



SIKKIM ALPINE UNIVERSITY

Kamrang, Namchi, South Sikkim – 737126

(Established under Sikkim Alpine University Act, 2021)

SOCIO – ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS (SEDGs) POLICY

(Policy Document – 2025)

Prepared by

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)

Coordinator: Dr. Aita Rani Subba (Limboo)

Recommended By:

Academic Council: Date 03 December, 2025

Approved by:

Board of Governors: Date 05 December, 2025

All rights reserved.



SOCIO – ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS (SEDGs) POLICY

**SIKKIM ALPINE UNIVERSITY
KAMRANG, NAMCHI
SIKKIM**

1. Preamble

Sikkim Alpine University (SAU) is committed to the constitutional values of equity, justice, and inclusion in higher education. Recognizing that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds face systemic and historical barriers, SAU adopts this Policy in alignment with:

- UGC Guidelines to Provide Equitable Opportunities for SEDGs in Higher Educational Institutions (2024)
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

This Policy ensures that students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive comprehensive academic, financial, emotional, and infrastructural support to participate fully and succeed in higher education.

2. Purpose & Scope

This Policy aims to:

1. Provide a framework to identify and support SEDG students.
2. Ensure equitable access to academic and non-academic opportunities.
3. Strengthen SAU's systems for inclusion, sensitivity, and cultural responsiveness.
4. Guide the functioning of the **SEDGs Cell** (Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups Cell).
5. Apply to all students enrolled at SAU, across all programmes and campuses.

3. Definitions

3.1. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)

As per NEP 2020 & UGC 2024, SEDGs include students belonging to one or more of the following categories:

(i) Gender Identity

- Female Students: Girls and women constitute approximately half of all SEDGs and often experience multiple disadvantages, especially when they belong to other underrepresented or marginalized groups.
- Transgender Persons: Students identifying as transgender who face social exclusion, stigma, or discrimination in educational and social contexts.

(ii) Social Backwardness Identity

- Scheduled Castes (SCs)
- Scheduled Tribes (STs)

These groups, recognized under the Constitution of India, have historically experienced social and educational disadvantages requiring special support and affirmative measures.

(iii) Educational and Economical Backward Identity

- Non-Creamy Layer among Other Backward Classes (OBCs)
- Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs)
- Students from Vernacular Medium Schools
- First-Generation Learners

This category includes students from economically and educationally deprived backgrounds, those educated in vernacular medium schools, and those who are the first in their families to pursue higher education.

(iv) Minority Identity

- Religious Minorities
- Linguistic Minorities

This group includes students belonging to minority communities recognized by the Government of India who may face barriers to equitable access and representation in higher education.

(v) Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and Benchmark Disabilities

- Individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that hinder their participation in education on an equal basis with others.
- Persons having not less than forty percent of a specified disability, as certified by a competent authority under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

(vi) Vulnerable and Low Socio-Economic Conditions

- Members of migrant communities, denotified and nomadic tribes
- Individuals from low-income households or Below Poverty Line (BPL) families
- Child beggars or children in vulnerable situations
- Victims or children of victims of human trafficking
- Students who have lost one or both parents
- Any other group identified as living under low socio-economic conditions as recognized by government authorities or the University.

(vii) Less-Developed, Poor-Access, and Disadvantaged Locations

Students belonging to or residing in geographically and infrastructurally disadvantaged regions, including:

- Villages and small towns
- Tribal Areas / Scheduled Areas as per the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution of India
- Urban slums
- Aspirational districts and Special Educational Zones (SEZs)
- North Eastern States
- Islands
- Conflict-prone or border areas
- Disaster-prone regions, including those affected by floods, droughts, earthquakes, or other natural calamities

4. Interventions for Inclusion and Support

4.1. Bridge Courses

Bridge courses play a vital role in supporting newly admitted students during their transition into higher education. These courses are specifically designed to assist moderate and below-moderate level students belonging to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in bridging the academic gap between the subjects studied at the previous level and those introduced in the new academic programme at the University.

The objective of the bridge course is to provide an adequate foundation in core subjects so that SEDG students are academically prepared and confident when regular classes commence. By reinforcing fundamental concepts and essential skills, these courses aim to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can perform academically at par with their peers.

4.1.1 Objectives of Bridge Courses:

- To facilitate the students to overcome challenges in their learning process.
- To assist students with different learning abilities and multiple challenges to perform at optimal level.
- To act as a buffer for the new students.
- To provide adequate time to the SEDGs students for smooth transition.
- To provide knowledge on core courses and prepare the students for the identified courses which will commence in the forthcoming sessions/semesters.
- To equip the students with the necessary knowledge and confidence to take on more challenges.

4.1.2 Measures to be taken by SAU

- **Timing:** Bridge courses shall be organized every year prior to the

commencement of the semester programme, either in physical or online mode, depending on feasibility.

- **Purpose:** These courses are intended to provide both primary and supplementary knowledge in subjects that are foundational to the academic programmes in which the students are enrolled.
- **Identification of Beneficiaries:** The University shall identify students belonging to SEDG categories who require additional academic support at the entry level through diagnostic assessments, interaction with faculty, or review of academic records.
- **Medium of Instruction:** Wherever possible, bridge courses may be conducted in local or regional languages to enhance understanding and participation.
- **Curriculum Design:** The content of the bridge courses shall be tailor-made to meet the specific academic requirements of SEDG students. A separate timetable shall be prepared for effective delivery and monitoring.
- **Outcome:** Successful completion of bridge courses is expected to improve students' academic preparedness, confidence, and retention, enabling them to fully participate and succeed in their chosen programmes.

4.2 Earn-while-Learn Scheme

The Earn-While-Learn (EwL) scheme is designed to support students belonging to Socio- Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) by providing them with opportunities to earn while pursuing their education. This initiative aims to reduce financial constraints, enhance employability, and build self-reliance among students through skill development and practical engagement.

The EwL scheme seeks to mitigate the economic hardships faced by students during their studies and to foster adaptability in learning, thereby improving the overall quality and purposefulness of higher education. In addition to financial assistance, the scheme helps students develop essential technical, interpersonal, and entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for professional careers.

4.2.1 Objectives

- To provide financial support to economically weaker students without compromising their academic performance.
- To enhance employability through skill-based and work-oriented engagements.
- To encourage self-reliance and a sense of responsibility among students.
- To enable practical exposure and professional development through on-campus opportunities.

4.2.2 Implementation Mechanism by SAU

- **Part-time Engagements:**

Eligible SEDG students shall be offered part-time work opportunities within the University campus, ensuring that such engagements do not interfere with academic commitments.

- **Indicative Areas of Engagement:**

Opportunities may include, but are not limited to:

- Research project assistance
- Library and documentation support
- Computer and data entry services
- Laboratory assistance
- Departmental or administrative support work

- **Capacity Building:**

Through the EwL programme, students gain hands-on experience, time management skills, and professional exposure, preparing them for future employment or entrepreneurial ventures.

- **Remuneration**

The rate of remuneration for each of the students will be a consolidated amount on an hourly basis for the part-time service they render. Eligible students can be engaged up to a maximum of 20 hours per week, 20 days per month. The payment may be made on an actual basis. The services of the students may be planned in such a way that it does not affect their classes.

- SAU will be referring to the UGC guidelines to provide opportunity for the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in the HEIs, 2024 for further steps to be taken if necessary.

5. SOCIO- ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS CELL (SEDGS CELL): STRUCTURE, ROLE & FUNCTIONING

5.1. Objectives of SEDGs Cell

1. To protect all the constitutional rights of the SEDGs students.
2. To ensure that the SAU is inclusive, safe, and secure for the SEDGs students.
3. To provide socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for the students belonging to the SEDGs through proper counselling and monitoring programme.
4. To ensure proper implementation and monitoring of orientation and bridge courses designed by the SAU to benefit SEDGs students.
5. To ensure implementation of all such programmes designed and developed by SAU to increase the participation of SEDGs students in academic activities.

6. To ensure implementation of Government's policies, including reservation policies and various schemes, programmes, facilities, and guidelines for SEDGs students.
7. To ensure that the University develop appropriate outreach programmes to help the SEDGs students avail the various opportunities of educational/academic programmes of SAU.
8. To ensure proper implementation of preventive measures and laws against discrimination and atrocities, and for safeguards of students belonging to respective categories under SEDGs.
9. To circulate, publicize, facilitate, and monitor the implementation of all UGC and Government guidelines and instructions issued from time to time in reference to SEDGs.
10. To redress the grievances and complaints of the SEDGs students within 15 days through a Student Grievance Redressal Committee (SGRC) without compromising the safety, privacy, and dignity of the complainant.

5.2.Functions of SEDGs Cell

- 1.To co-ordinate with other existing cells and statutory bodies of the SAU and enable implementation of the existing schemes and provisions, including scholarships and fellowships of the Government of India and respective States.
- 2.To ensure the implementation of orientation and bridge courses, earn-while-learn schemes, and outreach programmes designed and developed by SAU for SEDGs.
- 3.To provide socio-economic, academic, and psychological support and mentoring for such students through proper counselling and mentoring programmes.
- 4.To ensure sensitization of faculty, staff, counsellors, and students on SEDGs issues and their inclusion in all aspects of the University.
- 5.To explore and generate funds from various sources like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and Alumni contributions to provide more financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs, mitigating opportunity costs and educational expenses.
- 6.To coordinate with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) to raise awareness about the implementation of various policies for inclusive and equitable quality higher education.
- 7.To function as a "Single Window" for students belonging to SEDGs for their grievances, basic needs, amenities, facilities, welfare measures, and scholarships and fellowships.
- 8.To upload and disseminate guidelines, facilities, welfare, and safety measures on the SAU website and maintain records to review and monitor amenities and basic facilities for a safe and secure environment for SEDGs.
- 9.To circulate, publicize, and facilitate existing welfare schemes such as Remedial Coaching, NET Coaching, Entry into Services, and Residential Coaching for SC/ST/OBC (non-creamy layer), Minority Community, and PwD students.

10. To establish a team of counsellors, social workers, and faculty members to provide emotional and social support to SEDGs to help them adapt to the environment of the SAU.
11. To focus on overall personality and skill development, including professional and soft skills, to enhance student employability.
12. To organize periodic meetings and monitor the progress of various schemes, while ensuring that all SAU prepare a database of such schemes for SEDGs.
13. To assess the needs of SEDGs and make necessary recommendations to the authorities of the SAU.
14. To make faculty, staff, students, and service professionals aware of facilities available for SEDGs.
15. To sensitize all students to bring an attitudinal change towards SEDGs and ensure their participation in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities in the SAU.
16. To hold regular meetings with representatives of SEDG students to address their grievances and engage with the management/authorities of SAU to facilitate discussion while maintaining confidentiality of deliberations and data.
17. To review, monitor, and ensure disposal of all grievances within 15 days.
18. To inform all students during induction/counselling sessions about the University's zero- tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination.

6. Governance of SEDGs Cell:

1	Chairperson (SEDGs Cell)	
2	Senior Professor	Member
3	In-Charge of Internal Complaint Cell	Member
4	Coordinator/Director of IQAC	Member
5	SC/ST Representative	Member
6	OBC Representative	Member
7	Two Students' Representative belonging to SEDGs	Members (one male and one female member)
8	Assistant Registrar/Administrative Officer	Member Secretary

7. Implementation & Monitoring

1. The SEDGs Cell shall meet at least **twice each semester**.
2. Minutes shall be submitted to the **Registrar** and **IQAC**.
3. Annual Report must be included in **AQAR/NAAC documentation**.

4. Policy implementation shall be reviewed annually by IQAC.

8. Grievance Redressal

- SAU shall establish a **confidential grievance mechanism** for SEDG students.
- All grievances must be resolved within **15 days**, ensuring dignity, privacy, and safety.
- Serious violations shall be escalated to the Registrar/VC.

9. Review & Revision of Policy

This Policy shall be reviewed every **three years** or earlier as required by new UGC/GoI guidelines.