



**The Centre for English Studies: In the top 100 English departments worldwide twice, but intake for 2017-18=ZERO!**

**31** MAR  
2017

[ADD A COMMENT](#)

**The Centre for English Studies has been ranked among the top 100 English Departments in the world in 2011 and 2013.** Its alumni include major authors and academics in leading academic institutions internationally and in India, but as far as the JNU administration is concerned, it's not worthy of a single new admission to its M.Phil./PhD and Direct PhD programmes.

The CES has ten faculty members, who – as per the UGC regulations – can supervise 22 MPhil students and 64 PhD students at any given time. The determination of intake for this year should be based on the actual number of students under supervision and should take into account the number of students who complete the programmes in July. **According to this, CES should be able to admit 22 students to the MPhil/PhD and 3 or 4 students to Direct PhD this year.** Although UGC regulations specify caps on supervision and not on admission, our university administration appears to make no distinction between students who are under supervision and those who are not. MPhil students doing coursework and provisional PhD students are not assigned supervisors, and this must be factored in the calculation of intake.

The CES faculty have repeatedly made this point supported by detailed information before the university administration, but have not received any positive response. We have no doubt that the current embargo on admissions will have a severe destructive impact on our prospective students and our cherished research programmes.

Eminent scholars in English studies from across the world have expressed shock and concern over the way our university has slashed admissions to our Centre this year. Some of the responses are given below.

.....

“I hear that the Centre for English Studies at JNU is considering a significant reduction in the number of students to be admitted to the M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. I fervently hope that this is no more than a distressing rumor. The CES is one of the leading institutions of literary studies in the world: the highly motivated students, the innovative courses, the rigorous standards of research, and the scholarly repute of legendary teachers such as the late Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee, have all played a part in building up its international reputation. It surely cannot be the intention of the administration to curtail such a flourishing culture of research and teaching. Many of us have had the privilege of institutional collaboration with your faculty, or studied or taught or visited there; in turn we have invited CES faculty to serve as experts (as dissertation readers, conference participants, or distinguished visiting scholars) in our institutions. Like many other US university departments of English, mine has always been eager to receive students from your centre into our doctoral and post-doctoral programs. I sincerely hope your research programs will not be adversely affected by the proposed changes.”

***Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Global Distinguished Professor, New York University***

.....

“I write to express my dismay and anxiety at the news that the Centre for English Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University will not be able to offer any seats to aspiring M.Phil or PhD applicants this year. This is not just a drastic reduction, but effectively a kind of shutdown that will damage not only the institution but higher learning in India as a whole. Many students from all over the country take the JNU entrance test each year in order to gain an opportunity to begin research in one of our best academic institutions. I believe that over the years this opportunity has proved extraordinarily empowering in intellectual and human terms to students from a wide social spectrum, and that JNU is in this sense truly an institution of national importance. At a time when the Government is emphasizing the need to make our institutions of higher learning both globally competitive and socially relevant, it seems counter-productive to ban intake at the research level. I appeal for a reconsideration of this policy and urge that the Centre for English Studies, together with other centres of higher learning in JNU, be allowed to admit students into its M.Phil and PhD programmes. ”

***Supriya Chaudhuri, Professor (Emerita), Department of English, Jadavpur University***

.....

“The Centre for English Studies is an international beacon of research excellence. Their outstanding faculty and graduate program have been much admired. I have visited the Centre on more than one occasion and have been impressed with the rigour and imagination of its scholarship and the vibrancy of its postgraduate culture. I understand that the MPhil and PhD intake may be drastically cut, a move that will be irreparably damaging. In the interests of this outstanding Centre and for the prestige it brings JNU and India, I would urge a reconsideration of this policy.’

*Isabel Hofmeyr, Professor of African Literature, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and Global Distinguished Professor, New York University*

.....

‘The Center for English Studies at JNU is perhaps the pre-eminent home for scholarship in literary and cultural studies in India. Generations of students trained there have gone on to establish fine academic careers in India and abroad, and their scholarship has greatly enhanced the quality and range of our understanding of literary histories and criticism in English and a range of Indian languages. Faculty and graduate students at the Center have participated in colloquia, seminars, and research projects with universities across the globe, and their work has contributed to the esteem in which colleagues elsewhere hold academic enquiry conducted in India. As a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study at JNU I had several occasions to work with colleagues and students from the Center, and I benefited greatly from such engagements.

That the Center is now being told that it cannot admit any research

students can only be understood as an attempt to destroy its functions and its intellectual standing. This bureaucratic decision is clearly the product of partisan politics that is devoted to the destruction of intellectual life in our outstanding universities. As an Indian academic, I write to protest that decision, and to express my solidarity with my colleagues who bear the brunt of this ugly attack on academic autonomy. No modern nation can flourish without major universities with vital research and training programs, and any governmental attempt to delegitimize universities must be condemned and resisted.'

*Suvir Kaul, A. M. Rosenthal Professor, Department of English, University of Pennsylvania*

.....

“I am shocked to learn of the cuts in admissions at JNU and the total freeze at its Centre for English Studies. As an Indian academic based abroad, I know that students and researchers from JNU and particularly, in my field, the Centre for English Studies are highly respected ambassadors of India, in person and in their writings. It is a pity that India is being made to lose such necessary ambassadors in the future.”

*Tabish Khair, Associate Professor, Aarhus University and Guest Professor, University of Leeds*

.....

“I am absolutely shocked to learn that as a result of the new UGC notification, there will be no new students taken into the Centre of English Studies at JNU. Such an arbitrary ruling will have a disastrous effect both

on faculty and on the existing students. How can a university as eminent as JNU keep up its production of world-class research, its nurturing of students from all over India, and indeed its conversations with peers across the world if its basic student pipeline is cut off in this unthinking manner? As someone who taught at this Centre earlier, and continues to be closely connected to JNU, I stand in solidarity with my colleagues in the Centre and at JNU and join the growing number of voices urging the Indian government and the UGC to rescind this short-sighted measure. I know that such an undemocratic measure goes against every principle of liberal thought, and any commitment to higher education.”

*Ania Loomba, Catherine Bryson Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania*

.....

‘The JNU Centre for English Studies has been for many years a world-leading hub for research discussion and collaboration at the highest level, both nationally and internationally. Its research scholars are internationally respected for their scholarship and the intensity and focus of their outreach. I look back with great profit to the workshops in which I have been involved with JNU Centre for English Studies researchers, and hope very much to collaborate again with them in the future. Through the outstanding work of the Centre, English Studies in India have been prominently placed on the world map.

*– Elleke Boehmer, Professor of World Literature in English, University of Oxford, and Director of the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities*

The Centre for English Studies at JNU is one of the leading programs in the world for critical studies in the humanities; it would be an injury to international collaboration and an assault on thinking to suspend admissions to CES. Our graduate programs at the University of California look to and communicate with the CES for keen, urgent analysis of the historical, political, and philosophical formations of modern thought. Over the years we have learned to expect CES professors and graduate students to model dedicated teaching and research vibrantly engaged with the most important questions of the day. Through turbulent times CES has remained an inspiration, globally, for programs, like my own department's, that aspire to equal access for students of diverse backgrounds, open pedagogies, and collaborative and adventurous writing. I always think of it as a place where the idea of the critical university actually materializes in community practice—in social interaction, lively discussion and in the pages of innovative publications. This reputation creates demand for CES-trained students and professors internationally; members of the CES diaspora, with wide intellectual influence, cultivate respect for JNU internationally. Its diminishment would be a gratuitous act of self-harm on the part of the larger educational enterprise.”

*Rei Terada, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Comparative Literature University of California, Irvine*

I write in support of the Graduate M. Phil and Ph.D program of the Centre for English Studies, SLL&CS of Jawaharlal Nehru University and of the students in the program. I recently had the honor of presenting at an

international seminar sponsored by the Centre for English Studies, where I joined colleagues from several nations and scholars, artists, and leading thinkers from across India. The seminar addressed critical issues in the arts and culture of India and the world. It was attended by some one hundred of faculty and graduate students of the University and led to serious engagement in scholarly issues of significance to India and the international community.

One of the high points of the seminar was the participation of the graduate students in the program of the Centre for English Studies who were active contributors to the seminar. Not only did they ask serious and insightful questions of the seminar's invited participants, they advanced the discussion significantly. Of particular value for me as a scholar was that I benefitted from the papers that eight of the graduate students presented at the seminar. I found the students' work to be intellectually mature, well-reasoned, and original. Although each of these students addressed the common theme of the seminar, they all established clear, personal and intellectually astute perspectives—so much so that I asked for copies of their papers and to receive their email addresses so that I might continue conversations and scholarly interactions with them. I am fully confident that these students of the Centre for English Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University will make significant contributions to Indian and international culture as teachers, researchers, and members of society.

These are exemplary students that are the core responsibility of universities to prepare for the society of the future. Not to sustain support for them and the programs of which they are a part is an act of shocking dereliction to the mission of the University, the culture, and the

government which is established to serve the people and nation. I hope that the students and the graduate program will continue its fine and necessary work.

*Charles Russell, Professor Emeritus of English, Rutgers University*

I was shocked to hear the JNU administration has decided not to offer any places at all to admit research scholars for the M.Phil and PhD programmes of the Centre for English Studies. India is the third largest publisher of English books in the world and Indian scholars play an important role in shaping the discipline internationally. It is incomprehensible why the administration would want to downsize the prestigious Centre for English Studies in one of its leading Indian Universities. I have been proud to be associated for close to two decades with the CES, and I have enjoyed the flourishing research and vibrant atmosphere of intellectual inquiry and research. I was very happy when my Department at the University of Cyprus established collaboration with the CES by establishing an international agreement of exchange. I have benefitted a great deal from this collaboration and have enjoyed the stimulation of dialogue with senior scholars and young researchers every time I visited as a scholar, speaker, or researcher. At UCY, we have also been delighted to receive experts and young scholars from JNU, who have enriched us with their knowledge and expertise as conference participants, visiting speakers, or PhD research advisors. Our network and joint efforts have given rise to valuable work and publications. I sincerely hope that the administration will rethink this misguided decision and do what it can to support and develop the

Centre and its important international network.

*Stephanos Stephanides, Professor of English and Comparative Literature,  
University of Cyprus, Fellow of the English Association*

Advertisements

Occasionally, some of your visitors may see an advertisement here  
You can hide these ads completely by upgrading to one of our paid plans.

[UPGRADE NOW](#)

[DISMISS MESSAGE](#)

[Edit](#)

**SHARE THIS:**



**LIKE THIS:**

**PREVIOUS**

**Stand for Public Health and oppose seat cuts in  
JNU's pioneering CSMCH!**

**NEXT**

**'The End of History' in 'their' sights? CHS**

# M.Phil./PhD Admissions slashed to Zero!

Leave a Reply

You are following this blog

You are following this blog, along with 2,453 other amazing people ([manage](#)).

