

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines: Deciphering Legal Frameworks for Non-Legal Professionals

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This article clarifies the distinctions between Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines, which are often conflated in legal and organizational contexts. It aims to enhance understanding among non-legal professionals and institutional committees by providing practical examples and analyzing their roles in decision-making.

**Methodology:** A descriptive analysis of legal definitions, hierarchical relationships, and case studies (e.g., the Consumer Protection Act, 2019) is conducted. Comparative tables and flowcharts are used to illustrate differences.

**Findings:** Acts establish overarching legal frameworks, Rules operationalize procedures, Regulations enforce industry-specific standards, and Guidelines offer non-binding best practices. Documented guidelines, while promoting transparency, require flexibility to avoid rigidity.

**Implications:** Clear differentiation of these terms ensures compliance, reduces ambiguity in decision-making, and balances adherence to legal frameworks with professional judgment.

**Conclusion:** This article clarifies distinctions between Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines, underscoring their roles in governance. Acts establish laws, Rules operationalize procedures, Regulations enforce standards, and Guidelines advise best practices. Clear differentiation ensures compliance, reduces ambiguity, and balances legal rigor with professional judgment, empowering non-legal professionals in decision-making.

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## KEYWORDS

• Legal Frameworks • Acts • Rules • Regulations • Guidelines • Consumer Protection Act 2019 • Decision-Making • Stare Decisis • Per Incuriam • Non-Legal Professionals • Governance • Compliance • Institutional Committees • Judicial Consistency • Best Practices

## KEY MESSAGES

- Clarity in Legal Terminology:** Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines serve distinct roles. Acts establish laws, Rules operationalize procedures, Regulations enforce sector-specific standards, and Guidelines offer advisory best practices.
- Guidelines as Tools for Equity:** While non-binding, guidelines enhance transparency and objectivity in decision-making but require flexibility to avoid rigidity.
- Balancing Legal Rigor and Flexibility:** Strict adherence to legal frameworks must coexist with professional judgment, particularly in dynamic sectors like healthcare and consumer rights.
- Judicial Principles in Practice:** Stare decisis ensures consistency, while per incuriam corrects judicial oversights, maintaining the integrity of legal systems.

## INTRODUCTION

Law & legal provisions are universally needed, in all walks of life. Any average prudent citizen is expected to follow the law of the land. However, the legal terms used are not easy to understand & interpret by lay persons or even educated non-legal professionals. Sometimes, people in statutory committees are also ignorant about these issues and are happy to rely on subjective opinions arbitrarily in their decision-making. The authors have attempted to decipher these terms for the benefit of the lay persons and non-legal professionals, to clear the misconceptions. Legal frameworks form the bedrock of governance, yet terms like Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines are frequently misunderstood by non-legal professionals. This confusion can lead to arbitrary decision-making in statutory committees and organizations. For instance, while Acts are laws enacted by legislatures, Rules and Regulations are often interchangeably used despite differing scopes and authorities. Guidelines, though non-binding, influence ethical and procedural

standards. This article demystifies these terms, using examples such as the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to illustrate their practical applications. The objective is to empower professionals to navigate legal obligations effectively while maintaining flexibility in decision-making.

## DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

### Hierarchy and Roles

- Acts:** Primary legislation enacted by legislatures (e.g., Parliament). Example: Consumer Protection Act, 2019.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Rules:** Detailed procedures under an Act, formulated by executive bodies (e.g., ministries). Example: Consumer Protection Rules, 2020.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Regulations:** Technical standards issued by regulatory authorities (e.g., National Medical Commission). Example: MCI Regulations on Medical Ethics.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Guidelines:** Advisory recommendations (e.g., Indian Medical Association guidelines).<sup>[4]</sup>

## Comparative Analysis

Aspect	Acts	Rules	Regulations	Guidelines
Authority	Legislature	Executive Agencies	Regulatory Bodies	Professional Bodies
Enforceability	Legally Binding	Legally Binding	Legally Binding	Non-Binding
Flexibility	Rigid	Moderate	Low	High
Example	CPA, 2019 <sup>[1]</sup>	CPA Rules, 2020 <sup>[2]</sup>	MCI Regulations <sup>[3]</sup>	IMA Telemedicine Guidelines <sup>[4]</sup>

To understand these terms more clearly, let us examine some examples in the context of the Consumer Protection Act, as it applies to medical professionals.

The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) was enacted to protect the interests of the consumers. The Act is supported by the Rules & Regulations released by the Government giving the details of how the provisions of the Act need to be implemented. How these terms apply with respect to the medical professionals, the breakdown may be something as described below.

- The Consumer Protection Act 2019 itself is the primary law passed by the legislature to protect the rights of consumers, including those seeking medical services. It defines and includes what constitutes the legal framework for addressing grievances against medical professionals and institutions.
- The Act, in the case of medical professionals, recognizes patients as consumers and provides them with the right to seek redressal for deficiencies in services (like medical negligence) or unfair business practices.
- It establishes mechanisms like Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions (National, State, and District levels) to address complaints from consumers (patients).
- Consumer Protection (Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission) Rules, 2020 specify how cases related to medical professionals will be processed and which types of evidence need to be submitted. It defines the rules regarding the central council, the functioning & administrative rules of the National Commission, the State Commission, and the District Commission, Mediation of Disputes, and the rules of E-commerce and so on.
- Regulations. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, under powers conferred by the Consumer Protection Act 2019, has published the regulations related to the administration, procedures and processes to be followed, engagement of experts with respect to Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) and Mediation under the Act.

- Guidelines in this context are non-binding recommendations issued by bodies like Medical Associations, healthcare institutions, or regulatory authorities to inform medical professionals on best practices. These guidelines help ensure that the medical care provided is in the best interest of the patients. While they are not enforceable, like laws or regulations, they set standards for medical practice and can influence the outcome of legal cases under the Consumer Protection Act if a medical professional's conduct is judged against established best practices. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) or the Healthcare Institution might issue guidelines on how to treat specific diseases or how to manage patient care under specific situations, ensuring that medical professionals provide safe and effective treatment and care.

#### Case Study: Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **Act:** Establishes consumer rights and redressal mechanisms.<sup>1</sup>
- **Rules:** Specify complaint procedures and evidence requirements.<sup>2</sup>
- **Regulations:** Define unfair trade practices and mediation processes.<sup>5</sup>
- **Guidelines:** Advise hospitals on patient care standards.<sup>4</sup>

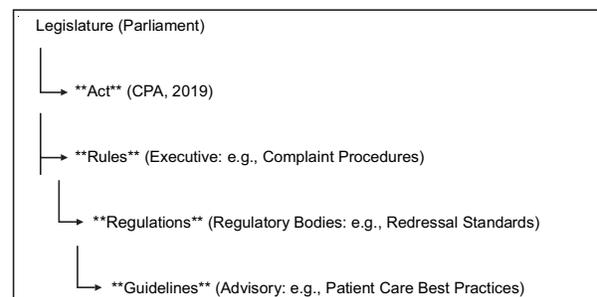


Figure 1: Flowchart: Legal Hierarchy under the CPA

## DEFINITIONS & MEANINGS

These terms are often used in legal, organizational, or regulatory contexts and are sometimes used interchangeably but have distinct meanings and roles. In essence, Acts lay down the law, Rules and Regulations bring out the execution process with more detail, while Guidelines offer advice at the end-user level, without legal obligation.

1. An **Act** is a law passed by a legislative body (Parliament or State Assembly). It is a formal piece of legislation that establishes legal principles or sets out the structure for the overall functioning of a system. It is typically broad-based and provides the overarching legal framework for a particular subject.

2. A **Rule** is a specific, detailed guideline that is created under the authority of an Act or regulation. Rules are typically more specific than the Act and provide the procedures or administrative details needed to implement the provisions of the Act. Rules are created by government agencies or bodies with the power inherently granted by the Act.

3. A **Regulation** is similar to a Rule but is generally issued by a regulatory authority or government body with the authority to regulate specific industries or sectors. Regulations often deal with the practical, technical, and operational aspects of an Act.

What is the difference between rules and regulations? The terms **rules** and **regulations** are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings, especially in legal and regulatory contexts.

## RULES

**Definition:** Rules are specific, detailed directives that are created to implement the provisions of an Act or law. They outline the procedure, the steps to be followed, and the standards to be maintained.

**Creation:** Rules are usually created by the executive, i.e., the government departments, agencies, or ministries under the authority granted by a specific Act or legislation. They are more focused on operational details.

**Scope:** Rules tend to be narrower in scope and focus more on the procedural aspects, laying out specific requirements for how certain actions or processes should be conducted.

**Example:** Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, rules may specify how complaints are to be filed with consumer forums, jurisdiction of different redressal agencies, the time frames for hearings, and how compensation should be calculated.

## REGULATIONS

**Definition:** Regulations are similar to rules, but they tend to be more comprehensive and can have a broader impact. Regulations generally provide detailed standards, guidelines, and technical specifications to enforce laws and cover more specific areas of an industry or field.

**Creation:** Regulations are typically issued by regulatory authorities or specific government bodies with the legal authority granted by an Act. They carry more weight and have a more technical or industry-specific focus.

**Scope:** Regulations are often more technical, industry-specific, and detailed, governing the practices and procedures within a particular field (e.g., medical practice, financial markets, etc.).

**Example:** Regulations issued by the National Medical Commission govern the functioning of medical professionals, Medical Education and Healthcare Institutions, specifying the professional conduct, infrastructure requirements, registrations, etc. and also penalties for non-compliance.

## KEY DIFFERENCES

**Authority:** Rules are typically created by government agencies or ministries based on the powers provided by an Act, whereas regulations are created by specific regulatory bodies with broader authority in their designated field.

**Scope:** Rules focus on detailed procedures and the mechanics of how laws will be implemented, while regulations establish industry-specific standards and detailed operational rules for workers within those fields.

**Impact:** Regulations tend to have a more profound and direct impact on specific industries or sectors, while rules are more about ensuring that the law is implemented smoothly in day-to-day practice.

### Example to Illustrate:

Under the **Consumer Protection Act**, rules might specify how to register a complaint against a service provider for alleged negligence or deficiency of service and the procedure to be followed in grievance redressal. Regulations framed by the consumer councils under

that Act would provide detailed standards regarding the rights of consumers or the ingredients of unfair trade practice or what will constitute frivolous complaint. Regulations by the National Medical Commission will determine what constitutes deficiency of service or professional misconduct by its members

4. A **Guideline** is a set of recommendations or suggestions, rather than a binding rule or law. Guidelines help organizations or individuals understand best practices or the preferred way of doing something, but they are not legally enforceable. They are more flexible than rules or regulations and are often issued by authorities or organizations to provide advice on how to interpret or implement legal provisions or regulations for decision making. How do Guidelines differ from Rules & Regulations?

## GUIDELINES

- **Definition:** Guidelines are recommendations or suggestions designed to guide behaviour, practices, or decisions, but they are not legally binding. They are often intended to provide advice or best practices on how to approach specific situations.
- **Purpose:** The goal of guidelines is to recommend the best course of action or behaviour, based on expert opinion or established best practices. They are flexible and provide room for judgment and adaptation.
- **Enforceability:** Guidelines are not enforceable. While they provide direction, following them is voluntary. However, not adhering to them may impact on the quality of services or could be used as evidence in legal proceedings if non-compliance leads to harm or damage.

**Example:** The Indian Medical Association may issue guidelines to its members for proper selection of patients coming to OPD for treatment, or guidelines for handling aggressive, abusive & violent patients, or guidelines for Mortality & Morbidity meetings or guidelines for internal & external transfer of critically ill patients.

## RULES

- **Definition:** Rules are specific directives that define how something should be done, often detailing procedures and administrative processes. They are more formal than guidelines and are created based on the authority granted by an Act.
- **Purpose:** Rules focus on establishing detailed, specific actions that must be followed. They help enforce the provisions of an Act or law by specifying procedures, timelines, or steps.
- **Enforceability:** Rules are legally binding and must be followed. Failure to comply with rules can result in penalties or legal action.

**Example: Consumer Protection (Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission) Rules 2020** specify how complaints of defective products or deficiency of service or negligence against traders & service providers respectively will be processed and which types of evidence need to be submitted.

## REGULATIONS

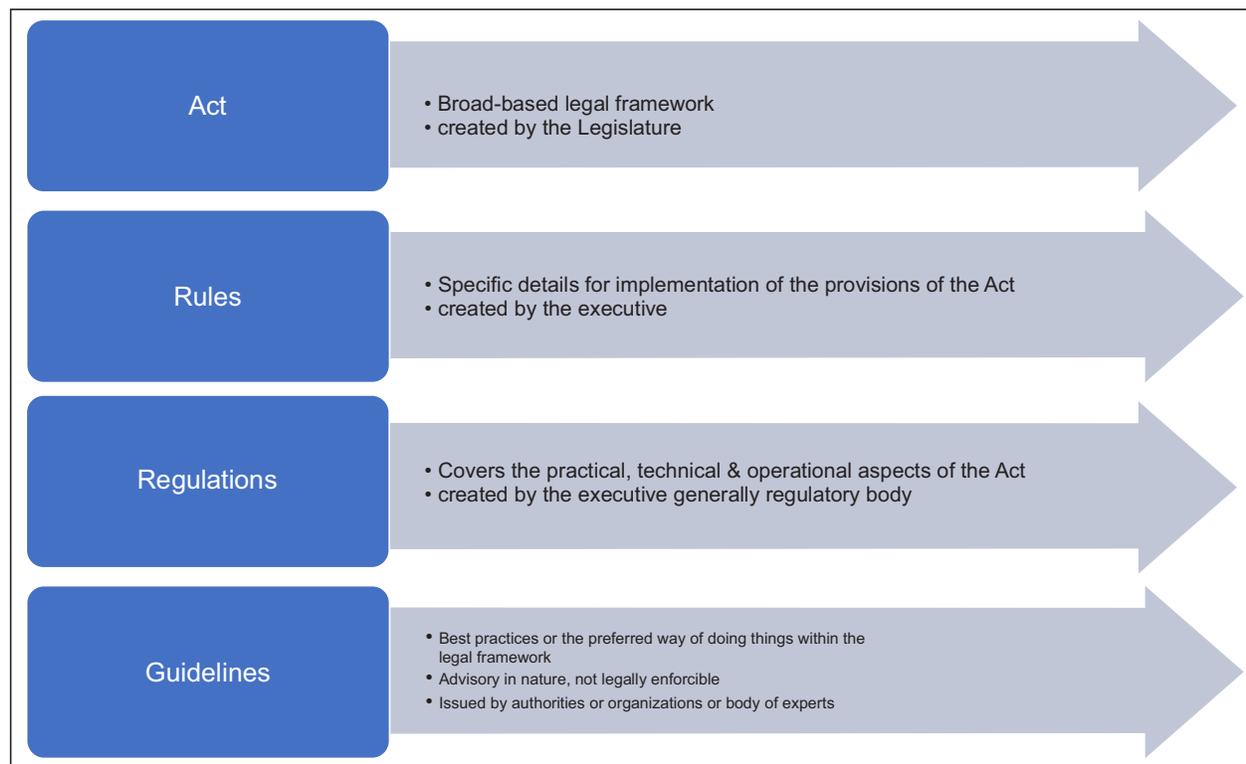
- **Definition:** Regulations are similar to rules but often more comprehensive and specific. They define technical, operational, and professional standards within a particular industry, such as healthcare, finance, or the environment.
- **Purpose:** Regulations provide specific standards and guidelines that ensure compliance with the broader objectives of an Act. They are particularly focused on controlling industry practices or ensuring safety and quality within certain sectors.
- **Enforceability:** Regulations are legally binding, and failure to follow them can result in legal consequences, including fines, sanctions, or disciplinary actions.

**Example: Medical Council of India (MCI) regulations** for the practice of medicine set the standards for ethical practices, conduct, and professional behaviour in healthcare.

## KEY DIFFERENCES

**Table 1:** Key Differences in Rules, guidelines and regulations

Aspect	Guidelines	Rules	Regulations
Purpose	Recommend the best practices and advice.	Define specific procedures or processes.	Establish detailed standards and requirements for specific industries.
Nature	Non-binding, flexible, advisory.	Binding, enforceable.	Binding, enforceable.
Enforceability	Not enforceable.	Enforceable by authorities.	Enforceable by regulatory bodies or authorities.
Flexibility	Highly flexible; allows for professional judgment.	Less flexible but offer specific instructions.	Typically, less flexible, focusing on compliance and technical standards.
Examples	NMC guidelines on medical certificates or on telemedicine.	Rules for filing consumer complaints under the Consumer Protection Act.	MCI regulations on professional conduct of doctors



**Figure 2:** Act, Rules, Regulations & Guidelines

## ARE DOCUMENTED GUIDELINES A BOON OR A BANE FOR DECISION MAKING

It is true that for decision making documented guidelines are not mandatory. However, it is prudent to have the documented guidelines to facilitate decision making, which is more transparent, objective and un-biased. Documented guidelines can be both a boon and a bane for decision-making, depending on how they are applied and the context in which they are used.

### Boon (Advantages) of Documented Guidelines

#### for Decision-Making:

**1. Consistency and Standardization:** Guidelines help ensure consistency in decision-making. They provide a framework or set of best practices, which help professionals or organizations make decisions in a standardized way, ensuring similar issues are addressed uniformly.

**2. Clarity and Direction:** Documented guidelines give clear directions on how to handle specific situations, which can be particularly helpful for those without much experience in a particular field. It reduces

ambiguity and helps make decisions faster.

**3. Efficiency:** By having pre-determined guidelines, decision-makers don't need to reinvent the wheel every time. They can rely on established frameworks to expedite the decision-making process.

**4. Risk Mitigation:** Guidelines help minimize errors and risks by providing structured frameworks that have been tested and proven to work. This reduces the likelihood of poor decisions that could lead to legal, financial, or reputational damage.

**5. Support for Accountability:** Documented guidelines provide a basis for accountability. If something goes wrong, decision-makers can refer to the guidelines to show that they follow the best practices or industry standards.

### **Bane (Disadvantages) of Documented Guidelines for Decision-Making:**

**1. Over-Reliance on Standardization:** Rigidly following guidelines can result in an over-reliance on standardization, which may stifle creativity and flexibility. In situations that require adaptability or innovative thinking, adhering strictly to guidelines can limit options.

**2. Inflexibility:** Guidelines can sometimes be too inflexible and restrict decision-making in dynamic or complex situations where exceptions or changes are necessary. They may not account for unusual or unique circumstances, forcing decision-makers to overlook the nuances of a case.

**3. Overcomplication:** Extensive or overly complex guidelines can overcomplicate decision-making by creating confusion or making it harder to sift through the required information. This can delay decisions or make the process more cumbersome.

**4. False Sense of Security:** Decision-makers might assume that following documented guidelines guarantees the right decision. This can lead to complacency or a lack of critical thinking, as decision-makers may follow guidelines without considering whether they are the best fit for the situation.

**5. Limiting Autonomy:** Strict guidelines might limit individual or team autonomy, especially in organizations or fields where personal judgment and expertise are crucial. It could create a culture of box-ticking rather

than thoughtful decision-making.

The guidelines, therefore, need to be prepared after a thorough discussion between the members and must contain provisions for out-of-the-box decisions in extraordinary situations. Some flexibility can be in-built in the guidelines to handle complex situations. Guidelines are not to be followed mechanically but are used to understand the letter & spirit of what is required for prudent decision-making and are used as a reference for best practices. The key is to balance the use of guidelines with the need for judgment, adaptability, and contextual decision-making.

### **PRINCIPLE OF PER INCURIAM-AN EXCEPTION TO STARE DECISIS**

The principle of *stare decisis* (Latin for "to stand by things decided") is a legal doctrine that obligates courts to follow historical cases when making a ruling on a similar case. It ensures consistency, predictability, and stability in the law by adhering to precedents set by prior judicial decisions. Here's a breakdown of the principle:

#### **Key Aspects of Stare Decisis:**

##### **1. Precedent:**

- Courts are bound to follow the rulings of higher courts within the same jurisdiction.
- Lower courts must adhere to the decisions of higher courts (vertical stare decisis).
- Courts also generally follow their own prior decisions (horizontal stare decisis).

##### **2. Consistency and Predictability:**

- Stare decisis promotes fairness by treating similar cases similarly.
- It allows individuals and businesses to understand their legal rights and obligations.

##### **3. Hierarchy of Courts:**

- Higher courts (e.g., supreme courts) set binding precedents for lower courts.
- Lower courts cannot overturn precedents set by higher courts.

##### **4. Exceptions to Stare Decisis:**

- Precedents can be overturned if they are deemed outdated, unworkable, or unjust.
- Courts may also depart from precedent if there are significant changes in societal

values, technology, or legal understanding.

### 5. Doctrine of Judicial Restraint:

- *Stare decisis* reflects a conservative approach to the law, discouraging frequent changes to legal principles.

### Importance of Stare Decisis:

- **Legal Stability:** Prevents constant changes in the law, ensuring continuity.
- **Judicial Efficiency:** Reduces the need to re-litigate settled legal issues.
- **Public Confidence:** Builds trust in the legal system by demonstrating fairness and consistency.

### Criticism of Stare Decisis:

- **Rigidity:** Can perpetuate outdated or unjust laws.
- **Inflexibility:** May hinder legal evolution in response to societal changes.

In summary, *stare decisis* is a foundational principle in common law systems, ensuring that courts respect and follow established precedents while allowing for flexibility when necessary.

The principle of *per incuriam* is a legal doctrine that serves as an exception to the rule of *stare decisis*, which requires courts to follow precedents set by higher courts or earlier decisions.

### Meaning of Per Incuriam

The term "*per incuriam*" is Latin for "through lack of care." In legal contexts, it refers to a judgment or decision made by a court that was rendered in ignorance or forgetfulness of a relevant statutory provision or binding precedent. Such a decision is considered to have been made in error and lacks the authority of a proper precedent.

### Application as an Exception to Stare Decisis

Under the doctrine of *stare decisis*, courts are generally bound to follow prior decisions to ensure consistency and predictability in the law. However, if a prior decision is found to be *per incuriam*, it may be disregarded or overruled because it was made without proper consideration of the law. This exception allows courts to correct errors and avoid perpetuating incorrect legal principles.

### Conditions for Per Incuriam

For a decision to be considered *per incuriam*, the following conditions must typically be met:

**1. Ignorance of a Statutory Provision or Binding Precedent:** The court must have overlooked or failed to consider a relevant law or precedent that would have been decisive in the case.

**2. Material to the Decision:** The overlooked law or precedent must have been crucial to the outcome of the case.

**3. No Deliberate Departure:** The error must be unintentional, not a conscious decision to deviate from established law.

### Examples

- If a court issues a ruling without considering a recent statute that directly applies to the case, the decision may be deemed *per incuriam*.
- If a lower court overlooks a binding precedent from a higher court, its decision may be set aside as *per incuriam*.

### Significance

The principle of *per incuriam* ensures that the rule of *stare decisis* does not perpetuate errors or unjust outcomes. It allows courts to maintain the integrity of the legal system by correcting mistakes and ensuring that decisions are based on a thorough understanding of the law.

In summary, *per incuriam* acts as a safeguard against the rigid application of precedent, allowing courts to disregard decisions that were made in error due to a lack of care or consideration of relevant legal authorities.

## PRINCIPLE OF PER INCURIAM

### Definition:

The principle of *per incuriam* is a legal doctrine used to describe a decision made by a court that is rendered without consideration of a relevant statutory provision or authoritative precedent. The term is Latin for "through lack of care."

### Key Points:

#### 1. Lack of Precedent or Statutory Consideration:

- A judgment is considered *per incuriam* if it was given in ignorance of a relevant

statute or binding precedent that would have been crucial to the decision.

## 2. Not Binding:

- Decisions made *per incuriam* are not considered binding precedents. Other courts are not obliged to follow them and can deviate from such rulings.

## 3. Correcting Errors:

- The principle allows higher courts or subsequent benches to correct errors made due to oversight, ensuring the integrity and consistency of the legal system.

## 4. Application:

- It is typically invoked in appellate courts to challenge the validity of a lower court's decision that overlooked critical legal authorities.

### Example:

If a court issues a ruling without referencing a key statute or a binding case law that directly applies to the matter at hand, a higher court may later declare that decision *per incuriam* and overturn it.

### Limitations:

- The principle is applied cautiously to maintain judicial stability and respect for precedent.
- It does not apply to every error but only to significant oversights that affect the outcome of the case.

### Take away:

The principle of *per incuriam* serves as a corrective mechanism within the legal system, ensuring that judicial decisions are made with due consideration of all relevant laws and precedents. It underscores the importance of thoroughness and accuracy in judicial reasoning.

## WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF 'BODY OF OPINION'

The doctrine of the '**body of opinion**' refers to the concept in legal and professional contexts where the prevailing or majority opinion of experts or practitioners in a particular field is given significant weight in making decisions or forming judgments, particularly in cases where the facts are uncertain, or the law is not

clear-cut. The body of opinion is much more credible than an individual opinion.

This doctrine is often used to guide courts, tribunals, or regulatory bodies when determining issues where expert testimony or professional consensus is needed. It essentially acknowledges that expert opinions or consensus on a subject can provide guidance when there is ambiguity or lack of clear evidence. The body of opinion may not always be determinative. Courts or decision-makers still have the discretion to evaluate the body of opinion against other available evidence, including opposing expert opinions. It is not a rule of law, but rather a persuasive tool to guide decision-making. It reflects the reliance on established practices or norms within a profession or field. For example, in a medical litigation, a doctor may be accused of medical negligence or deviation from the standard of care. The body of medical opinion on the issue may be available as a published document, or a professional body may give its opinion on the facts of the given case, or the court may seek such an opinion from the medical council or a reputed medical institution. If the body of opinion states that the treatment administered was standard, the defendant might be exonerated, or at least the body of opinion may be used to mitigate liability. While it provides useful guidance, it is not absolute and may be subject to further scrutiny or challenge based on other facts or expert opinions.

### Guidelines for Institutional Committees.

Does it make any sense? We are generally happy to retain our discretion in all decision-making. We don't want to be tied down by some written guidelines. However, where we are dealing with important decisions and where there are a lot of variabilities & ambiguities involved, the pre-determined written guidelines are likely to bring fairness & equity, transparency, efficiency & consistency in addressing the legal & ethical issues with objectivity. The bias & subjectivity are also likely to be eliminated or at least reduced considerably.

## GUIDELINES IN DECISION-MAKING: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

### Advantages:

1. Standardization and transparency.<sup>[6]</sup>
2. Risk mitigation through proven frameworks.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Disadvantages:**

1. Over-reliance may stifle creativity.<sup>[8]</sup>
2. Inflexibility in dynamic scenarios.<sup>[9]</sup>

**Legal Principles: Stare Decisis and Per Incuriam**

- **Stare Decisis:** Ensures judicial consistency but risks rigidity.<sup>[10]</sup>
- **Per Incuriam:** Allows courts to disregard precedents made in error (e.g., overlooking statutes).<sup>[11]</sup>

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT****Content Enhancements****1. Expand Case Studies:**

- Include examples from diverse sectors (e.g., finance, environmental law) to demonstrate universal applicability.
- Add recent examples, such as updates to the Consumer Protection Act or telemedicine regulations post-COVID-19.

**2. Deepen Legal Principle Analysis:**

- Provide case law examples (e.g., landmark judgments where *per incuriam* overturned precedents).
- Link stare decisis to contemporary debates on judicial activism vs. restraint.

**3. Practical Tools for Non-Legal Audiences:**

- Incorporate checklists (e.g., “Steps to Align Organizational Policies with Regulations”).
- Add a glossary of legal terms for quick reference.

**Structural Improvements****4. Visual Clarity:**

- Redesign the flowchart with color-coding to distinguish legislative, executive, and regulatory hierarchies.
- Enlarge the comparative table to include columns for “Purpose,” “Creation Authority,” and “Enforcement Mechanism.”

**5. Readability:**

- Break long paragraphs into bulleted lists under subheadings (e.g., “Advantages of Guidelines”).
- Use infographics to summarize key

distinctions (e.g., “Binding vs. Non-Binding Legal Instruments”).

**Audience Engagement****6. Real-World Scenarios:**

- Include anonymized case studies where guidelines improved decision-making (e.g., hospital ethics committees) or caused challenges (e.g., rigid compliance in startups).

**7. Interactive Elements:**

- Propose a “Self-Assessment Quiz” for readers to test their understanding of legal frameworks.

**Technical Refinements****8. Update References:**

- Cite recent studies on governance (e.g., 2023 reports on digital compliance tools).
- Ensure all citations adhere strictly to Vancouver style (e.g., consistent use of journal abbreviations).

**9. Peer Review:**

- Seek feedback from legal experts to validate accuracy and non-legal professionals to assess accessibility.

**Future Directions****10. Dynamic Guidelines:**

- Recommend exploring AI-driven tools for real-time guideline updates in response to legal changes.

**Final Takeaway**

By refining definitions, diversifying examples, and enhancing visual and structural clarity, this article can bridge the gap between legal frameworks and practical implementation, empowering non-legal professionals to navigate compliance confidently while fostering adaptive governance.

**CONCLUSION**

Acts, Rules, and Regulations form a binding legal triad, while Guidelines serve as ethical compasses. Institutional committees must leverage documented guidelines to enhance fairness but avoid mechanistic adherence. Future research could explore digital tools for dynamically updating guidelines in response to legal changes. The article has discussed the meaning & rationale of very important words

like Act, Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines, as used within the bounds of the legal framework. The Act, Rules & Regulations are legally enforceable and have to be followed by one & all. The Guidelines are optional and not legally enforceable. However, pre-determined documented guidelines help in prudent decision making which brings with it transparency, efficiency, equity, consistency and objectivity.

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