLSIU, Christ University, FLAME, Ashoka, Amity, and Punjab University. Additionally, four respondents were enrolled in universities abroad - in Australia, Canada, Singapore, and Toronto. Respondents represented 34 academic disciplines (see Table 1). The most common were:

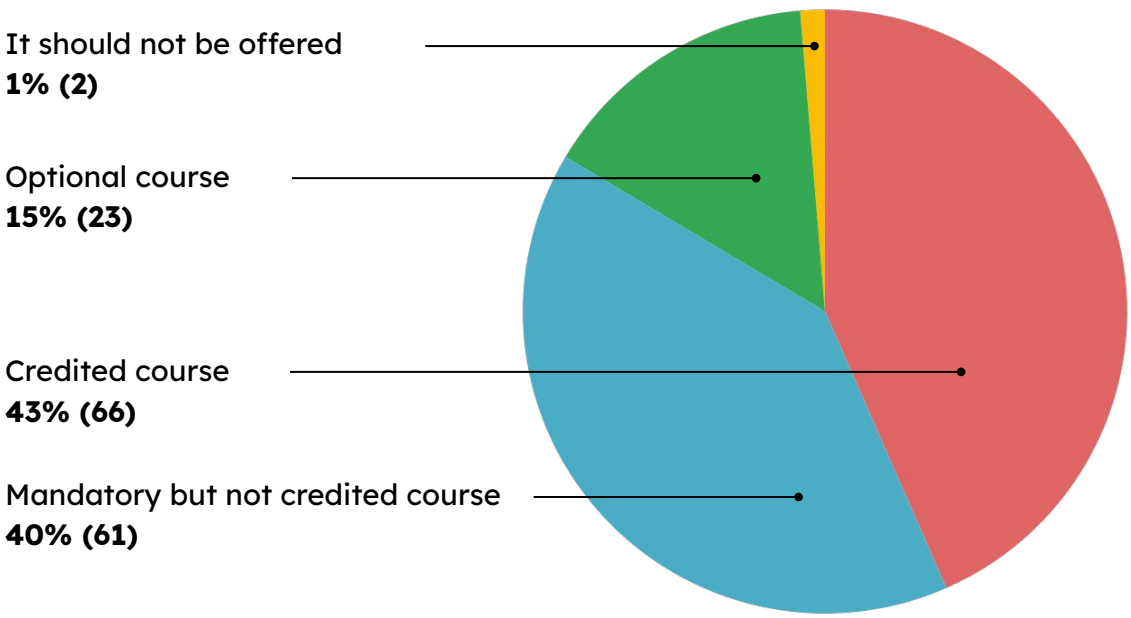
- **Psychology** (26%, n=40)
- **Social Work** (15%, n=23)
- **Home Science** (13%, n=20)
- **Law** (7%, n=10)
- **Humanities and Other Social Sciences** (22%, n=33)
- **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)** (7%, n=11)

The sample included both **undergraduate** (65% - 99) and **postgraduate** students including Master's students, MPhil/PhD and Postdoctoral scholars (35% - 54).

Table 1: Map of disciplines and fields of study

Field of Study	Discipline	
Humanities & other Social Sciences	Comparative Literature Development Studies Economics Education English Gender Studies Health, Gender and Society History Home Science	Law Linguistics Philosophy Political Science / International Relations Psychology Public Administration Social Work Sociology
STEM	Architecture Biotechnology and Botany Computer Science and Applications Electronic Science	Engineering Mathematics Medicine Pharmacy
Business, Commerce & Management	Commerce Labour Welfare / Personnel Management / Industrial Relations /	HRM Tourism Administration and Management
Creative Arts and Media	Design Journalism	Mass Communication Visual Arts
Miscellaneous	Occupational Therapy	Physical Education

Figure 1: Student Preferences for course format



Findings indicated that all proposed topics received notable attention from respondents across all disciplines and Universities, indicating their perceived relevance and importance.

Ranking by popularity was as follows:

- Laws Related to Sexuality, Gender and Violence (74% - 113)
- Sexual Violence Against Adults (65% - 100)
- Media, Digital Spaces and Sexuality (64% - 98)
- Sexual and Reproductive Health (64% - 98)
- Sexual Violence Against Children (64% - 98)
- Structure and Function of Sexual and Reproductive Systems (53% - 81)
- Sexual Preferences and Practices (50% - 77)
- Sexual Development in Children and Adolescents (50% - 76)
- Intersectionality (48% - 73)

Suggestions for Additional Topics

Five participants reiterated on the topic of gender. Some provided nuances they would like to be addressed within the course:

- Understanding Gender and Sexuality in India
- Reforms and change in the world due to the understanding of Gender and Sexuality (futuristic and current perspective)
- LGBTQ+ inclusivity; community rights and life struggles and laws related to them
- Establishing boundaries and improving one's ability to advocate for themselves

A new topic emerged from the responses - Gender, Sexuality and Mental Health. This was not previously included in the list of topics.

Limitations

This assessment yielded valuable insights, but some limitations need mention.

- It is possible that the sample is more representative of individuals who are already in favour of such education.
- Background information and demographics, such as whether participants come from urban or rural parts, were not collected. Such information may have provided further nuance to tailoring the context to varying needs and levels of understanding.
- Finally, although the list of topics was comprehensive, and supplemented with a brief explanation at times, the respondents may have been unclear or unfamiliar with some of them. This is especially relevant for respondents with little to no prior exposure to sexuality education. This could have potentially affected how they responded.

APPENDIX B.2

Focus Group Discussion Report: Integration of Gender & Sexuality in Professional Legal Education at MNLU, Nagpur

This Focus Group Discussion (FGD) report analyzes the current state and proposes a framework for the **Integration of Gender & Sexuality in Professional Legal Education** at Maharashtra National Law School University (MNLU), Nagpur. The exercise, conducted by Srikar Nagasubramanyam (Research Lead, The Metropolitan Institute) with support from Ankush Singh and Dipanshu Hood involved eighteen students associated with the Center for Gender Studies to evaluate existing educational approaches, identify systemic gaps, and construct a vision for reform.

1. Objectives

The FGD aimed towards the Integration of Gender & Sexuality in professional legal education, and had several objectives such as:

1. Critically Evaluating Current Educational Approaches
2. Identifying Systemic Gaps Across Disciplines
3. Analyzing Missed Opportunities and Consequences
4. Uncovering Resistance to Reform
5. Designing an Inclusive Future Curriculum
6. Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

2. Methodology

The exercise included eighteen students from different years who were associated with the Center for Gender Studies at the Maharashtra National Law School University, Nagpur.

The exercise was divided into an introduction and three discussion segments to explore the current landscape of professional education, anticipated resistance to mandatory gender and sexuality education, and strategies for implementing an effective gender and sexuality program.

3. Key Findings

A. Introduction

The session began with a structured introductory segment designed to establish baseline perspectives and personal stakes. Each participant provided their name, current year of study, and department to contextualize their insights within their specific academic journey.

To anchor the discourse in personal experience, the moderator tasked each student with responding to two fundamental prompts:

1. Students were asked to provide a single word describing the **current legal education system's approach towards gender and sexuality.** The responses highlighted a perceived systemic failure, with participants using the following descriptors:
    - Cautious
    - Limiting
    - Restrictive
    - Bleak
    - Inadequate / Insufficient
    - Ignorant
    - Biased
    - Fragmented
    - Historicity (lack thereof)
    - Tokenistic
    - Hesitant

2. Students were asked to fill in the blanks for the statement: "**Professional education would be stronger if _____.**" The responses revealed a collective desire for structural and cultural shifts to include:
    - **Open Dialogue:** Strengthening education by creating a space for "open-minded and free dialogue" without fear of retaliation.
    - **Ground Realities:** Moving beyond "restricting themselves to theory" to take real-world application into account.
    - **Focus on Duties:** Balancing the focus on rights with a deeper understanding of duties.
    - **Better Exposure:** Including practitioners who can expose students to new ideas and widen their horizons.
    - **Gender-Neutral Language:** Starting with the acceptance and normalisation of gender-neutral terminology.
    - **Greater Resource Allocation:** Additional research and awareness.
    - **Prioritization of Soft Skills:** Focusing on communication and intelligence to prepare students for a diverse workforce.
    - **Feminist Frameworks:** Incorporating stronger feminist frameworks into the curriculum.
    - **Representation:** Ensuring LGBTQIA+ individuals are represented and can "bring their issues to the table" themselves.

B. Core Discussion Segment 1: Current Landscape

The session began with a structured introductory segment designed to establish baseline perspectives and personal stakes. Each participant provided their name, current year of study, and department to contextualize their insights within their specific academic journey.

1. *"Thinking about your legal education so far, how would you describe the integration of gender and sexuality topics in your coursework?"*
   The participants described the current integration as superficial and poorly executed. Specific descriptors included:
   - Cautious and Hesitant
   - Tokenistic and Surface-Level
   - Restricted to Theory
   - Fragmented and Rushed: One student noted that critical topics like feminist jurisprudence are sometimes "wrapped up in like one lecture" despite being vast.

2. Gap Analysis (Critical Gaps, Missed Opportunities, and Consequences): The students were divided into three different groups to analyse their assigned topics across different professions.

   Group 1: Critical Gaps in Professional Education

   - Medical/Health: There is a strictly binary approach to anatomy that is a remnant of "colonial science". Most research is conducted with the male body as the model. For example, there is a lack of research on medication. reactions in female bodies (due to hormonal cycles) or the effects of synthetic hormones on those who have undergone sex reassignment.
   - Business/Finance: There are persistent gender stereotypes where women are channeled into HR while men are viewed as more suitable for finance and accounting.
   - Engineering/Tech: There is a prevalent mentality that views technology as purely technical rather than social. This leads to unsensitized AI data and a hostile atmosphere for female students in software firms due to biases regarding reservations.
   - Other (Architecture/Sports): Architecture lacks dedicated courses on making inclusive and accessible spaces and sports education remains tied to narrow biological ideas of sex.

   Group 2: Missed Opportunities for Integration

   - Business/Finance: There are missed opportunities to support women re-entering the workforce after maternity leave, particularly in fast-moving sectors like IT where skills can quickly become outdated.
   - Education: Segregated reproductive and menstrual health classes that exclude men lead to a lack of shared information and gender-neutral environments.

- Other (Market/Design): The "pink tax," where utility products (like razors or basic t-shirts) are priced higher when marketed to women, contributes to stereotypes about the market behaviour of women. Students also cited a lack of intervention in advertising education to stop gender stereotyping.
- Law: Failure to move past colonial ideas in legal frameworks (like the IPC) that group women and children together deny women an independent identity.

Group 3: Consequences of Lack of Integration

- Medical/Health: Scientific work risks being discredited if it continues to ignore the specific needs and resources of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Engineering/Tech: Rolling out systems like AI without feminist frameworks causes political and social realities to become "secondary," by painting a biased picture of the world to all users. This propagates and reinforces harmful stereotypes that also get embedded into any process that integrates these systems.
- Law: The primary consequence is the creation of an "insensitive" legal reality where archaic legal language results in the law failing to align with modern social discourses. The students also highlighted the minimal female representation at the highest court of the land to participate in the interpretation of the law. There has been no female Chief Justice of India.

C. Core Discussion Segment 2: Resistance and Challenges

1. The students were asked to be **realistic about the pushback** and construct arguments that various stakeholders might use against mandatory gender and sexuality education.

- Arguments from Faculty
- Arguments from Students
- Arguments from Administrators
- Arguments from Professional Bodies

Students identified specific resistance they anticipate from different groups:

- Anticipated Arguments from Faculties & Administration:
  - Resource Management: Concerns about the need to introduce a new course and whether it is a worthwhile allocation of resources.
  - Impact Skepticism: Would a mandatory course truly result in the intended impact or just be a "check box" for students?

- Anticipated Arguments from Students:
  - Employability: A primary concern is whether such a course makes them more employable compared to "bread and butter" subjects like Corporate Law, IPC, or CPC.
  - Curriculum Overload: They argue that they already study “equality” in Constitutional Law (Articles 14 and 15) or Family Law, making a separate subject feel like an "extra exam". They also highlight that they study supreme court judgments and have a course on gender and law
  - Adding to the Existing Academic Paradox: Students often joke about having "three semesters of sociology and one semester of CPC," even though they view social science subjects as lower-value "qualification papers" compared to legal procedures.
- Anticipated Arguments from Professional Bodies (BCI/Market):
  - Market Demand: The market favors procedural and service oriented skills over gender justice.
  - Trend, not Necessity: Gender sensitivity education is just a "trend" or a "phase" that institutions are conforming to, and is therefore not important in the long term.

2. The students were then asked to **respond to these arguments** and propose "counter-strategies".
   - **The "Professionalism" Argument:** One student argued that without such education, “you're not going to be a good lawyer" because understanding gender and sexuality at work is essential for professional competence.
   - **Curriculum Modification over Addition:** Instead of a completely separate course, students suggested augmenting existing courses with specific modules or units to provide both a "broad view and a specific view".
   - **Connection to Practice:** Reframing the subject as "Gender, Sexuality, and Law" to directly link social discourse with legal application, making it more marketable and impactful.
   - **Novel Testing methods:** Moving away from rote theory and another conventional exam toward practical components where students must engage with real-life on-ground scenarios.
   - **Mandatory Empirical Research:** Requiring field work and research to highlight ground realities and thereby challenge stereotypes and bias.

D. Core Discussion Segment 3: Implementation Vision

The students refused to settle for "checkbox" education. They suggested the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in faculty hiring panels and showed a commitment to authentic representation rather than mere academic discussion. They also recommended the strategic placement of the mandatory course in the first year based on their practical understanding of student psychology. This placement finds students at their most enthusiastic and available state by avoiding the internship and placement pressures of the later years of law school.

1. **Content and Topics:** Students proposed a comprehensive syllabus that balances legal theory with social reality:
    - **Fundamental Concepts:** Starting with basic concepts of gender and sexuality before moving into Indian and feminist jurisprudence.
    - **Specific Marginalizations:** Detailed study of sexual minorities and the oppression faced by marginalized communities.
    - **Judicial Analysis:** Evaluating both "good" and "bad" judgments (e.g., the State of Maharashtra case involving the "two-finger test") to understand how judicial biases impact victims.

2. **Format and Pedagogy:** The group debated whether the course should be standalone or integrated, ultimately favoring a **two-pronged approach:**
    - **Hybrid Model:** A separate, specialized subject for gender and sexuality restricted to the field of study (e.g., Law or Medicine), combined with specific "modules" or units integrated into other existing courses.
    - **Experiential Learning:** A heavy emphasis on storytelling and activism, bringing in people to share their lived experiences to foster empathy and understanding.
    - **Empirical Research:** Shifting from purely doctrinal research to mandatory empirical research, requiring students to conduct fieldwork to engage with ground realities.

3. **Timing and Assessment**
    - **Early Intervention:** Participants strongly suggested the course be introduced in the first year. They argued that first-year students have the "excitement" and open minds necessary for such topics, whereas fourth or fifth-year students are too preoccupied with job hunting.
    - **Scenario-Based Testing:** Assessments should avoid testing simple theory. Instead, they proposed **situational testing** where students are given complex scenarios to analyse and break down.

4. **Faculty and Training:** The most spirited discussion involved who should be allowed to teach these subjects:
    - **Sensitivity over Seniority:** Students argued that the faculty should not necessarily be "older" or just "experienced in teaching," as they might "rant" or lack contemporary knowledge.
    - **The Bias Test:** Proposed an **interview or panel test** for prospective faculty to ensure they are "gender sensitized" and do not harbor rigid biases or preconceived notions.
    - **Inclusive Panels:** Suggested that the hiring panel for these professors should include one or two members of the **LGBTQIA+ community** to assess the candidates' suitability.

5. **Advocacy Strategy:** The students recognized that calls for “social justice” alone might not move a conservative administration. They argued that pivoting to "market demands”, “professional competency", and "Legal Duty," is more likely to yield positive results.

E. Conclusion/Analysis

The exercises involved passionate discussions questioning the place of a course on gender and sexuality. While most students agreed that such education should be mandatory as it contributes to a non-negotiable pillar of professional competency, there were students who argued that it remains a course for those with elective interest. Some students argued that existing courses like constitutional law, family law, gender and law, and a variety of sociology and psychology subjects, already cover a lot of these topics. An additional mandatory course, they said, puts more strain on students that are already stretched thin having to complete numerous mandatory courses while also choosing electives that boost their employability.

The discussion moved from the merits of such a mandatory course to the cost of such a course on the student. The majority opinion was still that the merits outweighed any time or opportunity costs. But the minority opinion points to a very important factor that determines the effectiveness of such an inclusion - engagement. Not considering this opinion will risk introducing a course that will get lost as a line item in student transcripts. Further discussion revealed that almost all the students holding the minority opinion did not deny the need for such education per se, they simply believed that it would not achieve its intended impact if it took the form of some of their other mandatory courses.

The students were asked to discuss and arrive at three things that would make this course effective. These were their recommendations:

- **Early Curriculum Integration:** Introduce “Gender, Sexuality, and Law” in the first year to capture student interest before internship and placement pressure take a toll.
- **Sensitized Faculty Selection:** Implement a rigorous vetting process and a panel that includes LGBTQIA+ representation to ensure that professors are free from rigid biases.
- **Empirical and Experience based Pedagogy:** Move away from purely doctrinal research and mandate field work. Include storytelling from activists and practitioners to expose students to ground realities.

APPENDIX C
Review of UGC Model Curricula for Presence of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Topics

Reviewed Curricula:

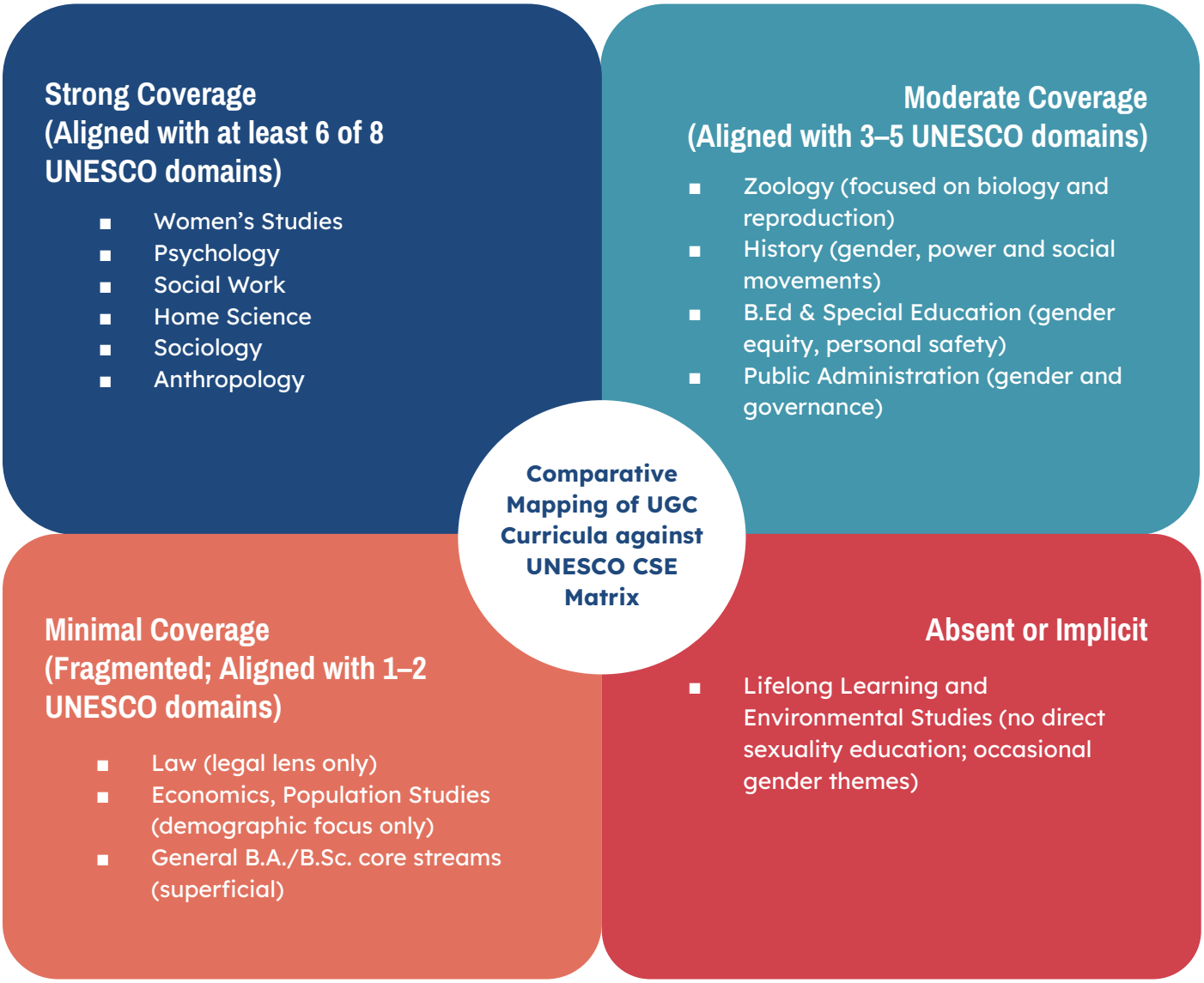
- General Graduation (BA/BSc/BCom – Humanities Stream)
- Psychology (BA/BSc)
- Social Work (BA/BSc)
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- History
- Home Science
- Public Administration (BA)
- Population Studies
- Law (LLB – 5-year)
- B.Ed (2-year and 4-year Integrated)
- Special Education (UGC-NCERT/NIEPID model)
- Women's Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Zoology
- Lifelong Learning and Extension

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Overview

UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) outlines 8 core concepts central to high-quality CSE:

1. Relationships
2. Values, Rights, Culture, and Sexuality
3. Understanding Gender
4. Violence and Staying Safe
5. Skills for Health and Well-being
6. The Human Body and Development
7. Sexuality and Sexual Behavior
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

In higher education, the inclusion of these principles should also consider adult sexual health, autonomy, legal literacy, professional conduct and restorative justice.



Key Findings

1. **Strong CSE Alignment:**
   - Psychology integrates puberty, sexual development, identity, behavior, and mental health across the lifespan.
   - Social Work engages intersectionality, trauma, child protection, and legal safeguards.
   - Women's Studies provides in-depth treatment of gender, sexuality, consent, and systemic oppression.
   - Home Science addresses adolescent sexuality, safety, counseling, parenting and abuse prevention.
   - Sociology & Anthropology discuss cultural perspectives on sexuality, family, reproduction, and identity.

2. **Partial/Fragmented Coverage:**
    - B.Ed and Special Education lack structured content on sexual development, gender identity, or reproductive rights, but they address inclusion and child protection.
    - Zoology is strong on biological foundations but lacks rights-based or psychosocial dimensions.
    - Public Administration and Environmental Studies include gender policy but ignore sexuality and consent.
3. **Minimal or Missing Coverage:**
    - Law focuses on legal statutes without including lived experiences, survivor voices, or restorative approaches.
    - Population Studies, Economics, and General B.A. streams do not explore sexuality, gender identity or rights.

Major Gaps Identified

- Silence on topics such as sexual pleasure, elderly sexuality, disability and sexuality, and masturbation.
- No structured approach for early childhood education, socio-sexual development or how to talk with children about sexuality.
- Absence of affirmative consent, diverse relationships, or sexual well-being in most programs.
- Very few programs approach CSE from an intersectional lens combining caste, class, sexuality, and ability.
- Legal education fails to include psychosocial healing, survivor-led justice, or restorative principles.

Good Practices Found

- Women's Studies and Home Science stand out for practical and grounded approaches to safety, inclusion, and psychosocial aspects.
- Social Work and Psychology offer counseling, trauma and behavioral health modules.
- Anthropology brings in comparative cultural and gender diversity, including religious and symbolic understandings.

Comparative Framework with Higher Education CSE Standards

Besides UNESCO's ITGSE, some higher-ed relevant frameworks include:

- **IPPF's CSE in Digital Spaces (2023):** Emphasizes media, privacy, cyber safety, and digital intimacy.
- **The Pleasure Project:** Focuses on sex-positive, pleasure-inclusive approaches to CSE.
- **SIECUS Guidelines (USA):** Designed for lifelong sexual health education across school to university.

Current UGC curricula do not reflect any of these newer standards, especially:

- Digital risks and safety (cyberbullying, pornography)
- Media literacy on sexuality
- Ethical conduct and communication in intimate relationships
- Inclusion of diverse lived realities of LGBTQIA+ persons

The absence of structured, inclusive and progressive CSE in Indian higher education impedes the creation of safe, informed and equitable campuses. A policy shift grounded in global standards, local realities and youth participation is urgently needed. Integrating CSE into UGC-regulated programs is essential for advancing **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7**, bodily autonomy and gender justice.

APPENDIX D

Analysis of Curriculum on Health and Wellness of School-going Adolescents under the aegis of School Health Programme of Ayushman Bharat

1. Growing Up Healthy (Theme 1)

Topics Covered:

- Body parts, including private parts (early grades)
- Physical and psychosocial changes during puberty (menstruation, nocturnal emissions)
- Taboos and myths (especially around menstruation, shame)
- Body image and media influence
- Access to youth-friendly services

Depth: Progressive across grades, introduces sensitive content in upper primary, and deconstructs stigma and misinformation in secondary.

2. Emotional Well-being and Mental Health (Theme 2)

Topics Covered:

- Understanding and managing emotions
- Mental health and stressors (peer pressure, relationships, sexuality)
- Self-awareness, self-esteem, coping strategies
- Access to mental health support

Depth: Strong psychosocial foundation crucial for making informed sexual and relationship decisions.

3. Interpersonal Relationships (Theme 3)

Topics Covered:

- Building healthy relationships
- Trust, boundaries, attraction, intimacy, and peer influence
- Respect for diversity, inclusion, and power dynamics

Depth: Explicit mention of love, infatuation, attraction, and how to manage these experiences.

4. Values and Citizenship (Theme 4)

Topics Covered:

- Respect, honesty, empathy, equity
- Discrimination and stigma (including around HIV, gender, caste, ability)

Depth: Important for creating a value-based foundation for inclusive CSE, though sexuality-specific values (consent, sexual rights) are not explicit.

5. Gender Equity (Theme 5)

Topics Covered:

- Gender roles, stereotypes, discrimination
- Diversity in gender identity and expression
- Child marriage, boys' role in ending GBV

Depth: Encouraging. Explicit in addressing power, agency, equity, and the need to engage boys.

6. Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention (Theme 9)

Topics Covered:

- Menstrual health, genital hygiene
- RTIs, STIs, HIV & AIDS (transmission, prevention)
- Responsible sexual behavior, adolescent pregnancy
- Access to health services and legal rights (e.g., HIV Act 2017)

Depth: Strong content, some components adapted from established sources like The YP Foundation, WHO, UNESCO.

7. Safety and Security Against Violence and Injuries (Theme 10)

Topics Covered:

- Abuse: verbal, physical, sexual, cyber
- Good/bad touch, GBV, No-Go-Tell strategies
- Laws and help-seeking behavior

Depth: Strong emphasis on protection, consent and child-friendly reporting mechanisms.

8. Safe Use of Internet and Social Media (Theme 11)

Topics Covered:

- Cyber safety, misinformation, body image and gender norms online
- Cyberbullying, fake news

Depth: Adequately addressed for age-appropriateness.

What the Course is Doing Well

- **Holistic and Multi-thematic:** Covers 11 themes, many aligned to UNESCO's CSE standards.
- **Age-appropriate Progression:** Content gradually builds from pre-primary to senior secondary.
- **Gender-Inclusive Language:** Acknowledges diversity in identities and stresses inclusivity.
- **Strong Pedagogical Approaches:** Emphasis on participatory methods—role plays, theater, reflection, art, storytelling, parent engagement.
- **Connection to Life Skills:** Core CSE goals such as decision-making, refusal skills, self-awareness are embedded.
- **Integration with Legal Frameworks:** References to laws (e.g., HIV Act, COTPA), helping learners understand rights and protections.
- **Linkage with Services:** Directs students to youth-friendly services, health clinics, and support networks.
- **Cultural Sensitivity + Scientific Basis:** Good balance of Indian ethos and scientific/rights-based knowledge.

Gaps in the Course

1. Avoidance of Terms like "Sex", "Sexuality", or "Consent":
   - The curriculum steers clear of direct references to sexual intercourse, sexual orientation, or explicit consent.
   - Important topics such as masturbation, contraceptives (beyond menstruation), and sexual diversity are underexplored or missing.
2. Binary Gender Framing:
   - While there's mention of "diverse identities", the implementation still seems rooted in male-female binaries, especially in early years.
3. No Explicit LGBTQI+ Inclusion:
   - Does not directly address sexual orientation, gender identity or expression
4. Teacher Preparedness:
   - Teachers are expected to handle sensitive content but the training plan risks falling short given the deep attitudinal work required, especially around gender, sex, and rights.
5. Limited Focus on Pleasure and Consent:
   - These are essential CSE pillars to help young people understand their bodies, boundaries, and respectful relationships.
   - No mention of consent or sexual pleasure - all key to rights-based sexuality education.

Suggestions

- Introduce explicit SOGIESC content, including sexual orientation and gender identity, starting from middle grades in age-appropriate ways.
- Add modules on consent education, including examples and role-play scenarios.
- Discuss contraceptive methods, not just menstruation and hygiene, especially for secondary learners.
- Integrate a rights-based framework more explicitly - e.g., the right to bodily autonomy, information, and protection.

APPENDIX E
Mandates and Frameworks

Mandate	Provision	Key Principle(s)	Relevance
Constitutional	Article 15(1) & 15(3) (Prohibition of Discrimination)	Prohibits sex-based discrimination; allows special provisions for women & children.	Supports protective and educational measures for children.
	Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)	Includes the rights to education, dignity, privacy, bodily autonomy, and freedom from sexual violence.	Provides the foundation for a constitutional right to education and sexual well-being; establishes that sexual violence is a violation of the right to life.
	Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech and Expression)	Supports the right to express one's identity and access information.	Backs the right to express gender identity and sexual orientation, and to access sexuality and health information.
	Article 14 (Equality Before Law)	Guarantees equal protection under the law.	Essential for addressing gender-based violence and ensuring justice for survivors.
	Article 39 (e), (f) (Directive Principles of State Policy)	Directs the state to protect children from abuse and ensure their healthy development.	Establishes a state obligation to protect children and foster their healthy growth.
	Article 51A(e) & (h) (Fundamental Duties)	Encourages citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women and develop a scientific temper.	Encourages the development of respectful and inquiry-based thinking regarding gender and sexuality.
International	UN International Conference on Population & Development (ICPD), 1994	Member states, including India, affirmed the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents.	Obligates the government to provide free and compulsory CSE.
	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	Obligates states to protect the "best interests of children" and shield them from all forms of violence, including sexual abuse.	Establishes a global obligation to protect children, which is supported by comprehensive education.
	Article 51(c), 253, and 73 of the Indian Constitution & International Law	Directs India to respect international law and empowers the central government to take executive action to implement international commitments.	Overrides the quasi-federal structure of India for the purpose of fulfilling international obligations, enabling nationwide programs related to health and education.

Mandate	Provision	Key Principle(s)	Relevance
National	Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012	Defines child sexual abuse and mandates reporting of offenses.	Provides a framework for justice after abuse has occurred; CSE/PSE empowers children to use these reporting mechanisms.
	Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)	India's first holistic adolescent health program, which adopts a health promotion approach beyond traditional sexual and reproductive health.	Aims to address nutrition, mental health, violence, and substance misuse, using peer educators and health clinics.
	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme	Tri-ministerial effort to address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and promote the education and empowerment of girls.	Aims to improve the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and increase girls' enrollment in secondary education.
	Mission Shakti	A comprehensive, convergence-based mission to holistically empower women and uphold their safety, security, and dignity.	Integrates safety components like One-Stop Centres and helplines, as well as empowerment initiatives like skill development and financial inclusion.
	Mission Vatsalya	Provides holistic care, protection, and rehabilitation for children in vulnerable situations, prioritizing family-based care.	Aligns with the POCSO Act and focuses on institutional care, emergency outreach, capacity building, and community engagement.
	Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY)	Aims to empower adolescent girls by addressing nutritional and gender disadvantages, with a focus on skill development.	Promotes health awareness, hygiene, and vocational skills training for adolescent girls.
	National Health Policy 2017	Emphasizes adolescent and school health programs along with mental health.	Emphasizes school health programs and integrates health and hygiene into the school curriculum. The policy references psychological problems that can be linked to the misuse of technology, indicating an awareness of modern issues affecting adolescents.
	National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)	Educates adolescents on HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual health.	Focuses on behavior change, targeted interventions, and stigma reduction to combat HIV spread.
	Rani Laxmibai Atma Raksha Prashikshan (2023)	Aims to empower all girl students with self-defense skills.	Provides training in martial arts like judo and karate for personal protection and awareness.

Mandate	Provision	Key Principle(s)	Relevance
UGC	UGC Act, 1956	Section 12	This section places the duty of the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination, and research in Universities, on the UGC
		Section 12(d): "..recommend to any University the measures necessary for the improvement of University education and advise the University upon the action to be taken for the purpose of implementing such recommendation"	Tasks the UGC with identifying areas of improvement and guiding universities in updating their academic programs
		Section 12(i): "..require a University to furnish it with such information as may be needed relating to the financial position of the University or the studies in the various branches of learning undertaken in that University, together with all the rules and regulations relating to the standards of teaching and examination in that University respecting each of such branches of learning"	This allows the UGC to monitor the deployment of these courses, and their quality and relevance, identifying the need for any updates.
		Section 26(1)(f): "..defining the minimum standards of instruction for the grant of any degree by any university"	This empowers the UGC to effectively mandate the inclusion of training for all individuals on campus.
		Section 26(1)(g): "..regulating the maintenance of standards and the coordination of work or facilities in Universities"	This allows UGC to introduce a standardized mandatory course across universities.

Mandate	Provision	Key Principle(s)	Relevance
Legal	Sukdeb Saha vs The State Of Andhra Pradesh (2025)	The Court explicitly declared that the Right to Life (Article 21) includes the Right to Mental Health. This elevates mental well-being from a policy goal to a justiciable fundamental right. HEIs are no longer just academic providers; they are legally bound custodians of their students' psychological integrity. The judgment shifted the narrative of student suicide from "individual failure" (weakness, lack of resilience) to "structural violence." It established that if an institution fails to provide mandated support systems or ignores bullying/harassment, and this negligence contributes to self-harm, the institution is legally liable. The ruling recognized that safety is not uniform. It highlighted that students from marginalized backgrounds - specifically mentioning LGBTQ+ individuals, SC/ST/OBC communities, and persons with disabilities - face higher risks of harassment and isolation.	The guidelines mandate that all teaching and non-teaching staff undergo training to engage sensitively with students from LGBTQ+ communities. The Court directed HEIs to establish confidential mechanisms for reporting harassment based on sexual orientation. The judgment requires the integration of "life skills education" into orientation programs. HEIs with over 100 students must appoint qualified full-time counselors and psychologists. Institutions must prominently display contact details for Tele-MANAS (the national mental health helpline) and local crisis centers across campus and on websites
	Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action & Anr v. Union of India & Ors. (2024)	The State's duty to protect children from the social evil of child marriage cannot be fulfilled solely through punitive legislation. It also requires a proactive preventative approach. Court explicitly linked child marriage to a direct violation of Article 21, stating that it denies children personal autonomy, bodily integrity, ,and access to mental and physical health, forcing them into adult roles for which they are not prepared.	The court issued a direct and unambiguous mandate to states and union territories to integrate CSE into school curricula

Mandate	Provision	Key Principle(s)	Relevance
Legal	Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India (2018)	Primacy of constitutional morality	Curriculum content must be based on constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination, and not on prevailing social, cultural, or religious norms that may be discriminatory.
		Right to dignity and privacy in sexual orientation	Educational materials must portray diverse sexual orientations as natural variations of human identity and must not contain stigmatizing or derogatory content.
	NALSA v. Union of India (2014)	Right to self-identification of gender	Curricula must move beyond a rigid binary and respect the concept of self-identified gender. Medical and social science courses must not pathologize non-binary identities.
		Non-discrimination on the basis of 'sex' includes gender identity	Professional training must include modules on preventing discrimination against transgender persons in all spheres, including employment, healthcare, and education.

Enfold was founded in 2001 (and registered as a trust in 2002) by two gynaecologists, Dr Shaibya Saldanha and Dr Sangeeta Saksena, in response to the lack of discourse on sexuality, silence and apathy around gender-based violence and child sexual abuse in India. Enfold works to create safer spaces where children feel valued and their rights are respected, and where people of all genders feel empowered, accountable, and responsible. This is achieved through field-based engagement across different settings, association with national and international agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and State Governments, and advocacy.

- Its **Prevention and Suvidha** project team pioneered Gender Equity, Sexuality, and Personal Safety education for children, including children with disabilities, college students and adult stakeholders - like parents, teachers and those involved in offering services to victims and perpetrators of gender-based and sexual violence.

- The **Support and Rehabilitation** team assists children who have faced sexual violence through the criminal justice system and conducts training on the POCSO Act, workplace sexual harassment and redressal mechanisms.

- The **Restorative Practices** team facilitates Circles and trains Child Care Institution staff, school teachers, counsellors, and social workers in building a restorative culture and addressing conflict through Restorative Practices.

- The **Research** team works on child protection issues to advance children's rights and the implementation of laws.

Reach till March 2025

As of March 2025, Enfold has sensitized over 2,57,682 children and adolescents in 1078 schools, Colleges, and Child Care Institutions; 90,502 parents, teachers, and support staff; 18,431 police, doctors, and judiciary personnel, 3272 Government Officials, JJB members, and Child Care Institution staff and 15,453 social workers and counsellors in over 60 cities / rural areas of India. This includes 5,180 adults reached under Enfold's Suvidha Project for persons with disability.

enfold

Enfold Proactive Health Trust
No 42, 3rd main,
1st cross, Domlur 2nd Stage,
Bengaluru - 560071, India
+91 99000 94251
info@enfoldindia.org