

PROPOSALS

Tanush B Agarwal

(23IM10040)

General Secretary Students' Welfare

Technology Students' Gymkhana



**Indian Institute of Technology
Kharagpur**

Academic Session: 2025-26

Proposal 1

Institutionalizing Digital, Inclusive, and Compassionate Counseling for Student Well-being.

1.1 Goals

To address the critical institutional requirements of Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur through three interrelated strategies: The proposal aims at using three interrelated strategies to address critical shortfalls in the student counselling provided by the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, which are: an integrated digital ecosystem providing access to counseling without compromising student privacy; and an innovative specialised counselors program fostering specialized knowledge across a range of therapeutic areas—from queer affirmative practice to neurodivergent care—directly addressing the challenging mental health environment of our KGP community.

1.2 Overview and Current Scenario

The Students' Counseling Centre at Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur offers necessary mental health care in the form of individual and group counseling, and crisis intervention. There are full-time clinical psychologists and visiting psychiatrists for consultation. Outreach activities seek to have sensitized representatives in student halls to locate peers who require help. There are a number of challenges that continue to exist:

- Outdated paper-based systems and limited computer tools lead to inefficient record maintenance, scheduling conflicts, and inadequate resource allocation.
- New students have to fill out paperwork in person for 15-20 minutes, discouraging many from pursuing the help-seeking process.
- The stigma around counseling, coupled with the need for physical office visits even for appointment scheduling, discourages many students from taking the first step or following up on their mental health concerns.

- The institute currently does not have specialized counselors certified in critical areas such as queer affirmative therapy, substance abuse counseling, trauma-informed care, and academic stress management, leading to gaps in addressing specific student needs.
- The current manual and time-intensive approach to counseling creates barriers for students seeking support, making it difficult to effectively reach those who need specialized care but may hesitate to visit the counseling center. While counselors are skilled in their roles, the absence of specialists in certain domains limits the scope of support available for diverse mental health challenges.
- There is no structured follow-up system to track student progress, leading to discontinuity in care and higher dropout rates from counseling programs.

1.3 Proposed Solutions and Their Impact

The proposed system implements online registration, cutting the 15–20 minute in-person process down to a hassle-free digital experience with secure ERP authentication for the counselling centre. Students will be able to schedule appointments online, select counselors, and have access to secure video conferencing for virtual sessions. A private messaging system will offer ongoing support between appointments. Other resources include a success story blog and educational materials, a carefully curated mental health library with reading materials, worksheets, and crisis contacts. Feedback based on data will guarantee service enhancement while ensuring anonymity and ethical data management.

To improve the quality of care, counselors would have specialized training for queer affirmative therapy, substance abuse counseling, trauma-informed care, and managing academic stress. A formal case re-evaluation system will facilitate regular student follow-ups, individualized intervention tweaks, and smooth referrals. Ethical communication guidelines will indicate when outside intervention is required, maintaining confidentiality and coordinating with faculty, welfare representatives, and families when needed.

By streamlining processes and expanding counseling resources, this initiative aims to create a mental health support system that is efficient, accessible, and tailored to student needs. The integration of digital tools will eliminate logistical barriers, making it easier for students to seek help without fear of stigma or inconvenience. Specialized training for counselors will ensure that diverse mental health concerns are addressed with expertise, while a structured follow-up system will provide continuity of care. These efforts collectively foster a proactive and inclusive environment where students feel supported, empowered, and encouraged to prioritize their mental well-being.

1.4 Implementation:

Phase 1: Technology Development and Awareness: Phase 1 will develop the online portal with registration, scheduling, and secure video conferencing capabilities. Educational content will be created while awareness campaigns are launched through student events and social media. Training for students and staff on the new system will be provided, with initial feedback collected for improvements.

Phase 2: Specialized Training and Capacity Building: In Phase 2, Effective training programs will be identified for counselors in queer affirmative therapy, substance abuse counseling, trauma-informed care, and academic stress management.

Phase 3: System Refinement and Protocol Development: Phase 3 will establish follow-up protocols with regular check-ins and clear intervention guidelines. Ethical communication frameworks will be created to define when outside involvement is necessary. A case re-evaluation system will be implemented alongside referral networks with external providers. Feedback will measure program effectiveness, ensuring continuous improvement of the counseling system.

1.5 Groundwork

I have contacted the Institute Wellness Group, and they mentioned that there is a need for insights from the Counseling Centre regarding the challenges faced by students. I contacted the Technology Coordinator to assess the feasibility of an online portal. Through multiple visits to the counseling center, I gained insight into current challenges. Discussions with a senior counselor highlighted the need for specialized counselors and implementation strategies. I also consulted with the General Secretaries of Student Welfare from various Halls of Residence regarding the necessity for new intervention guidelines.

Proposal 2

Establishing Holistic Mental Health Screening and Peer Support Systems for Student Wellness.

2.1 Goals

This proposal is a mental health initiative at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur through the integration of support systems into student life. Compulsory mental health checks during induction will facilitate early detection of issues and formal interaction with the counseling center for first-year students will make seeking help the norm and break down stigma. The transition to IIT Kharagpur brings unique challenges, including academic pressure, social adjustment, and homesickness. Many students struggle silently during this phase, making early intervention crucial to prevent long-term issues. Peer-based support groups will enable students to proactively encourage an empathetic and compassionate culture within their respective communities. Integrating these activities, the institute can establish an interactive ecosystem focused on mental wellness and communal progress.

2.2 Overview and Current Scenario

Mental health concerns among students are becoming increasingly noticeable in our institute. Challenges like academic stress and peer influence sometimes lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, including substance use, which can have lasting effects on well-being. While initiatives like outreach programs and courses on happiness aim to provide support, stigma and limited reach still make it difficult for many students to seek help. Some key challenges include.

- Most of our students are afraid of approaching mental health services because of fear of stigma or misunderstanding from colleagues and professors, fostering silence on the matter of mental health.
- Available counseling services are only accessed by about 15% of the students, with this being due to lack of knowledge or inconvenience perceived.
- Present practices do not incorporate systematic mental health screenings during induction of students, resulting in delayed identification of problems when they have already reached advanced stages.
- First-year students face significant transitional stress, including academic pressure, homesickness, and social adaptation. Many may not recognize the early signs of stress, making preventive assessment crucial to ensuring long-term well-being.
- Though wing representatives receive training during the gatekeepers' training session, the proposal seeks to extend this training program by issuing certificates and awards to students who are interested in peer counseling.

2.3 Proposed Solutions and their impact

A formalized mental health screening process will be incorporated into the induction process to catch students at risk early while maintaining confidentiality. With validated psychometric tests, this process will link identified students seamlessly

with proper resources through individual counselor evaluations and targeted interventions. The system will focus on wellness rather than diagnosis, with the utilization of non-stigmatizing language. Confidential data management will safeguard privacy while allowing aggregate analysis to detect trends and underserved populations.

To familiarize first-year undergraduates with mental health support to normalize the service, all will be taken through a counseling session that will make them acquainted with services in a non-clinical environment. The small groups will offer a relaxed environment for students to get acquainted with counseling and diminish any stigma, thus promoting active participation. The sessions will be placed strategically to assist students in absorbing their transition at the university and learning how to access support when necessary.

Decentralized peer support networks will be created within every hall of residence, with trained student counselors as the first port of call. Peer counselors will work through a tiered support structure to ensure timely and well-defined pathways of referral to professional services. The 24/7 service will provide closure on after-hours support gaps. Crisis identification, active listening, and cultural competence training will be included, complemented by workshops for skill development to remain up-to-date and applicable to newly evolving campus demands.

2.4 Implementation plan:

Conduct preliminary awareness sessions before the screening to help students understand its purpose, ensuring participation without stigma. Design a psychometric test for the initial round of mental health screening, identify the right time for the psychometric testing during the Induction program. Plan timings for the next round of screening. Schedule mandatory visit to the counseling centre for the first-year undergraduates. Define Roles and Responsibilities, Design flow of the workshops and sessions for training of peer counsellors. Circulate form to get interested students for the same. Spread Awareness about the peer counsellors.

2.5 Groundwork

To ensure a well-informed and feasible approach, I conducted a survey among students to identify key gaps in the current mental health support system. The findings highlighted fragmented access to resources and stigma-related barriers. Additionally, discussions with the General Secretaries of Students' Welfare from various halls of residence revealed a lack of early intervention mechanisms. To further assess feasibility, I consulted the Counseling Center officials, whose insights helped refine the proposal, ensuring alignment with existing support frameworks while introducing scalable improvements.

Proposal 3

Fostering Career Readiness through Career Guidance Program

3.1 Goals

To provide second-year undergraduate students with the necessary information, resources, and mentoring to succeed in their Career Development Centre (CDC) internship preparation. Through the pairing of students with senior guides, the program aims to establish a formal mentoring system that promotes career preparedness through individualized guidance, CV construction, interview coaching, and exposure to applicable resources. The initiative seeks to enhance peer relationships and celebrate the efforts of guides via certification while closing the gap between classroom knowledge and practical application so that students are suitably prepared for competitive opportunities.

3.2 Overview and Current Scenario

Most second-year undergraduates experience issues such as poor clarity regarding career paths, limited acquaintance with resources, and inadequate CV and interview preparation for the Career Development Centre Internship Procedure. Currently, there is no established formal guidance program specifically tailored for internship preparation. Although informal guidance among seniors and juniors exists, it tends to be inconsistent and restricted to personal networks, meaning many students lack proper support during this important period.

Some of the major challenges are that students tend to be disoriented when preparing for internships because expectations are not well defined and there's a lack of adequate guidance. Not all students have access to seniors willing or capable of offering regular advice. There is also limited awareness of career opportunities until junior year, even among students who have identified their interests.

3.3 Proposed Solutions and their impact

a. Professional Career Counseling

To address the fundamental lack of career direction many students face upon entering IIT Kharagpur, the initiative will incorporate professional career counselors as its primary component. These counselors will provide personalized guidance to help students clarify career goals and align their academic pursuits accordingly from an early stage in their education. They will assist in selecting appropriate courses that complement career objectives and keep students informed about current job trends and opportunities in various industries. The counselors will offer comprehensive support with resume-building and interview skills development. Additionally, they will provide necessary emotional support for stress management during the competitive internship process and guide students interested in entrepreneurship as an alternative career path. This professional guidance serves as the foundation upon which other elements of the program can build.

b. AI-Enhanced Resource Management

Building upon the career direction established through counseling, the second core component involves leveraging technology to make existing resources more accessible and actionable. The FORESIGHT articles available on Student Welfare Group Application and Website contain valuable insights on different profiles and companies but include extensive content that can be overwhelming for students to navigate independently. An AI chatbot will be developed to answer queries using data from FORESIGHT articles and CV repository, addressing general questions that students commonly face during their preparation. The system will recommend relevant courses and materials based on student interests identified during counseling sessions and provide tailored suggestions on CV improvement. This technology-driven approach will help students efficiently navigate the wealth of available information, creating a personalized resource experience that complements the human guidance received from counselors.

c. Career Guidance Program

As the third pillar of support, this will link seniors with second-year students planning Career Development Centre internships, providing peer-level insights that complement the professional counseling and technological resources. Student groups mentors by career interest to provide focused advice based on recent, relevant experience. The program will involve periodic group meetings and individual consultations, monitoring development in resume creation, interviewing skills, and technical competencies. Forms will be floated towards the end of the third semester for students to indicate their interests and for seniors to apply as guides. Second-year

students will be grouped according to career interests and assigned to senior guides. The program will recognize senior guides with certificates of appreciation to acknowledge their contributions and motivate high-quality mentorship.

3.4 Groundwork

I have reached out to the officials at the Counseling Centre, who highlighted the need for dedicated career counselors. They mentioned that many students seek career guidance, but the existing counselors struggle to provide adequate support due to a lack of familiarity with current industry trends. Additionally, I consulted with the Tech Team of Student Welfare Group to assess the feasibility of implementing the technical aspects of the proposal. I also engaged with the Student Welfare Group to discuss the practicality of establishing the Career Guidance Program.