**Proposal to restructure the SSAC**

*Anurag Sahay (11917141/11141)*

The current constitution of the Senate Students’ Affairs Committee, which primarily oversees cases of student indiscipline, is as follows:

* Dean, Students’ Affairs (Chairperson, *ex-officio*)
* Head, Counselling Service (*ex-officio*)
* Chairman, Council of Wardens or his/her nominee
* Chairman, APEC or his/her nominee
* Three Senate Nominees
* Four Students’ Senate Nominees

This proposal is to restructure the SSAC, and is based on an earlier proposal by Prof. Dheeraj Sanghi (CSE). There are two proposed models, and the Students’ Senate is requested to consider both models and send either or both to the Academic Senate for further consideration as it wishes.

**Model I:**

The proposed constitution in Model I is as follows:

* Five Senate Nominees
* Five Students’ Senate Nominees
* Dean, Academic Affairs (*ex-officio*)
* Dean, Students’ Affairs (*ex-officio*)

Furthermore, it is proposed that the Chairperson of the SSAC should not be *ex-officio*. Instead, the Chairperson of the SSAC should be elected from among its non-*ex-officio* faculty members in a process similar to that followed for other Standing Committees of the Senate, conducted by the Senate Elections Committee.

It is further proposed that:

* The immediate previous Chairperson, SSAC should be one of the five Senate Nominees.
* At least one each of the Senate Nominees and the Students’ Senate Nominees must be female.
* At least one each of the Senate Nominees must be an Assistant Professor, an Associate Professor and a Professor respectively.
* At least one each of the Students’ Senate nominees must be an undergraduate student, a PhD student, an MTech/MDes/MBA/MS by Research student and an MSc (2 year)/MSc-PhD dual degree student respectively.

**Model II:**

The proposed constitution in Model II is as follows:

* Five Senate Nominees
* Five Students’ Senate Nominees
* Chairperson, Senate Undergraduate Committee (*ex-officio*)
* Chairperson, Senate Postgraduate Committee (*ex-officio*)
* Dean, Students’ Affairs (*ex-officio*)

Furthermore, it is proposed that the Chairperson of the SSAC should not be *ex-officio*. Instead, the Chairperson of the SSAC should be elected from among its non-*ex-officio* faculty members in a process similar to that followed for other Standing Committees of the Senate, conducted by the Senate Elections Committee.

It is further proposed that:

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* At least one each of the Senate Nominees and the Students’ Senate Nominees must be female.
* At least one each of the Senate Nominees must be an Assistant Professor, an Associate Professor and a Professor respectively.
* At least one each of the Students’ Senate nominees must be an undergraduate student, a PhD student, an MTech/MDes/MBA/MS by Research student and an MSc (2 year)/MSc-PhD dual degree student respectively.

**Justification for the Proposal:**

1. For the removal of the Dean, Students’ Affairs as Chairperson: One of the most out of the ordinary characteristics of the SSAC as a Standing Committee of the Senate is that it is the only Committee that has a Dean as its member, and further, it is the only committee except the EPC (which is chaired by the Chairman, Senate) whose Chairperson is not elected by the members of the committee. There is no clear justification for why this is the case except for the fact that the Deanship of the DOSA is one of the only Deanships to exist at the time when the Standing Committees were first constituted, and hence it probably made sense to make matters that pertain directly to students, like the SSAC to be associated with this Deanship. However, with time, the philosophy of the Institute has changed, and now this particular oddity cannot be justified any longer: in all other Standing Committees, the independence of the structures of the Senate from the Administrative setup of the Institute is (rightly) emphasized as an infrastructure that promotes democratic and consultative decision-making in the processes of the Senate, and hence reflects the mood of the Institute at large, rather than the views of the few who hold administrative positions at that time. The Chairperson of a committee has a great deal of clout in terms of the functioning and decision-making of the committee, and hence the Administration has far too much input into the proceedings of the SSAC at present – this situation has lately resulted in a number of cases being hotly contested by Senators, and often the decisions taken by the SSAC have been overturned by the Senate. Furthermore, the SSAC has often been accused of being lenient with students – an accusation which is often linked to an effort being made by the DOSA to help students as far as he can. If the Chairperson of the SSAC is elected instead, this complaint will not longer be valid, as the Senate will be able to direct the Chairperson by sending appropriate Senate Nominees in the first place. However, it is clear that in the vast majority of cases, the input of the Dean, Students’ Affairs may and will be necessary. Hence, the DOSA should continue to be a member.
2. For the removal of Chairperson, CoW: The inclusion of the Chairperson of the Council of Wardens in the SSAC can probably be understood as an attempt to provide context to the SSAC with respect to Hostel issues when cases related to it are considered by the SSAC. However, as a former member of the SSAC, I can attest to the fact that no such input ever comes from the nominee of the CoW: usually, the Warden-in-Charge of the concerned Hall will have a much better idea about the case than an arbitrary member of the CoW nominated by its Chairperson. Given this, it makes sense to remove the Chairperson, CoW from the committee, and instead call the Warden-in-Charge(s) of the concerned Halls as special invitees to the meetings of the SSAC involving students of their Halls in hostel-related offences.
3. For the removal of Chairperson, APEC: The Chairperson, APEC was included in the SSAC due to the fact that he/she would, in the original working of the APEC, directly monitor undergraduate students in Academic Probation and Warning, and hence have a fair idea about the undergraduate population of the Institute (which is also the population most likely to end up in disciplinary trouble, due to age-related maturity issues). However, this mode of functioning of the APEC has not happened in many years due to the increase in the size of the student population in the past 50 years. Given this, the Chairperson, APEC is not, at present, providing any valuable input of this nature. Hence, it is proposed that the Chairperson, APEC not be included in the committee.
4. For the inclusion of officials pertaining to Academics: Specialized cases that come to the SSAC normally fit into two categories: pertaining to the Students’ Affairs Office (hostel administration, festival conduction, Gymkhana, election misconduct and so on) or the Academic Affairs Office (cheating, plagiarism, bunking and so on). While the Dean, Students’ Affairs is still included in the committee, the removal of the Chairperson, APEC will mean that no input comes from the Academic side of things. Hence it is proposed that either the Dean, Academic Affairs, or the Chairpersons of the SUGC and SPGC be added to the committee.
5. For the removal of the Head, Counselling Service: The role of a member of the SSAC, with respect to discipline is clear: it serves the role of a jury and judge – deciding whether an infraction has been committed, and deciding the appropriate punishment to redress the wrongdoing. However, this conflicts with the duties of the Head, Counselling Service, whose role, first and foremost must be to counsel and support any student who needs such counseling – notably even when the student has been, or is being punished. This creates a situation at present, where the student, once punished by the SSAC (where he has met the Head, Counselling Service) is unable to approach the Service for his issues due to this conflict of interest. Thus, it is proposed that the Head, Counselling Service be excluded from the committee. However, it is proposed that in cases involving students who are either:
   1. Under the care of the Counselling Service;
   2. Likely to be facing emotional and mental stress; or
   3. Likely to be punished at Level 6 or above,

the SSAC should call the Head, Counselling Service to any interview of the student(s) as a special invitee. In such cases, the Head, Counselling Service may also be invited to the meeting in which the punishment is decided to give his/her input.

1. For the number of Nominees of the respective Senates: The proposal posits that in matters of student discipline, the opinions of the faculty body (represented by the Academic Senate) and of the student body (represented by the Students’ Senate) must be given equal priority, and hence proposes that equal number of Nominees must be taken from both bodies. Furthermore, the number 5 has been chosen to take into account the increase in the size of the student population.
2. For the rules governing the Nominees of the respective Senates: For all the proposed rules, the underlying principle is to ensure basic representation from all stakeholders from the campus community.
3. On the question of which Model is preferable: The essential difference between the two models is the number (12 vs 13) and the representative on matters pertaining to academics (Dean, Academic Affairs or Chairpersons of SUGC and SPGC). My personal recommendation is that it is preferable to include the Dean, Academic Affairs for the following reasons:
   1. While having a healthy independence from the Institute administration in Senate matters is important, it is also the case that the discipline of the Institute’s students is a matter of direct importance to the Administration, and hence it is important to have the input of the Administration that is directly responsible for the discipline of students to the parents. Hence, including the Dean over elected officials of the Senate is preferable.
   2. Since the current use of the SSAC is primarily of disciplinary correction, it can be likened to a jury. The number 12 has long been associated with a jury, and has served well in other contexts.