



STATEMENT OF EXPRESSION OF GRIEVANCES AND SUGGESTIONS REGARDING CONDUCT OF
OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION, 2020

To the living emblems of justice,

We, the students of Campus Law Centre, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi thank you profusely for listening to and registering our grievances stemming from the organisation of our final semester examinations. It is unfortunate that our alma-mater has shown scant regard for our welfare and our prospects in the future. This is borne out by the inability of its administration to create a proper plan for holding our examinations despite the UGC exhorting universities to make preparations way back on 29.4.2020. The administration hasn't made any effort to assess the feasibility of conducting exams via the online medium. No representations has been sought from the students in order to learn about the issues they may encounter while sitting for these exams. There has been no inclination to devise alternatives to address the myriad concerns that are suffocating the students on account of the exams. No attempts have been made to gauge our mental state, to measure the physical toll of a fatal fear and a fallible future. Instead we have been treated as a lifeless monolith ready to be cast in stone by sculptors who never embraced us as beings who breathe. The Students' Union of the Campus Law Centre seeks to rectify these anomalies by eliciting the opinion of the students and making you hear the cries for relief of that abandoned collective. We are pained and hurt at the turn of events, but this letter is an expression of hope. This optimism stems from our firm belief in your wisdom which will allow both students and the administrators to reason together.

From the responses received by the students it is clear that cancelling the open book examination is the most humanitarian, equitable and elegant solution to an ugly problem as:

1. The conduct of OBE online is an altogether discriminatory procedure considering the online infrastructure government colleges and its students are equipped with. This idea ignores the existence of huge gap in wealth distribution in the country and presumes the availability of secure, stable and fast internet connection and access to smart devices with everyone. The procedural guide issued by DU is nothing more than a utopian fiction but certainly India is far away right now from that position. Imagining a situation wherein an online exam is contemplated in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir which is currently operating on limited internet connectivity in light of the national security concerns creates grim realities for the students of the region giving them no option but to opt for offline exams. This places a huge dash on their vision for their future, seeking employment opportunities or subsequent educational endeavours. Similar situation can be imagined in remote areas where electricity issues occur on a daily basis. The conduct of online exam in this situation doesn't leave the students of these regions with a choice but rather makes them involuntary participants in a failed experiment.
2. The relief of offline exams for students not able to conform to the requirements of OBE online is totally ill-founded. Considering the uncertain circumstances prevailing in pandemic it is not possible to provide a definite timeline for the conduct of offline exams. Moreover, most of the outstation students in DU live in rented accommodation around campus and due to COVID 19 many have vacated their accommodations to lighten up the burden of rent. Imagining that DU conducts offline exams for students in September which are obviously not going to be one day exam like a competition exam, the students will be faced with the problem of finding temporary accommodation to appear for exams.

3. Attempting exams on the dysfunctional online platform provided by DU is impossible for some students' and onerous for others. The court has already been apprised of the blatant errors which had riddled the mock exams organised by the DU administration, which bears repetition. Some students were unable to access the portal (due to vital credentials not being supplied). Uploading the answer scripts proved to be another insurmountable challenge, with unresponsive servers crashing abruptly. Uploading a massive number of sheets in a short span of time further proved to be a herculean task and was fraught with chances of inducing a grievous error. These difficulties meant that incomplete and incoherent answer sheets were uploaded due to a paucity of time. This will pose a significant challenge to the faculty correcting the manuscripts and they will not be reflective of the quality of the preparation and performance of the students. Finally, the students of Faculty of Law under Delhi University were also aghast to discover that not even one paper belonging to their stream was available for practice on the day of the mock examinations.
4. A few students have also mentioned that they have gotten placed or admitted into post-graduate courses abroad. This requires them to furnish their transcript and degrees before being formalised as employees or students with the respective institutions. Due to the large number of students that need to be evaluated, Delhi University takes about three to four months post exams to release the results. The transcripts and mark-sheets are made available another month after this date. Normally this process ends by early August, allowing students to discharge their obligations to their prospective employers or educational institutions. However since the proposed OBE of final year students are not yet conducted, then this process may stretch to the rear end of the current year jeopardising the future of students.
5. The delays on behalf of the university have prevented students from becoming part of the workforce or augmenting their knowledge by going for higher studies. While some employers have postponed the date of joining, the students are anxious whether they would be able to retain their jobs. Seeing the precarious financial situation prevailing throughout the nation, it would be cruel and disheartening to make the student agonise over their future. Robbing them of the chance to apply what they have learnt and to be remunerated for it is a great disservice to the effort made over the years by them and their well-wishers.

Bearing in mind the difficulties in organising and attempting the exam via the online medium that have been enumerated here, we request the administration to opt for an alternate smoother method of assessment:

1. It is humbly requested that the students be promoted on the basis of the performance in the previous semesters by taking the aggregate score for five semesters and extrapolating them to calculate the marks for the final semester. Those unsatisfied with this arrangement can sit for physical exams later. While final year students stand with their peers in the intermediate years and want exams to be scrapped for all students, they can't rationalise the unfair and discriminatory treatment in the midst of a pandemic wreaking havoc with mankind. These are extraordinary circumstances which have severe economic, social and medical impact, and they are required to be dealt with in a similar manner.
2. If however the university fails to value these concerns and goes ahead with the exams then the students would like the following suggestions to be honoured at the earliest:

- a) The university should allow the respective teachers to grade their students on the basis of internal assignments. This decentralised approach has been relied upon to good effect for partial completion of other subjects, even in the current semester. The University should retain the prerogative of defining an outer deadline before which this exercise should be completed. Further this will save the university and the students from agonising about having to retake or re-appear for the exams on account of having missed or being unable to complete the exams under this setup. They also need to devise a robust mechanism for addressing the grievances of the students which may arise while undergoing this task.
- b) Problem based question paper format can also be adopted as a last resort whereby questions are uploaded on the morning of exam day and answer sheets are submitted by evening via portal and an alternate email in case portal doesn't work so that there is sufficient time for students to put forth any inquiry and cope up with network or electricity issues.

The three-hour window stipulated by University is totally inadequate, insensitive and inconsiderate of issues in conduct of OBE online. This will mitigate the misery that may arise from enforcing unviable time-frames for writing and uploading the answer scripts.

We are confident that this demand is in keeping with the well-intended suggestions made by the UGC in its guidelines issued after its internal deliberations on 6.7.2020 and is also within the bounds of the alternative method of assessment made by the Bar Council of India as part of its press release dated 9.6.2020. Thus the university and the UGC should come up with a viable plan (accommodating the aforementioned suggestions made by the students) and execute it with urgency.

We implore your lordships to address the pending petitions before this court in the light of concerns and suggestions expressed in this letter. Students are the single most important stakeholder in conduct of this OBE and hence, being their representative we request you to consider this representation with utmost seriousness and urgency.

Sincerely,
Campus Law Centre Students' Union 2019-20,
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