



UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

COMMISSION CIRCULAR NO. 10/2021

No. 20, Ward Place,
Colombo 07

21.12.2021

Vice Chancellors of Universities,
Rectors of Campuses,

Social Reconciliation among University Communities: Establishing Centres of Social Reconciliation

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has launched a joint initiative with the President's Office to establish Social Reconciliation Centres (SRCs) increasing capacity building, research output, and other activities for an initial time period of ten years and is expected to extend well beyond that time frame.

The central purpose of a SRC is to promote understanding of different religions and ethnicities while promoting the Sri Lankan spirit rather than parochial identities. Through educational and cultural programmes, the SRCs can bring diverse ethnic and religious leaders and their communities together. Key activities such as functions that bridge the cultural and religious divide and remove ingrained and acquired prejudice can be organized by the Centres to promote greater understanding and reach out to the university communities and beyond.

The UGC at its 1062nd meeting held on 02.09.2021 decided to establish the Standing Committee on Social Reconciliation. On the approval of the UGC, the SRCs have to be established at all state universities and suitable academic staff should be appointed as Directors of the Centres. These academic staff members will be members of the Standing Committee on Social Reconciliation.

Although the UGC plays a facilitator role to achieve goals of social reconciliation (SR) in the university system, the operational aspects including the adoption of appropriate policies and the implementation of programmes must be at university level. The rationale for establishing a SRC in the university is well recognized the world over.

This Circular covers the following areas:

1. Composition and Functions of the Standing Committee on Social Reconciliation .
2. Policy Framework
3. Institutional Arrangements, Objectives and Functions
4. Administration, Accountability Mechanisms and Financial Management

(1) The Standing Committee on Social Reconciliation

1.1 Functions of the Standing Committee

- Initiate actions on policy directives issued by the UGC from time to time to implement prescribed initiatives, programs, and activities at university/ campus level.
- Assist in the formulation and dissemination of policies, practises, and procedures.
- Regularly monitor the progress made by the respective SRCs at universities/ campuses.
- Function as a catalytic unit to promote new initiatives and to improve and advance research on social reconciliation and peace building.

1.2 Composition of the Standing Committee

- Chairperson - a member of the UGC, nominated by the Chairman/ UGC
- Secretary to the Standing Committee, nominated by the UGC
- Directors of SRCs of universities and campuses
- Two consultants from among professors, appointed by the UGC
- One invitee who has expertise in the field of peace and reconciliation, appointed by the UGC
- Two outside nominees who have expertise in the field of peace and reconciliation, appointed by the UGC

(2) Policy Framework

The (Name of the HEI) policy seeks to create a framework that will guide the University in establishing a SRC, increasing capacity building, research output and other activities.

The policy establishes the basis for (Name of the HEI) cooperation with the UGC, the Government and society at large to promote reconciliation.

This policy applies to all members of the university, including students, employees, visitors, and any individuals regularly or temporarily employed, studying, living, visiting, conducting business, or having any official capacity at the university.

This policy also applies to off-campus conduct that is likely to have a substantial adverse effect on any member of the university community or the university.

2.1 Policy Vision

To promote social reconciliation and harmony through, social and cultural activities and dissemination of research output among university community.

2.2 Policy Mission

To enable university community to excel in providing social reconciliation and harmony by way of engagement in social, cultural activities and research in order to promote national unity and reconciliation.

2.3 Guiding Principles

Policy will be based on the following principles:

- Principles of social reconciliation shall be upheld.
- Social reconciliation is central to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the policy.
- Transparency, accountability, confidentiality, and sensitivity in the implementation of the policy shall be upheld.
- Partnership and collaboration between staff and students are essential to the reconciliation.

2.4 Specific Objectives of the Policy:

- Establish SRCs to promote reconciliation as continuous processes.
- Contribute to the knowledge and research on broad, post-conflict dynamics in the country.
- Encourage academia to engage in reconciliation and peace building processes and produce research drawn from perspectives from a multitude of disciplines.
- Disseminate research from a multitude of disciplines to the public in all three languages.
- Build an offline/ online platform for both internal and external collaboration and interaction between different universities/ campuses.
- Design programmes to educate and connect individuals to remove elements of hate, prejudice, suspicion, and mistrust.
- Promote harmonious relations between different categories of staff and students at (Name of the HEI).
- Provide prompt, effective, consistent and fair guidelines and procedures for handling social reconciliation at the university, and promote research and publications of research findings and recommendations in the form of measures regarding SR.

(3) Institutional Arrangements, Objectives and Functions

In order to take the social reconciliation ideals forward, it is necessary that each university establishes a SRC.

3.1 Structure:

The SRC, as decided by the University Governance System, i.e. Vice Chancellor/ Rector and the Council may have a person entrusted with the responsibilities¹ known as the Director.

The Centre and the Director may be provided a core group of competent staff to carry out the work that it would decide to undertake on a predesigned annual work plan.

¹ Executive Responsibility: (i) Takes meaningful decisions about how the operations are run (ii) Responsible for the consequences of those decisions. The University Council will decide on the extent of the executive power/responsibility.

The following organizational structure is suggested²:

		Comments
1	Director (1)	Essential post to steer the Centre activities, ensuring a strategic niche in the university and towards a sustainable future.
2	Assistant Registrar (1)	To be responsible for all administrative matters. Initially, the service may be provided by an Assistant Registrar from within the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for one day/week or equivalent.
3	Assistant Bursar (1)	Prepare the annual budget of the Centre in line with the University budget. Deal with all financial matters.
4	Technical Officer/Research Assistant	These positions will be required to carry out the functions of the Centre effectively in the long term as technical assistance is required at every instance and research activities need to be enhanced through this Centre.
5	Management Assistant (Program)	The Management Assistant (Program) will assist the Director and the programme staff on activities undertaken by the SRC.
6	Works Aide (1)	The works aide will assist the Director of the SRC.

Initially, the Centre may be established with the above composition. This structure may be adopted for the initial phase of one year.

3.2 Objectives:

1. Contribute to the knowledge and research on broad, post-conflict social dynamics in the country by encouraging the academia to engage in reconciliation and peace building processes, as well as produce research drawn from perspectives from a multitude of disciplines and disseminate them to the public in all three languages via print and electronic media.
2. To build an offline/ online platform for both internal and external collaboration and interaction between different universities, as well as diverse communities, and establish an online repository of research and knowledge. The information generated by the different programmes of the Social Reconciliation Centre (SRC) programmes are designed to educate and connect individuals so that elements of hate, prejudice, suspicion, or mistrust that may remain are removed from their hearts and minds.

3.3 Functions/ Key Activities:

The main functions of the Centre could be any combination of those listed below. Depending on the context, the functional priorities, and the emphasis may vary.

1. Policy: Develop and adopt, refine, review, and improve institutional reconciliation policy. Assist in the operationalization and implementation of the university reconciliation policy. Periodically review the policy and suggest improvements.

² This is a short term measure and may be revised in five years.

2. Introducing compulsory courses (i.e. ESS 1000: Leadership, Ethics and Social Cohesion) including Out Bound Training (OBT) and appropriate certificate, diploma and degree programs jointly with the relevant faculties/ departments of study of the respective universities.
3. Capacity building, research, workshops, conferences, publications, internships for undergraduates, peace building and youth empowerment activities.
4. Celebrating national festivals such as Thai Pongal, Sinhala and Hindu New Year, Vesak, Ramazan, Deepavali, Christmas, etc.
5. Implementing youth exchange programs, etc. with host-family schemes.
6. Hosting painting, art, cultural exhibitions, etc.
7. Conducting national and international conferences on conflict, peace, and reconciliation.
8. Creating a trilingual journal to publish the findings of social reconciliation and peace research conducted by members of Sri Lankan universities (at faculty-level and by students).
9. Dancing, drama, music performances, etc.
10. Establishing reconciliation clubs (RC), etc.
11. Providing opportunities to enable social reconciliation by way of holding events such as cultural festivals, fun activities, youth camps, multi-cultural events at both university and national level that will enable them to share their experiences with other cultures and lifestyles.
12. Organize any other activities related to social reconciliation and peace building.

(4) Administration, Accountability Mechanisms and Financial Management

4.1 Administration:

The Social Reconciliation Centres (SRCs) will be placed under the purview of the UGC and a Standing Committee will be set up to oversee the activities of SRCs in the university system. The university SRC is placed under the purview of the Vice-Chancellor and governed by a Management Committee headed by a Director. Its administrative and financial management will be under the structure of the Management Committee.

Management Committee

The SRC Management Committee will consist of members in terms of the number of faculties of the university. Member composition of the Management Committee will be as follows,

- Representatives of Senate – 02 members
- Coordinators – 01 from each faculty
- Representatives – 02 from each faculty with at least one female student
- Eminent individuals devoted to reconciliation – 02 from outside the university

The Management Committee will be approved by the Council with the recommendation of the Senate.

Proposed working principles

The following are the proposed working principles based on which each university may strengthen a more robust and credible approach to their work:

- a. Be inclusive and engage all segments of the university community
- b. Be transparent in all dealings
- c. Optimize the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to improve efficiency and facilitate information sharing
- d. Have regular dialogues with stakeholders and obtain feedback
- e. Think global and act local

- f. Adhere to university regulations – AR&FR
- g. Be democratic and respectful of all stakeholders who will seek services

4.2 Director – Functions³/ Responsibilities⁴

The Director, a professor who is an expertise in the field of peace and reconciliation, will be nominated by the Vice Chancellor/ Rector of the respective university/ campus. The Director of SRC of the university/ campus shall be a part-time post confined to academics of the university/ campus and the duration of the appointment shall be three years.

The Director of the Social Reconciliation Centre of a university will take on the responsibility of ensuring that the university undertakes actions to nurture social reconciliation in the university environment. Such an environment will have numerous functional dimensions which are elaborated under the “Functions of the Social Reconciliation Centre”.

The following is a listing of the Responsibilities of the Director:

Maintaining Image / Credibility of the Centre (SRC):

1. At all times, when in the Higher Educational Institute or outside, will be the image of the core values and standards advocated. Therefore, will act with integrity, respect for all people, will be gender sensitive and honourable. Will not bring any disrepute.
2. The Director is responsible to maintain the overall image of the Centre locally and internationally.

Management of the Centre (SRC):

1. Report to the Standing Committee on Social Reconciliation regarding the progress of the Centre.
2. Respond on time to requests made by the UGC.
3. Prepare end of year reports for the UGC Social Reconciliation Standing Committee by mid-January each year for the preceding year following standards of good practices.
4. Will be fair and just in all her / his dealings with colleagues, subordinates and all stakeholders (students / university employees) associated with the SRC.
5. Maintain cordial relationships with SRC staff, management committee, and stakeholders.
6. Provide the Management Committee of the SRC with monthly review / chair progress meetings professionally. Maintain minutes and circulate those within two weeks after each meeting.
7. Prepare the annual work plan and budget, get it approved by the Management Committee, and submit it to university Finance Committee via the VC for approval.
8. Work closely with the Bursar to ensure that all financial regulations are followed and that the SRC has sufficient resources to undertake the annual work-plan.

³ The four **functions** of management include (i) planning, or deciding upon organizational goals and the methods to achieve them; (ii) organizing, or determining the best allocation of people and resources; (iii) directing, or motivating, instructing, and supervising workers assigned to the activity; and (iv) controlling, or analysing metrics of organization activities to ensure completion of tasks and identify areas for improvement.

⁴ Entrusted with a leadership role, a manager is **responsible** for overseeing a group of employees across every sector; contributing to the dealings in significant ways, which are reflected in the public image, credibility, productivity, and overall workplace morale.

9. Ensure that the infrastructure, equipment and resources are properly inventoried and well managed.

Accountability of the Director

Director is accountable for all the functions handled by the Centre. The SRCs, being part of a HEI of the government, will adhere to all the rules and regulations of (i) the UGC (ii) public sector (iii) by-laws and policy directives of the respective HEI. Thus, the following aspects of decision making of the Centres will adhere to the rules and regulations adopted by the aforesaid:

1. Human resource management - recruitment, promotion and dismissals.
Any disciplinary action must follow due processes of the above agencies.
2. Obtaining resources, both personnel and material, must be as per procurement processes as stipulated by administrative and financial regulations.
3. Management of petty cash and cash boxes maintained by the Centre must be according to the financial regulations adhered to by the HEI.
4. Any discretion enjoyed by the Director must be first approved by the Vice Chancellor/ Rector and the Council of the HEI. If not, the Director does not have the freedom to use public funds at her / his will. Special care must be taken for tender board approvals and calling for quotations. These principles apply even for funds solicited and obtained as grants from agencies of the state sector, private sector or international funders.
5. The Director is accountable to the Management Committee. The Director and the Committee will be accountable to the VC and the University Council. The scope of accountability is wide and includes all financial and administrative matters.

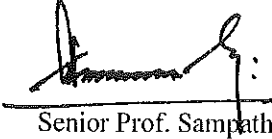
Program / Activities:

1. Develop (i) a strategic plan for the development and sustainability of the SRC, (ii) an internal management system that will ensure smooth functioning of the SRC.
2. Develop short /medium / long-term project proposals for social reconciliation programmes for the University for obtaining funds.
3. Strengthen the reconciliation mechanism within the university while ensuring effectiveness.
4. Develop guidelines and standards on how the SRC will implement the work plan and undertake quality activities and bring them to proper closure.
5. Ensure that all projects funded by agencies are completed as proposed, end of project reports are completed, and audited financial statements are readied and delivered on time.

4.3 Financial Management

The Commission at its 1063rd meeting held on 16.09.2021 decided that the universities have to find their own funding mechanism for the SRCs.

However, to establish the SRCs at universities, seed funding will be provided by the UGC subject to the funds allocated by the Treasury.



Senior Prof. Sampath Amaratunge

Chairman

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7. Registrars of Universities
8. Deans of Faculties
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