

Centre for the Study of Regional Development
School of Social Sciences

8 February 2018

The following is being forwarded to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for inclusion in the agenda item of the 145th meeting of the Academic Council scheduled on February 23, 2018.

The centre deliberated on the issues mentioned below and unanimously resolved to forward the same for discussion in the 145th Meeting of the Academic Council.

A. On Modified MPhil & PhD Ordinances

1. The circular dated 22/12/ 2017 states that the date of application of the provisions would be decided as per the decisions of the court as the matter is sub-judice, while the Ordinance 1.3, clause 1.2 states that it would be applicable to the students admitted to the PhD programme on or after 5 July 2017. It leaves the date of application of the changes in the ordinances ambiguous. Thus, its implications and applicability for the students who are at different stages of their academic career remains unclear. It is not clear whether students who are already part of the M.Phil/ PhD programme are to be governed according to the old or the new ordinances. Specific areas of ambiguities, include: (i) students who have opted for directly going to the PhD programme on the basis of their grades in the course work of the integrated M.Phil-Ph.D course; (ii) students admitted under 9(a); (iii) students who have already deregistered in this or the previous semester but have not followed the procedures laid down in the new ordinances. A standard practice is that there cannot be retrospective application of any rules and regulations especially that has an adverse effect on the affected party. In the light of the above, clarifications regarding the batch of students/ date of implementation of the said clauses may be issued at the earliest.

B. On Mandatory Attendance:

1. The Centre for the Study of Regional Development, like many other centres in JNU had a robust and well-functioning system of monitoring of students' participation and performance in lectures and research during the entire period of teaching and research. It is through these continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and periodic evaluation of progress as assessed by the supervisor and the relevant centres' committees (which includes, but are not limited to, tutorial groups interactions, classroom discussions, sessional assignments, quizzes, seminar presentations, written submissions, field visits, visits to libraries and group discussions), and duly approved by the statutory bodies of JNU as compulsory requirements for completion of courses, that students' active participation in classrooms (and in research) were ensured. The new mandatory attendance system renders some of these monitoring mechanisms ineffective. Since, 75 per cent of attendance system has been made mandatory, the precise relationship between these two types of requirements to sit in the end test examinations will render the much more substantive academic requirements redundant. In case of a potential conflict between these two types of requirements-i.e. in a situation where a student has fulfilled only one of these requirements- which one should be treated as the primary requirement? If mandatory attendance is taken to be the only criteria for appearing in the end-term test- the effectiveness of other pedagogical tools would be compromised. This would further require modifications in the evaluation criteria of all the courses, which have been approved by the statutory bodies of the university- such as the academic council.
2. For two of the MA compulsory courses offered by the Centre, the idea of mandatory attendance would be specifically inappropriate to judge students' participation. These courses, involve a period of intensive field surveys during the vacations, and a set of pre-field survey lectures, and a set of post-field survey lectures/ group activities/ practical classes- which goes beyond the classrooms. A mechanical application of the 75 per cent

formula in such cases might result in a situation where a student could be eligible for completion of the course without even attending the period of field survey!

3. For M.Phil and PhD students a routine signing of registers everyday would not be desirable under numerous circumstances. Students (including the MA students) visit to various libraries, seminars, training camps and field survey, often with short notices. It would be a huge administrative burden on the teachers and the office staff to maintain a record of all such exemptions. Given that the Centre does not have adequate infrastructure to provide working space to all the MPhil and PhD students, making the students to come to the centre to put their signature would involve unnecessary loss of research time.
4. Several categories of students (differently-abled, day scholars, those employed under the employed categories) might find it difficult to regularly travel to sign the registers, particularly when they are required to visit other parts of the city to complete their research and class assignments.
5. While class room lectures are an important part of the academic activities, the learning processes in JNU, and in CSRD, have always gone beyond the class room. Since such reading groups and discussion sessions are never part of the formal lectures, these are normally organised through informal discussions. Faculty members often spend considerable amounts of time with students outside the class room addressing their individual and collective difficulties and concerns. Such interactions cannot be brought under the formal lecture structure; but since these efforts are no longer be part of the criteria for formal requirements, it is going to be adversely affected.
6. Considering all these issues outlined above, the Centre is of the opinion that mandatory requirements of attendance is not likely to result in substantial improvements in the quality of teaching and research in the university; rather it is likely to devalue the robust continuous monitoring and evaluation system of the Centre. Since daily attendance is not a criterion to evaluate quality and participation, the Centre/ School should

be allowed to devise and implement the criteria to monitor the presence, participation and progress of the students of the Centre/ School.

C. On RAC

The amended ordinance makes the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) mandatory for all M.Phil and Ph.D students admitted on or after 05 July 2016. However, the new circular regarding the Viva-Voce examination require the presence of RAC members at the time of viva for a category students for whom RAC was not constituted during the entire period of research. It would be illegal, unethical and unfair to enforce the presence of RAC members constituted after the submission of the thesis or dissertation to be part of the evaluation process.

D. On JNUEE

Holding JNUEE during December and evaluation of scripts during in the active Winter semester, when full-fledged teaching and research activities are in progress, besides these months also being the period when the faculty members have seminar /conferences commitments leaves little room for evaluation of scripts to be completed within the stipulated schedule. This is a practical problem, which has adverse effect on the teaching and research programmes of the centre. The Centre proposes a discussion on this issue.

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