

## Create online forum for scholars to raise complaints, varsities told

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**Coimbatore:** The higher education department has directed registrars of all universities to establish an online reporting mechanism for research scholars to lodge grievances and ensure prompt redressal of the same.

The directive comes in the wake of research scholars raising complaints directly to governor R N Ravi during university convocations. On October 14, a research scholar from Bharathiar University petitioned the governor on stage, alleging mistreatment by their guides. Similarly, another scholar petitioned Ravi about the poor treatment of research scholars during the Bharathidasan University convocation on October 29.

In a letter dated November 17, higher education secretary K Gopal said, "It has come to the govt's attention that certain university guides fail to treat research scholars with due respect. Some guides are reportedly subjecting scholars to humiliation and harassment by assigning them personal and household chores. Scholars are allegedly threatened with dire consequences, if

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they refuse to comply."

The circular also highlighted that research scholars were being pressured to spend considerable amounts - both in cash and in kind - to complete their research projects and viva examinations.

Gopal then directed universities to issue a circular to all guides to ensure that such practices are strictly prohibited.

"If any such incidents are reported, strict action will be taken against the erring guides. Universities are also instructed to establish an online grievance reporting mechanism, enabling research scholars to lodge complaints and ensuring immediate action for resolution. This may be given top priority and a compliance report in this regard be sent to the govt at the earliest," the letter stated.