

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics

(Founded by Rao Bahadur R.R. Kale, Satara)
(Deemed to be University u/s 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)
846, Shivajinagar, B.M.C.C. Road
PUNE - 411 004 (INDIA)

SOP ON HANDLING OF RTI APPLICATIONS - GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Introduction

1. The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 stands as a beacon of transparency and accountability in India's democratic framework. Enacted with the aim of empowering citizens and promoting openness in governance, the RTI Act grants every individual the fundamental right to access information held by public authorities. Through this landmark legislation, citizens are empowered to seek information on government actions, decisions, and policies, thereby fostering greater participation, accountability, and integrity in public administration. This SOP gives out the process of handling RTI applications at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics.

Methodology of Handling RTI Applications

2. **Receipt of RTI Applications.** All RTI applications received by the organization shall be logged immediately upon receipt. The nominated PIO shall be responsible for receiving and processing RTI applications. Upon receipt, each RTI application shall be reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of the RTI Act 2005. Any incomplete applications shall be returned to the applicant with guidance on completing the form. A unique reference number shall be assigned to each RTI application for tracking purposes. This reference number shall be communicated to the applicant for future correspondence.

3. **Reply Mechanism.** RTI applications shall be forwarded to the relevant departments or divisions within the organization for information retrieval. Each department shall be given a specified timeframe for providing the requested information. Concerned departments shall retrieve the requested information within the stipulated timeframe. The information provided must be accurate, complete, and in compliance with the provisions of the RTI Act 2005. Upon receipt of information from the concerned departments, the PIO shall review it for accuracy and completeness. Any discrepancies or missing information shall be brought to the attention of the concerned department for rectification. Based on the information retrieved, the PIO shall prepare a

response to the applicant. The response shall include all relevant information as per the provisions of the RTI Act 2005.

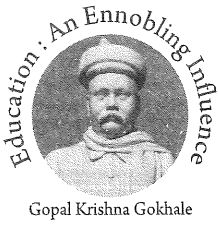
4. **Dispatch.** A quality check shall be conducted on the prepared response to ensure clarity, accuracy, and compliance with RTI guidelines. Any errors or inconsistencies shall be corrected before finalization. The response shall be dispatched to the applicant within the stipulated timeframe.

5. **Appeals Management.** The Registrar of the Institute shall be the Ex Officio Appellate Authority for the purpose of RTI Act 2005. All RTI appeals received by the organization shall be reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the RTI Act 2005. The appellate authority shall have the necessary jurisdiction to address the issues raised in the appeal. The appellate authority shall review the original decision made in response to the RTI application. This review shall include an examination of the grounds for appeal and any additional evidence provided by the appellant. The appellate authority shall carefully consider the arguments presented by the appellant and the reasoning behind the original decision. The appellate authority shall conduct an independent assessment of the information provided and the applicability of exemptions under the RTI Act 2005. Based on the review and assessment, the appellate authority shall prepare a response to the appellant. The response shall include a clear explanation of the decision reached and any actions to be taken as a result.

6. **Record Keeping.** A record of all RTI applications received, responses provided, and related correspondence shall be maintained electronically and/or in hard copy. This record shall be updated regularly and made accessible for audit and review purposes.

7. **Monitoring and Compliance.** Regular monitoring shall be conducted to ensure compliance with the SOP and the RTI Act 2005. Any deviations or issues shall be promptly addressed to maintain efficiency and transparency in the RTI process.

8. **Mandatory Disclosures.** As a public body, the Institute shall ensure 'mandatory disclosures' on the web site or on a publicly available platform. A recommended list of disclosures is as below:-



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- Institution Details to include, Name and address of the educational institute. Contact details of designated Public Information Officer (PIO) and Appellate Authority. Organizational structure and hierarchy.
- Description of the functions, powers, and duties of the institute. Rules, regulations, instructions, manuals, and records used by employees for discharging functions.
- Powers and Duties of Officers and Employees. Roles and responsibilities of faculty members, administrative staff, and other employees.
- Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures applicable to faculty and staff members. Rules, Regulations, Instructions, Manuals held by the institute. Procedures followed in the decision-making process, including channels of supervision and accountability.
- Tenders and Contracts, Details of tenders invited by the institute for various services, works, or procurement. Contracts awarded, including the name of the contractor, value of the contract, and duration. Public Procurement Procurement policies and procedures followed by the institute.
- RTI Application Procedure, Information regarding the procedure for filing RTI applications, including fees, modes of payment, and timelines.
- Complaint and Grievance Redressal Mechanism for lodging complaints and grievances related to the institute's functioning. Details of the grievance redressal officer and procedures for resolution.
- Academic Programs and Courses, Details of academic programs offered by the institute, including eligibility criteria, duration, and fee structure. Curriculum, syllabus, and teaching methodology.
- Infrastructure and Facilities, Description of infrastructure facilities available, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc. Student Welfare Schemes Information about scholarships, financial aid, and other welfare schemes available for students. Guidelines for availing scholarships and eligibility criteria.

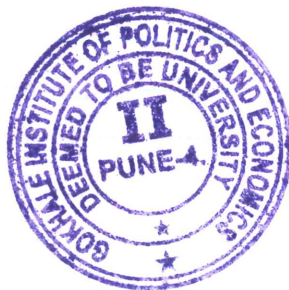
9. **Training and Awareness.** Training sessions shall be conducted for staff members involved in handling RTI applications to ensure they are familiar with

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the procedures and guidelines. Awareness campaigns shall be organized to educate the public about their rights under the RTI Act 2005 and the process for filing RTI applications.

Conclusion

10. The implementation of this meticulously crafted Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the handling of RTI applications reflects our unwavering commitment to fostering transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment within our organization. Through the establishment of clear and comprehensive guidelines, we aim not only to streamline the process of receiving, processing, and responding to RTI applications but also to imbue it with efficiency, integrity, and fairness. By adhering rigorously to this SOP, we ensure that the fundamental right to information, enshrined in the RTI Act 2005, is not merely acknowledged but actively safeguarded and promoted. This SOP serves as a robust framework, designed to instill confidence in our stakeholders, enhance public trust, and reinforce the principles of democratic governance. By embracing transparency as a guiding principle, we strive to bridge the gap between the government and the governed, fostering a culture of open dialogue, accountability, and participation. Thus, this SOP stands as a testament to our ongoing commitment to advancing the ideals of democracy, good governance, and citizen-centricity within our organization and beyond.




Col Kapil Jodh
Registrar