

ASCI invites public consultation as it updates advertising guidelines for the education sector

- *All institutions, from universities to coaching classes, as well as ed-tech platforms s will be subject to the updated guidelines*
- *Besides being truthful, ads must not contain messaging that might result in physical, mental, or moral distress of students or exploit their vulnerability*

Mumbai, March 14, 2023: The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has recommended an amendment to its “Guidelines for Advertising of Educational Institutions, Programmes and Platforms”. For this purpose, it has invited public consultation so that all stakeholders can participate and frame a set of just and equitable guidelines for a critical industry of the country.

All educational institutions, from universities, colleges and schools to coaching classes, EdTech platforms and others that offer education and training programmes play a vital role in in the development of the country's intellectual capacity and will be subject to these guidelines. Since parents not only place great value on their children's education, but also make significant sacrifices to get it, it is critical that marketing communication in this sector is honest and does not harm consumers through its portrayals or content.

In this year, the education sector has contributed to 27% of objectionable ads that ASCI processed (Traditional education 22% and EdTech 5%). The recent EdNext study conducted by ASCI also revealed that 49% of parents chose EdTech platforms based on advertising, demonstrating the importance of advertising regulation in maintaining the robustness of the educational framework. The report also brought out some concerns that stakeholders and experts had when it came to the manner in which learning seemed to be solely linked to exams and high scores. It is to address some of these concerns that ASCI has proposed a comprehensive update of the existing advertising guidelines for the sector.

The guidelines ensure that advertisements by the sector do not undermine the well-being of students. The guidelines continue to require educational entities to substantiate any claims they make with relevant evidence.

The revised guidelines seek to ensure that students are neither stereotyped based on their gender or appearance nor are those who score low, portrayed as unsuccessful or failures. Advertisements must also not portray average or poor-scoring students as demotivated, depressed, unhappy or receiving less appreciation from parents,

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teachers, or peers. Together with considering students' mental health, the updated guidelines will factor in their physical health; advertisements are required not to feature students sacrificing sleep or meals in order to study as this normalises unhealthy habits. Creating a false sense of urgency or fear of missing out which could accentuate parental or student anxieties regarding education, too, will be considered a violation of the ASCI code.

Manisha Kapoor, CEO and Secretary General, ASCI, said: "The education sector impacts millions of students and parents who make immense sacrifices to ensure the best education for their wards. Unlike most other products, education cannot be tangibly measured. The value of a programme is determined by means such as degrees, diplomas and other qualification nomenclatures, recognition, affiliations, testimonials, accreditations, admissions/jobs/compensation promises. Hence, it is critical that, in addition to being truthful and compliant with Chapter I of the ASCI Code, advertisers must consider any harm that can be caused through depictions or messages to young, impressionable minds. These updated guidelines will go a long way in ensuring that emerging fields such as EdTech can be harnessed as forces of good. We request that the public come forth in large numbers and share their views for a cause that is vital for the well-being and the future of our country."

Public consultation for the guidelines starts from **March 14, 2023 and will continue until April 15, 2023**. Inputs can be sent to contact@ascionline.in

Read the proposed update of the guidelines: <https://ascionline.in/education-guidelines.pdf>

About The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising, ensuring the protection of consumer interests. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest, and truthful and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across ALL MEDIA such as Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet/website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material and point of sale material etc. In January 2017, the Supreme Court of India in its judgement affirmed and recognised the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for television and radio in India. ASCI's role has been acclaimed by various Government bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of AYUSH as well as the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). MIB issued an

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advisory for a scroller providing ASCI's WhatsApp for Business number 77100 12345, to be carried by all TV broadcasters for consumers to register their grievance against objectionable advertisements. On the international front, in 2021, ASCI CEO and Secretary General, Ms. Manisha Kapoor, was elected as one of the four Vice-President's on the Executive Committee of the International Council on Ad Self-Regulation (ICAS). Among several awards bestowed by the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), ASCI bagged a Gold Global Best Practice Award for the Mobile App "ASCIonline" (2016), a special recognition for its "Guidelines for Celebrities in Advertising" at the first-ever 'Global Awards for Effective Advertising Self-Regulation' hosted by the ICAS (2019). In 2021, ASCI also won two ICAS awards, one for the ASCI scroll telecast across television in the 'Best Awareness Raising Initiative' and for its extensive digital suo-moto monitoring through the NAMS initiative, in the 'Special Category'. It also got a special mention in the 'Best Sectoral Initiative' category for its efforts and regulatory recognition of its Gaming Guidelines.

For further information, please contact:

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