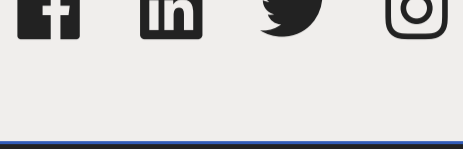




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28 DEC 2017
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JNUTA letter to Committee on Compulsory Attendance

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

28 December 2017

Members of the Compulsory Attendance Committee
Jawaharlal Nehru University

Dear Professors Pradipta Chaudhuri, Prof. K.P. Vijayalakshmi, Prof. Dhir Sarangi, Prof. Bijoy Kumar Kuanr, Prof. K. Natarajan

The JNUTA Is writing to you to both set the record straight on the circumstances that have led to the formation of the committee that you are members of and to present the opinions of the general mass of teachers on this compulsory attendance diktat whose implementation your committee has been tasked with.

1. **There was no decision by the 144th Academic Council on Item no. 08 of the Part A Meeting to make attendance compulsory for all regular registered students.** When this *proposal* made by the Vice-Chancellor was met with dissent from a number of teachers, it was recorded that the matter would be considered by a committee set up for the purpose. By s. 16 of the Second Schedule of the JNU Act, your committee's recommendations have to be made to the Academic Council (as an agenda item, after interaction with all Schools/Centres, following established practice). These recommendations may be made freely and need not labour under the presupposition that the 144th AC felt any need for compulsory attendance at all.
2. Please also note that the circulars notifying compulsory attendance as well as the constitution of your committee were issued before the date for receiving comments on the AC was over, i.e. 27th December. **Several members of the AC have already expressed their dissent in writing on the manner in which the minutes have been mischievously recorded on this item. We request you to take into account all observations that AC members have made in their submissions.**
3. In the JNUTA's opinion, there is no need whatsoever, for your committee to advance the proposition that attendance must be made compulsory by the Academic Council. First of all, **the JNU Act, its Statutes, and Ordinances do not prescribe the academic administration of teaching and research in the university to be top-down at all, as it is the Schools, through their Boards of Studies (please see Clause 2 of Ordinance 7), who are charged with this responsibility. No such proposal has been made by any Board of Studies, and even If It were to be made, would be applicable only to that School.** Please also note that there already exist

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provisions within all the Ordinances for each programme of study for Centres/Schools to address non-performance of students.

4. **The overwhelming opinion amongst teachers of the university is that the diktat for compulsory attendance seeks to manufacture a problem where none exists. There is no pernicious tendency towards absenteeism in JNU students at any level.** As teachers, we have a multitude of practices to address the problem of absenteeism if it occurs, because we understand that there can be a multitude of reasons why an individual case may crop up. We are also conscious of the power we have as evaluators and research supervisors, and exercise it with responsibility. We do not wish to introduce into this process of teaching and evaluation a preliminary screening component of compelled obedience, before the purpose of our pedagogical practices is for students to learn, not to just be there. **Most of all, we do not want, and will not let, our classrooms be turned into the last outposts of the Office of the Chief Proctor, because the notion of discipline in the classroom (be there, in order to question everything) is distinct from the current dispensation's notion of the disciplined conduct by students (don't be there, and don't question anything).**

The JNUTA also looks to your Committee to bury the malicious motivation behind this unilateral announcement of compulsory attendance — namely, that there exists a problem that has to be addressed. There is none, and we believe that the motive is what has become routine since February 2016 —the defamation of Jawaharlal Nehru University and its student and teacher communities.

Ayesha Kidwai
President, JNUTA

Pradeep Shinde
Secretary, JNUTA

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