

Criterion – 7
Institutional Values and Best Practices

7.1.1 Institution has initiated Gender audit and measure for the promotion of gender equity

- Gender and diversity audits are essential for higher education institutions to promote inclusivity, equity, and quality assurance. As enrollment ratios and diversity in Indian higher education continue to rise, these audits become increasingly important. At Pondicherry University, a comprehensive gender and diversity audit was undertaken to address the growing presence of women and non-binary individuals that enhances the inclusivity & equity of the campus environment. This audit was part of a broader strategy to align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).
- The audit employed a participatory approach, engaging key stakeholders-including students, faculty, and staff-through surveys and interviews. It followed globally recognized frameworks and models for gender audits to ensure a thorough and structured evaluation. The audit aimed to assess the current status of gender and diversity mainstreaming at the university, in line with international standards for educational excellence and gender equity.
- The university has implemented several best practices to enhance gender and diversity inclusion. It has organized gender sensitization and empowerment programs, including initiatives focused on career awareness for underprivileged girls, the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, and health and fitness. These efforts are in line with SDG 5 (Gender Equality).
- Grievance redressal mechanisms have been established, such as the Students Grievance Redressal Committees and a panel of mental health professionals, to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. Additionally, the university has launched initiatives like the 'PU-Freedom Walls' for student expression, an e-vehicle prioritizing persons with disabilities and women, and free counselling services for students, reflecting its commitment to creating a more inclusive campus.
- Faculty members from women's studies and other social science disciplines actively support students from transgender and queer communities through inclusive education, research, academic development, community engagement, and advocacy efforts. These actions signify a continued commitment to advancing inclusivity and addressing the diverse needs of the university community.