

# Proposal to set up a Gymkhana Review Committee

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The Student Gymkhana of IIT Kanpur has a continuously changing, self-correcting system: through amendments to the constitution, as passed in the Students' Senate, almost any aspect of the Gymkhana can be changed (and, in fact, is changed every year). For example, last year, the Gymkhana election procedure was amended to account for a no-preference vote. This year, there are already two constitutional amendments in the pipeline, in the form of the SFMC Committee, and the COSHA constitutional amendments committee. However, these changes are reactive in nature: in practice, they are thought out by individuals. Furthermore, seeing that the Gymkhana has functioned for 50 years now, a need is felt to review the overall structure of the Gymkhana and propose changes, similar to how the Academic Review Committee worked with respect to the academic Senate. This need is bolstered by the following areas in which the Gymkhana has been unable to fulfil its complete mandate:

1. **Academic policies and decisions:** The Students' Senate, by and large, seems so pre-occupied with the organization of Gymkhana festivals, the issues relating to inter-Hall competitions. In the present Senate, of a total of 64 proposals and reports presented, only 10 of them pertain to academic policies of the Institute. Furthermore, these 10 agenda items actually include multiplicities since these agendas often seem to get lost in committees or deferred unnecessarily. As a consequence, only 3 of those agendas are really distinct: the audit grade proposal, the discussion on midsem recess (which has, as yet, not even been discussed; it keeps getting deferred), the virtual classrooms proposal, and the proposal for online lecture (which, also, has yet to be considered; it has been deferred to its third meeting). In practice, all such policies and decisions are considered unilaterally by the President and Convener, and perhaps the nominees to the Senate committees pertaining to academics; something that needs to be remedied.
2. **Halls of Residence:** The Hall in which a student resides typically has a huge impact on their life. Yet, the Student Gymkhana has almost nothing to do with hostel administration, mostly because of the rules laid down by the

Institute. Several of the problems that arise from this can be avoided by an organizational overhaul of the mechanism by which the HECs interact with the Gymkhana.

3. **Council organization and SSF:** While the organization of councils has, by and large, stood the test of time, the way that the SSF has been administered has clearly failed to achieve some of its purpose. Often, the activities being administered are not new activities, or hobby group activities, but rather for club activities that already have extremely large dedicated amounts in the Gymkhana budget. This is clearly contrary to the spirit of SSF. Furthermore, in the recent Senate meeting, questions were raised about having a journalistic body like Vox Populi essentially subordinate to an executive. Seeing this, an overhaul of the council organization, to give a position to Vox outside the councils, similar to the Festival teams may be considered.
4. **Fresher activities and Junta participation:** By and large, Gymkhana club activities have a much lesser participation from senior UG batches and PG batches, while there are so many activities for freshmen that students often get overwhelmed. Some solutions to this problem need to be considered on an organizational level.

Thus, to look into these matters, it is proposed that a Gymkhana Review Committee be set up. It is proposed that this GRC will have a very broad mandate of reviewing the Gymkhana's structure, and shall go through the problems it feels the current system has. Furthermore, the GRC should go through bodies similar to the Gymkhana in other institutions such as sister IITs, and appropriate those parts of their systems that seem useful, and which could potentially help enrich the Student Gymkhana of IIT Kanpur.

The following part of this proposal will lay out the exact nature of the GRC, as proposed, giving its mandate, structure, composition etc.

## **Nature of the GRC**

The GRC, as proposed, shall be an ad-hoc subcommittee of the Students' Senate. It is proposed that it shall have a broad mandate, a loose constitution, and rules governing its functioning.

## Constitution and General Principles

It is proposed that:

- The GRC should have between 10-15 members, not necessarily all Senators.
- An experienced Senator should be chosen as the Chairman, GRC. The committee work will be long and involved, and the Chairman should be willing to devote the amount of time the post requires.
- It is recommended that one member of the GRC be either designated the Convener, or the Member-Secretary. Said member should be responsible for preparing Minutes of each meeting, proposals for forwarding to the Senate, and the multiple Reports of the GRC, in consultation with the Chairman, GRC.
- All meetings of the GRC should be open to the General Body, and the General Body must be notified about every meeting with a two day notice. The meetings should take place in a location such as the Senate Hall, New SAC or the Conference Room, Old SAC where a large number of people may be accommodated.
- The functioning and existence of the GRC should be widely publicised by Senators, and the Convener, so that the General Body, if it wishes, can be apprised to the discussions happening in the GRC. Furthermore, the GRC shall conduct surveys through mail to deduce the opinion of the General Body on the changes recommended by the GRC.
- Meetings should be extremely open. All General Body Members should have a right to express their opinion as well as to initiate discussions and submit proposals.
- As far as possible, decisions as to which proposals of the GRC shall be passed to the Senate should be taken by consensus. If necessary, however, the discussion itself may be passed to Senate. If no consensus is reached over a proposal, all members and General Body Members present shall vote and the proposal, along with the assent/dissent to the proposal shall both be forwarded to the Senate, irrespective of whether the vote had been able to secure simple majority or not.

## Mandate, Purview and Functioning

It is proposed that:

- The Mandate of the GRC is to prepare a list of deficiencies with the current Gymkhana system, deliberate on the issues, construct possible solutions and forward these solutions as proposals for discussion in the Senate.
- Furthermore, the GRC is mandated to go over the Student Governance systems of other IITs, the governance of the IIT Senates, and other bodies similar to the Student Gymkhana and the Students' Senate and adapt any organizational principles and ideas from these other systems for introduction in the IIT Kanpur Gymkhana, to enrich our system.
- The GRC will also review the organization and content of the Constitution and create an updated version of the same.
- The purview of the GRC will include all aspects of the Gymkhana, its functioning, its administration and its constituents.
- It is advised that for the duration of the existence of the GRC, all constitutional amendments (even minor ones) be routed through the GRC instead of the Senate.
- While most subcommittees of the Senate function in a comparatively informal manner, the GRC should be more formal in its proceedings. The formality associated with the proceedings of the Senate itself is a good indicator to the manner in which the GRC meetings and activities should be conducted.
- The GRC shall meet at least once a month. Notice for these meetings shall be given to the General Body, and agenda items will be invited from all General Body Members. These meetings shall be for the purposes of:
  - a) Discussing the needs and deficiencies of the Gymkhana.
  - b) Discussing the systems at sister institutions.
  - c) Apprising the General Body about the decisions taken by the Senate.
- These meetings, however, shall not be for brainstorming or for coming up with proposals. The GRC shall, for these purposes, constitute subcommittees. The size of these committees shall be somewhere from 1 to 5, and they shall legally be treated as ad-hoc subcommittees of the Students' Senate, as laid out in the Constitution of the Gymkhana.
- The GRC should function for a substantial period of time (for at least 1.5 semesters, maybe more, as required by the Senate). If the GRC is still functioning at the time of handover of charge of a Gymkhana, it should not be dissolved at such time, and should be considered as reconstituted as a subcommittee of the new Senate.

- The GRC should be dissolved only when there is consent in both the GRC and the Senate that its purpose has been met, or within 18 months of its constitution, whichever comes first.
- The GRC will deliberate on the issues covered under its mandate and forward its decisions and recommendations to the Senate in the form of Minutes, Reports, or Proposals, as laid out later in this document.
- The recommendations of the GRC shall be treated as a case-by-case basis in the Senate rather than in totality. This will ensure proper accountability of each decision, and will ensure that an uncontroversial reform does not get bogged down due to some other unrelated change which is controversial.
- The GRC is a purely advisory body. Its decisions and recommendations will only be enforced once it has been discussed and passed in the Senate. The Senate may, if it wishes, not accept the recommendations of the GRC.

### Minutes, Reports and Proposal

It is proposed that:

- The GRC will maintain a record of the Minutes of its Meetings. The Minutes of each Meeting shall be prepared by the Member-Secretary in consultation with the Chairman. The Minutes shall be circulated within a week of the Meeting or before the next Senate Meeting, whichever is earlier, and shall be confirmed (in case of no objection) online, on a GRC mailing list. If objections are raised, the Minutes will be confirmed in the subsequent Meeting.
- The confirmed Minutes shall be forwarded to Senate for its noting, and shall be circulated among the General Body, in order to keep the Senate and the General Body informed about the functioning of the GRC.
- Recommendations passed and decisions taken in the GRC shall be forwarded to the Senate by the Chairman, GRC, in the form of proposals. These shall be discussed as a single fixed item in the Senate Agenda. This item, to be called “Discussion on the proposals of the GRC” shall be for the discussion of the proposals, and when necessary, passing these proposals by consensus or by vote.
- Constitutional Amendments will only be brought to the Senate once its full text has been decided, and will be brought with the opinion of the Rules and Procedures Committee. All other rules pertaining to Amendments, as laid out in the Constitution will still apply.

- Recommendations passed shall be forwarded to the Senate as and when the relevant Minutes are confirmed.
- If the Senate rejects a proposal, it shall be sent back to the GRC with the comments of the Senate as to why the proposal was rejected. The GRC may then choose to forgo that proposal, or re-table it with modifications to address the Senate's concerns.
- The GRC shall submit multiple reports during its existence as and when required by the Senate. These shall document all the proceedings of the GRC, as well as any proposals or discussions that are in the pipeline.