



JNUTA letter to Rector I on Viva Voce guidelines

9 JUN
2017

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Dear Prof. Mahapatra

The JNUTA reads with some consternation your letter dated 5 June 2017 with respect to the conduct of the viva voce part of the entrance examination.

- 1. The recommendation that the Viva Voce Committee must include a member from the reserved categories has in fact been implemented in the university for some time; what is new is the diktat that such a member must be a Professor nominated by the Vice-Chancellor from within the Centre or outside it. This is completely unacceptable, as it has the utmost of potential for vitiation of the functioning of the Committee, as the VC's nominee is likely to be completely unacquainted with the discipline/area of the subject of the Centre. Since this Professor is to be considered a full member of the viva voce committee, and not an observer, the Viva Voce Committee could therefore include a member who has no expertise in the subject area. Rather than being a measure for counteracting discrimination, this move will result in unfair evaluation. Further, the restriction of such representation to colleagues of a non-Professorial rank must be done**

away with, as that is itself discriminatory. The JNUTA demands, the existing practice of including reserved members of the Centre faculty, irrespective of rank, must be retained.

2. **The proposal that “for gender sensitisation, a female faculty member should also be invited, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, in case no female faculty is available in the Centre” is one that illustrates the urgent need for gender sensitization of the Committee that has framed these guidelines.** For one, it is extremely discriminatory to refer to women as females — it erases women’s personhood and accords primary salience to their reproductive apparatus; for another, female is an adjective rather than a noun (and please do note that men are rarely referred to as males). Further, why should the task of the woman faculty member be ‘gender sensitization’ rather than evaluation of candidates? Who is the target – her colleagues or the candidates? What does she have to do to carry this out? Or is the reference to gender sensitization to make her presence more palatable to the Viva Voce Committee? Note also that she is presented in the guidelines as being only an observer/special invitee and not a full member of the Committee. And she doesn’t have to be a Professor. **The JNUTA demands that this guideline be withdrawn at once, as the antediluvian presuppositions behind it are not those of the JNU faculty.** It should be replaced with the simple statement that Viva Voce Committees must include as close to equal representation of all genders. Centres may be allowed to co-opt women/ transgender colleagues from the university to effect this.
3. **The proposal for audio-recording of the viva-voce of candidates is unacceptable.** Most importantly, there are issues of consent, and questions of security, access to the information for all participants of

the interview, and the methods of archiving the data thus created. When the university has no IT policy at all, individual Centres cannot evolve the rules for all these on an ad-hoc basis. There is also an important question of what exact purpose such recording will serve? Will it be used for the purpose of re-evaluation or for vetting of the interview process by the administration? Until the objectives of this measure are not spelt out (as well as what it cannot be used for), such audio recordings could attract penal consequences for faculty members. Please withdraw this guideline at once.

The JNUTA is mindful that the viva voce can be a potential site for discrimination. This is why the 142nd AC decided to reduce the weightage of the viva voce to 20%, something that your administration has refused to implement. Planting VC's nominees, whom we are supposed to naively assume are miraculously free of all biases, is not a solution at all.

Ayesha Kidwai

Pradeep Shinde

President, JNUTA

Secretary, JNUTA

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