RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION TAKEN

Indian Institute of Technology Madras, being extremely concerned about suicides of students, has taken several steps to counsel and help those who need emotional support. One of the measures has been to provide an 'Inquiry Committee' that shall interact with scholars, students and faculty members who would like to depose and provide any facts or information related to the recent suicide of a PhD Scholar and shall make recommendations to the Director, IIT Madras in the form of further actions to be taken in this situation and for prevention of such a loss of precious lives. Therefore, the competent authority had constituted an Inquiry Committee in April 2023 to inquire into the suicide of the Ph.D research scholar. The composition of the Committee is as follows:

1. Ms. G Thilakavathi, IPS (R)   - Chairperson
2. Ms. D Sabitha, IAS (R)   - Member
3. Ms. Kannegi Packianathan, IAS (R)   - Member
4. Prof. Ravindra Gettu, CE, IITM   - Member (Faculty)
5. Shri Amal Manoharan (PH19D043)   - Member (Student)

Considering the well-being of the students, the Inquiry Committee nominated Dr. Punithavathi, Assistant Professor, Institute of Psychiatry from Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH), also in the Committee, with the approval of the Director, IIT Madras.

The committee has provided a set of recommendations, covering various aspects related to guide-student relationship, grievance redressal mechanisms and wellbeing of faculty and students. The recommendations and action taken are given in the following sections.

A. THINGS TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE GUIDE - STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

Recommendation 1: Allotment of Guides:

The committee noticed that there is a need to review the present system of allotting guides and changing guides to make it in conformity with the global best practices.

Action Taken:

At present the scholars reach the campus about two weeks before the commencement of the classes. The scholars interact with the faculty and have full freedom to choose their guides depending on availability and interest. This practice will be continued. However, hereon the research scholars will be asked to reach the campus one month before the commencement of classes so that sufficient time is available to interact with the faculty and his/her group. The Department will publicise its policy and the scholars will have the freedom to choose their guides. Both the scholars and the guides can request the DC Chair for special DC meetings to resolve any issues including change of guide.

Recommendation 2: Documentation of the Guide's expectation of Academic requirements and lab protocols/etiquettes:

The expectations of the guide (i.e., number of papers, laboratory etiquette/protocols) that are over and above the requirements given by the Institute should be explicitly mentioned to the research scholar before the guide is allotted. It should also be recorded in the first meeting of the Doctoral Committee to avoid disputes and promote and to foster congenial working relationship between the guide and the research scholar.

Action Taken:

The research lab/group protocol and guide's expectations (i.e., number of publications, laboratory protocols, quantum of work, etc.) will be explained to the scholar before identifying their guide(s). The faculty shall highlight the expectations at the time of the first meeting with the new scholar. Department will facilitate interaction with the potential guides before allocation.

In the first meeting of the Doctoral committee which is the orientation DC (0th DC), the importance of meeting the milestones, as per the ordinances, will be emphasised to the scholar. The scholar should be informed to start working on the research problem along with the course work. The orientation DC (0th DC) is expected to be held within two weeks from the date of guide allotment.

Recommendation 3: Confidential feedback about Research Guidance:

At present there is no system to quantify and assess the quality of guidance, research input and the time spent by the guides on the research work and research scholars. A mechanism should be devised for collecting confidential feedback every semester as done in the case of academic courses where teaching feedback is collected. This should be monitored directly by the Dean- Academic Research.

Action Taken:

The Institute has created a new system of Kushal meetings between the faculty and the respective advisees in order to identify potential problems. An on-line confidential feedback portal is made available for the scholars to give their feedback (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/). In addition to this, a Research Credit system is introduced. The research scholars need to enroll for the same every semester, summer and winter breaks. At the end of every semester and the breaks the guides need to give his/her feedback about the progress of the scholar. Based on the same the Doctoral/General Test committee will meet, if needed, to resolve any issues to set the research work on track. The students will also be able to give their feedback through the teacher course feedback portal. The feedback goes to the HoD and the Dean (AR) for review and taking necessary action, if required. They can also use the Kushal website or the confidential box placed in the admin section which will be handled confidentially by the Director's office.

The seminars and candidacy exams will be courses. The scholar will register for these courses and the coordinator will assign the grades. This will help tracking milestones.

Recommendation 4: Offer Work-Life Balance Programs:

Promote work-life balance among students and faculty. Encourage extracurricular activities, hobbies, and sports, and ensure that students have time for relaxation and self-care. For a number of reasons, work-life balance is essential in research institutions. The wellness of researchers is improved by maintaining a healthy work-life balance, which also prevents burnout and fosters mental health. Enabling people to unwind and approach their work from a new angle paves the way for creativity and productivity. Demanding group meetings on Saturday and Sunday should be completely discouraged. Guides strictly demanding scholars presence in the lab outside the time window of 8 am to 5 pm should be discouraged.

Action Taken:

Several work-life balance programs like movies, concerts, Extramural Lectures, Cultural clubs, Gymkhana, etc. are already available at the Institute. Scholars will have the freedom to choose their working style outside the office hours and roster duty preference where manning of labs are concerned. The Senate in its 301st meeting held on 24-02-2023 has also approved five days per semester "on duty" provision for co-curricular activities in addition to the leave they are entitled to. Guides and scholars are expected to jointly workout a schedule that shall account for the scholar enabling a healthy work-life balance.

B. THINGS TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE GRIEVANCES REDRESSAL MECHANISMS

Recommendation 5: External Committee/Members for hearing grievances:

An external committee should be established and maintained to hear and address the issues raised by students and faculty members. In order to understand and adapt to the good practices in other institutes nationally and globally, it would be useful to have external members in the institute senate.

Action Taken:

IIT Madras implemented a system of 'Student Ombuds' in order to have an external and independent system of addressing grievances from students and other stakeholders. Ms. G. Thilakavathi IPS has been appointed as the Student Ombuds.

Additionally, the following three well reputed academicians are nominated as external Senate members.

(i) Prof. Vinod Singh (Rahul and Namita Gautam Chair Professor at IIT Kanpur, https://home.iitk.ac.in/~vinodks/)

(ii) Prof. Ganesh Ramakrishnan (Institute Chair Professor, IIT Bombay, https://www.cse.iitb.ac.in/~ganesh/)

(iii) Prof. Narayan Chandra Nayak, Professor of economics, (IIT Kharagpur, https://www.iitkgp.ac.in/department/HS/faculty/hs-ncnayak)

Recommendation 6: Anonymous Reporting Mechanism:

Establish an anonymous reporting system to report incidents of emotional abuse or any form of mistreatment of students either by faculty members or other students. Ensure that these reports are taken seriously, investigated promptly, and kept confidential. There should be a suggestion box or online portal for all students, especially research scholars, monitored by a non-faculty member. This may be done by a Grievance Redressal Cell, Counseling Centre or Ombudsman.

Action Taken:

An on-line confidential student feedback portal is available for the scholars to report their grievances at the site https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/. In this portal they can report if they are not happy or facing any discrimination. The research scholars can also report if they are facing undue delays from their guides (more than two months) in receiving feedback on their manuscript or thesis chapters and if they are facing any difficulty in terms of non-availability of equipment for their experimentation. In addition to this, a suggestion box was already installed in the ground floor of the Admin Building in which the students can drop complaints/suggestions and this will be handled confidentially by the Director's office.

c. THINGS TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE WELLBEING OF FACULTY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS/SCHOLARS

Recommendation 7: Establishment of a Robust Wellness Support System:

Create a dedicated mental health unit in the institute campus with full time psychiatrists on campus and professional clinical psychologists trained to handle emotional and psychological issues faced by students, and maintain detailed confidential case sheets with assessments for further follow up and review. It should be ensured that the high-risk students and persons with mental health issues in the past and present are being regularly followed up. The parents should be kept informed of the treatment protocol. Elaborate processes should be set up to document the information collected, for follow up and all cases should be monitored until graduation. Consent from the students for such follow up should be made mandatory when they join the Institute. This can be achieved only with a team of full time psychiatrists' working on a shift basis. Also it should be ensured that this wellness centre is accessible, confidential, and stigma-free. This will encourage students to seek help and actively promote mental health awareness.

Action Taken:

Wellness support system is currently in place to address all the issues related to the students, faculty and staff. Time bound grievance redressal mechanism, Kushal meeting, student feedback mechanism (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/) and counselors are available for ready help to the students. The counselors regularly visit the Departments, hostels, wellness centre and the hospital at announced timings.

Recommendation 8: Identify High-Risk Students:

Based on the student's feedback, the conflicting relationship between the guide and student should be identified. Corrective measures should be initiated by the HoD and Dean Academic Research to resolve at the earliest.

Action Taken:

Monthly feedback is being obtained from both the scholars and the guides to identify and resolve issues, if any, through the Kushal meetings. In addition high risk students are tracked through absence to class, assessments, examinations and mess. A weekly feedback mechanism from the parents is also being enabled.

Recommendation 9: Monitoring of High-Risk Students:

Monitor students who may be at higher risk of emotional distress or suicidal thoughts. Efforts should be made to reach out to them proactively and offer additional support. High importance should be given to preventing emotional abuse and creating a supportive environment through continuous effort that requires commitment from the entire institution.

Action Taken:

A dedicated wellness support system is created for addressing this issue with the utmost care and sensitivity. As explained earlier, inputs are being derived from different mechanisms to identify distressed students and likely students to be in distress. External counselors are appointed and are available to help 24 x7. This system will be continuously monitored and fine tuned.

Recommendation 10: Humane approach in dealing with research scholars:

As research scholars are young adults they expect a certain degree of mature and humane approach in their interpersonal relationship with their guides. The professors should be subjected to periodical sessions of counseling to caution them against behavioral conduct found to be humiliating and dehumanizing for the scholars.

Action Taken:

In most problem cases, it is observed that the root cause of the problems is the mismatch in expectations between the scholar and guide(s). Faculty and scholars will be advised to meet before the guide allocation process to get clarity on what is expected from each side. Scholars will also be informed of the grievance redressal mechanism available to them. Furthermore, research scholars will henceforth be asked to register for "research credits" every semester, summer and winter and the guides will give feedback. The scholars will also be able to give their feedback through the teacher course feedback portal. This will enable the administration to monitor the progress of scholars quantitatively and quickly recommend and implement any remedial measures.

Recommendation 11: Implement Strict Anti-Bullying Policies:

Develop and enforce clear anti-bullying policies that explicitly address emotional abuse, harassment, and discrimination. Communicate these policies to all faculty, students and staff. Ensure that there are appropriate consequences for those found guilty of violating the policies. It should be mandatory for faculty members to undergo an online/in-person training session on these aspects when they join the Institute. Circulars should be sent to all departments at regular intervals highlighting the importance of this policy.

Action Taken:

A guideline is being prepared. Scholars are able to report any incidents of bullying through the existing grievance redressal mechanism stated above. The institute will be organising regular programs to sensitise and train faculty, staff, students and scholars related to workplace ethics and expectations of IITM.

Recommendation 12: Conduct Training Programs:

Organise compulsory training sessions for all faculty members, including professors, to raise awareness about the impact of emotional abuse on students. These training programs should emphasize the importance of empathy, understanding, and foster a positive learning environment. Address issues like emotional intelligence, communication skills, and maintaining of a healthy teacher-student relationship.

Action Taken:

Many training programmes are regularly arranged. Some of the programmes can be found in https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/#wellness.

Recommendation 13: Faculty Evaluation:

Regular and comprehensive evaluation of faculty members, including their teaching and research guidance methods, behaviour towards students, and overall performance to be conducted by the head of the department and Dean of Academic Research or other higher officials. Student feedback and peer evaluations should also be done as part of the annual review process to ensure accountability and improvement.

Action Taken:

Research scholars will henceforth be enabled to register for "research credits" every semester, summer and winter, for effectively monitoring the overall progress. This will enable identifying students who are likely to overstay and provide them timely help. With this system, it is envisaged that Research scholars' progress could be assessed in a timely manner and any help needed could be provided. At the end of every semester, the scholar will be asked to give their feedback on their own performance also. In addition, the scholar can give anonymous feedback on the website https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/.

Recommendation 14: Student Feedback Mechanism:

Create a robust feedback mechanism for students to provide anonymous feedback about their experiences with professors, lab environment, and overall academic atmosphere. Use

this feedback to identify potential issues and areas for improvement. The feedback form should be standardized to facilitate relevant inputs. These feedback forms become mere paperwork if proper action is not taken. Hence, a mechanism to be devised for ensuring proper action on relevant feedback.

Action Taken:

On-line confidential feedback portal is available for the scholars to give their feedback. The scholar can give anonymous feedback on the website https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/. In addition, as a part of the Research Credit system, it is mandatory that the scholars give their feedback four times a year.

Recommendation 15: Supportive Lab Environment:

Encourage a culture of collaboration and mutual respect in laboratory settings. Foster an atmosphere where students feel comfortable seeking help from their peers and seniors without fear of judgment. It is strongly recommended that research scholars working with a particular guide should not be isolated from others (e.g., sitting together, separated from other groups) so that there is peer-to-peer support and social interaction. Organize team-building activities and workshops to promote a friendly and supportive lab environment.

Action Taken:

Lab protocols are being prepared. This should enable the different stakeholders in a lab to understand each other in terms of protocols, responsibilities and expectations. Collaborative support among the students and faculty will be encouraged.

Recommendation 16: Establish Mentorship Programs:

Develop mentorship programs where senior students can guide and support junior students through their academic journey. These mentorship relationships can provide an additional layer of emotional support and guidance to struggling students.

Action Taken:

In the research environment there is already an eco-system for senior students to train the juniors. Additionally, YAARI (https://iitmaa.org/page/staticpage17-535), MITR (https://www.wellnessiitm.com/mitr-1) and SAATHI (https://www.wellnessiitm.com/saathi) programmes are available for the students to take help.

Recommendation 17: Hearsay culture to be avoided:

In the instant case the action taken by the professor was based on hearsay which had disastrous consequences. In all such complaints fact based inquiry should be made as the norms, and hearsay culture should be discouraged.

Action Taken:

Grievance redressal mechanism is in force (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/). Students can approach the respective committee and fact-based enquiry will be ensured. Faculty members will be sensitized to adopt fair practices and responsibilities.

Recommendation 18: Promote Open Communication:

Create avenues for open communication between students and administration. Regular meetings, focus groups, and student-led forums can help foster a culture of openness, transparency, and trust.

Action Taken:

The students can approach the administration to resolve any of their issues, directly or through online in the website https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/. The scholars can also approach the DC chair to resolve any research related issues.

Recommendation 19: Review of control of labs:

At present several laboratories are under the control of a single faculty member who is also the guide for the research scholars enrolled under him. The access is restricted only to their group apparently to safeguard the expensive equipment therein. The restriction should be made liberal to allow access to other research scholars as all facilities should be treated as Institute and Departmental facilities. Final decision on to whom lab access is given should be by HoD or Dean Academic Research.

The Professors should be made to understand that the laboratory is the asset of the Institute and is funded by the government and that they do not "own" the lab. As access to the resources is crucial for research, restricting the students will be detrimental to them. The Institute should conduct a survey on damaged and unused equipment and the professor should be made answerable for the same.

Action Taken:

There are a variety of labs, and the associated protocols. The guide should clarify the practices followed in the labs in the initial meeting with the student. Students will also be sensitised to safe laboratory practices, what is acceptable and what is not. They will also be made aware of the potentially serious consequences of not adhering to laboratory protocols. As mentioned above, ample avenues are available for the scholars to escalate any issues of denying access to labs or restrictions. These avenues will be identified in the protocol document of each and every lab.

Recommendation 20: Grievance redressal system for laboratories:

In the inquiry the committee also observed that in the absence of a robust grievance redressal mechanism much is left to the discretion of the guides to make judgements when dealing with both academic and non-academic issues relating to their lab. Due to the occurrences of such issues, there is the need for formulating SOPs for lab related issues. This should be clearly informed to the students, as most seem to be unaware of whom to approach or complain to when they have grievances.

Action Taken:

Lab protocols/etiquette and SOPs will be explained by the HoD to the scholars during the Departmental orientation. Time bound grievance-redressal mechanisms are already

available. If the scholar is denied lab access he/she can raise it to the grievance redressal forum, available in the website https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/. The scholar can approach the student ombuds, in case the grievance is not addressed.

Recommendation 21: Fixing Accountability on the Guide:

In the present system there is no accountability on the part of the guide. He/she is never questioned when the scholars guided by them are lagging behind. It is always a foregone conclusion that the scholar's non-performance is the reason for the delay. It is essential to bring out a mechanism for fixing the responsibility and accountability of the guide for the poor performance of the scholars supervised by them.

Action Taken:

Research scholars will henceforth be asked to register for "research credits" every semester, summer and winter. Both the guide and the research scholars will be able to give feedback. This way, guides are held responsible for students' progress - if the student keeps getting poor feedback, the guide(s) and DC are obliged to suitably advise the scholar of possible options. If the scholar keeps getting a high rating, it is incumbent on the guide(s) to see them through graduation. Institute believes that this constant monitoring and recording of scholar's progress (or lack of it) will help scholars and guides alike. At the end of the course, the scholars also give their feedback as a part of the newly introduced Research Credit system.

A committee was formed with Prof C Balaji, Department of Mechanical Engineering and members from all the Departments to address the issues related to the delay in completion of thesis within the stipulated time. This committee will identify bottlenecks and hurdles in progress on a per-scholar basis and create a roadmap for completion of research milestones.

Recommendation 22: Psychological aptitude assessment:

All research scholars and guides should have psychological aptitude assessment done by a competent body periodically to facilitate early detection of academics induced anxiety.

Action Taken:

Health surveys of faculty, students and staff were already done and the same will be continued. Details of the same are available in https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/.

Recommendation 23: Revamping wellness counseling:

Faculty members and research students should be encouraged to seek psychiatric help and counseling at least once a year to identify concerns for follow up action. This should be done in such a manner for the concerned individuals to overcome the perceived stigma attached to it. The present counseling system should be accordingly revamped in consultation with external experts from the field.

Action Taken:

As suggested by the committee and in consultation with external experts, the following were done:

- Institute wide wellness survey was made with the support of the National Health Mission.
- Introduced third party counselors to visit all hostels and departments, in the stipulated time, for the wellness of students, faculty and staff.
- Introduced Kushal Program (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/) to enhance the faculty and student interaction. The faculty advisors/guides were provided an opportunity to flag any specific issues associated with wellness.
- Introduced Kushal dining program in which the faculty members visit a mess, where the students/scholars dine, to provide feedback on the quality of the food. This enabled caterers to have corrective actions to provide hygiene and quality food.
- Revamped wellness counseling services associated with the Dean (student) office by bringing third party counseling services.
- Introduced 24x7 counseling services in the hospital for the wellness of students, faculty and staff.
- Introduced de-addiction counselor in hospital for the benefit of students, faculty and staff.
- Organised programs to enhance the mental strength of the students/preparedness especially during placements/internship offer time.
- Provided 24x7 counseling facility in the venue, during the placement period.

Recommendation 24: Contact person:

The contact details of the person(s) to be contacted in case of emergencies should be taken from the student, who should be able to change/update the contact person, as and when needed, on Workflow. An appropriate undertaking should be taken from the student every year.

Action Taken:

Currently, the contact details of students, parents and brother/sister are collected in the hostel office during admission in the ikollege portal. As suggested, the contact details of the person(s) to be contacted in case of emergencies will be incorporated in the workflow and in the ikollege portal. The data can be updated by the student every year.

Recommendation 25: Role of Doctoral Committee:

From the instant case it is understood that there is no fixed mandate for the doctoral committee. This arbitrariness gives ample scope for the guides to dictate terms with the research scholars. It must be made compulsory for the doctoral committee to record parameters related to the research output, such as papers published, conferences attached, and work completed. The Committee should meet every six months or at the request of the research scholar whichever is earlier. The doctoral committee may consider

meeting the student briefly without the presence of the guide to facilitate the sharing of harassment related issues and other problems by the student.

Action Taken:

The role of DC is to evaluate the progress of the scholar at regular milestones such as candidacy examination, Progress review seminar and thesis approval meeting. There are four mandatory DC meetings such as 0th DC, DC-1 (Candidacy exam), DC-2 (Progress Review) and DC-3 (thesis submission approval meeting). Timeline for each meeting is also stipulated for the scholars to comply with. Special DC meetings can be convened on the request of scholars or guides on need basis. Regular progress should be assessed by the scholars themselves and the guides. Important milestones and the expected timelines are clearly given in the Ordinances. It is the responsibility of the scholar to update the progress to the guide and in turn the guide will review the progress continuously. As mentioned earlier, the research scholars will henceforth be asked to register for "research credits" every semester, summer and winter. Both the guide and the research scholars will be able to give their feedback.

Recommendation 26: Duration of MS:

Although the duration for MS is supposed to be two and a half years, there are many cases where the students are not able to complete their MS even after five years. The Institute may consider studying similar programs in other IITs which offer fixed tenure for MS and fix the tenure for completion.

Action Taken:

Both the scholars and the guides will work-out the schedule to complete the MS within the stipulated time, as per the ordinances. A committee has been constituted to address this issue on a per-scholar basis..

Recommendation 27: Re-examine the mandatory paper publication for Ph.D.:

The requirement of at least one paper publication for PhD should be re-examined, as it may lead to unnecessary stress on some students due to strained relations with the guide. This may be done after studying the practice in vogue in other IITs and comparable research institutions globally.

Action Taken:

The senate (305th Senate, dated 04-12-2023) approved that the scholars that have crossed the maximum duration, as per the ordinances, have completed the research work and are ready to submit the thesis but could not publish any journal paper may be allowed to submit the thesis. For such cases, proof of submission of at least one manuscript, based on the thesis, shall be provided. The DC will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and recommend to the Dean (AR) for consideration.

Recommendation 28: Duration of Ph.D.:

Research scholars have reported many cases where the research work is prolonged by the guides beyond the stipulated time, resulting in stoppage of funding. Scholars are left to suffer with no funding, causing a lot of mental stress. It is felt by research scholars that some guides do not focus on completing the research work of the scholars as they are not answerable to anyone for the delay. To overcome this situation, efforts should be taken by the Institute to set time allocation for research guidance, and ensure that indifference or lack of dedication of the guide is not delaying the completion of Ph.D.

Action Taken:

Both the scholars and the guides will work-out the schedule to complete the PhD within the stipulated time as per the ordinances. While it is recognised that research is most often open-ended without a known path to completion, the scholar and guide must have a plan, which can, of course, change based on research outcomes. For instance, if a problem, initially seemed feasible, turns out to be unsolvable after an (extended) investigation, the research plan will have to be changed. However, there must be a plan so that the scholar and guide can work towards it.

The Senate (305th Senate, dated 04-12-2023) has already approved a cap on the number of HTRA/fellowship students that a faculty member can supervise at any given time based on the graduating capacity of the faculty. This cap includes a penalty term for guides who have students not being financially supported after their government fellowship duration has been completed.

A committee, Chaired by Prof C Balaji, Department of Mechanical Engineering, and one member from each Department has been constituted to address the issue of scholars that have crossed the stipulated time of completion of research.

Recommendation 29: Quantum of Research Work:

The work given to the research scholars be it MS or Ph.D. should be commensurate to the degree. The guides should not be allowed to increase the research work at their whims and fancies. Any increase should be done for a purpose with the permission of the Doctoral Committee and the Dean of Academic Research. The present system is so watertight in all the laboratories as the guides unilaterally decide on the quantum of research work and also the functioning of the labs which is not a healthy practice. The guide should also be given fixed timelines for checking the manuscripts, thesis and other research work. Often delays are caused due to inadequate time allotted by the guide to their scholars. The Workflow could have a summary page wherein the guide can also report the reasons for the delay, with the concurrence of the student.

Action Taken:

This will be decided by the guide and conveyed to the scholar at an early stage. In case of disagreement, the scholar can escalate to the DC chair for resolution. Since the guide(s)

expectation of what is needed for a PhD/MS is clearly communicated at the beginning of the programme, it is hoped that misunderstandings will be greatly reduced.

Recommendation 30: Holistic Healing:

Every student must be encouraged to attend therapy sessions, yoga and meditation classes as time permits. Normalizing discussions on mental health and illness with conversations and counseling should be encouraged. Students showing concerning behaviour, social distancing and signs of depression should be identified and immediately referred by the concerned guides for further assessment and treatment. The focus should be on holistic healing.

Action Taken:

The scholars will be encouraged to avail the facilities created by the wellness team. Students and scholars having difficulty are identified through Kushal meetings and through other feedback mechanisms and are helped through the series of wellness initiatives (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/)

Recommendation 31: Non availability of disciplinary committee for research matters:

In the absence of an institutionalized framework for dealing with disciplinary issues concerning research scholars, the guides are vested with unfettered and absolute powers in dealing with disciplinary issues. Often the disciplinary action taken is not commensurate with the magnitude of the deviation. In order to provide a fair and just opportunity to the delinquent scholar, matters relating to disciplinary cases may be referred to a disciplinary committee. If such a committee is not available in the Institute efforts may be taken to form one.

Action Taken:

Disciplinary issues with respect to research matters are very varied. The doctoral committee and departmental grievance committees will be the first stop to raise these issues - for both scholars and guides. Subsequently, the Time Bound Redressal Mechanism can be followed. Kushal website gives ample opportunity for the scholars to escalate the matter (https://behappy.iitm.ac.in/).

Recommendation 32: Enhancing the effectiveness of POSH and CCASH:

Although forums such as POSH and CCASH exists where women scholars can seek redressal for harassment and issues affecting their dignity and self-esteem, these forums are seldom made use of. Efforts should be taken by the Institute to create awareness and to instill confidence in women scholars to take recourse to such bodies.

Action Taken:

Awareness about POSH and CCASH programmes are made through posters in every Department and Laboratory and the same will be continued. POSH training is made mandatory for all faculty and Group A officers. Also, as a part of introduction to research, POSH training is made mandatory for research scholars.

The above recommendations are generic in nature and for overall improvement of the research ecosystem comprising scholars, project staff, faculty, staff, administration and other stakeholders. The Institute is grateful to the committee for highlighting these aspects, thus enabling us to strengthen our internal mechanism of research administration.

The committee also made observations and recommendations which are specific in nature involving depositions and submissions of scholars, project staff, faculty and alumni. The competent authority after detailed deliberations has taken necessary actions on these specific recommendations. The competent authority observed that Section 8(i)J of RTI Act and certain other court orders prohibit publishing of information which is confidential and impacts privacy of individuals in nature. The competent authority also observed that government procedures prohibit publishing of the inquiry report, specific recommendations and depositions in the interest of students, project staff, alumni, faculty who have deposed before the committee and for others who work within the overall ecosystem of campus.