

File No. 16-08/2020-DD-III
Government of India
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Dated: 29.04.2020

Subject: Online classes during lockdown period and examination schedule post lockdown by various higher education institutions – protection of rights of persons with disabilities - reg.

The undersigned is directed to say that the Department is in receipt of a representation dated 25.04.2020 from Convener, Javed Abidi Foundation, seeking measures to prevent discrimination against students with disabilities while holding online classes and finalizing examination schedule by various higher education institutions. A copy of the representation received by email is enclosed herewith.

2. It has been alleged that the online classes being conducted by many Universities and academic institutions are not accessible to students with disabilities especially those having visual / hearing / specific learning disabilities. Moreover, majority of students with disabilities being at lower strata of society may not have facility of laptop and internet to avail online classes. It is understood that several Universities and other educational institutions are also planning to announce examination schedule immediately after the lockdown is lifted.

3. Ministry of HRD, Department of Higher Education may issue an appropriate advisory to States/ UTs/ Academic institutions to take measures to ensure that students with disabilities participate equally with others in online classes and also to take into consideration the plight of such students while finalizing the examination schedule.

4. A reply in this regard will be appreciated.

Encls: As above



(K.V.S.Rao)

Director

Tel. No. 24369054

Ministry of HRD, D/o Higher Education

Sh. G.C. Hosur,

Joint Secretary (Central Universities)

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi

Copy to: Mr. Shameer Rishad, Convener Javed Abidi Foundation

Subject: Letter to State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities regarding Students wanting urgent intervention.

To: "comdis.delhi@nic.in" <comdis.delhi@nic.in>
Cc: "secretaryda-msje@nic.in" <secretaryda-msje@nic.in>, "jsda-msje@nic.in" <jsda-msje@nic.in>

Date: 04/25/20 12:23 PM
From: Shameer Rishad <shameer@jaf.org.in>
Reply-To: Shameer Rishad <shameer@jaf.org.in>

Letter for SCPD Tapas.pdf (180kB)

25th April 2020

Dear Respected Commissioner,

Greetings from Javed Abidi Foundation (JAF)!

JAF is a youth advocacy group set up in 2019 as a tribute to Late Shri Javed Abidi, a disability rights activist who worked very hard for the rights of people with disabilities.

As we are all in lockdown and adhering to it very seriously, we are coming across different issues regarding people with disabilities. One such issue was highlighted by one of our volunteers Tapas Bharadwaj.

Talking to Tapas resulted in a discussion about the challenges students with disabilities are facing right now and possible interventions. Please see the attached note in this regard.

Sir, we urge you to read the attached note with the issues that were raised and the suggested interventions. We humbly appeal to your kind office to take cognisance of the key issues and suggested interventions made by us as a priority as each day is critical and kindly issue appropriate orders/directions to the concerned ministries and departments to take prompt action.

Yours respectfully,

Shameer Rishad

Convenor, Javed Abidi Foundation

(shameer@jaf.org.in ,_9811038018)

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Diary No. 10692.....JS(PS)/R/20.20
Dated 28.4.20

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We may write to Dept. of
Higher Education as per DFA
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To the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

25th April 2020

Subject: Request for issuing of an advisory with regard to conducting of accessible online classes and examinations in different universities and colleges, across the country

Dear Sir,

Javed Abidi Foundation, an NGO founded in the memory of Late Shri Javed Abidi. It is involved in empowerment of persons with disabilities across the country and was launched in March 2019. Creating awareness and facilitating advocacy are some of the core activities of the organization.

As you are aware that India is fighting with the widespread Corona disease. Social distancing is believed to be one of the most reliable methods for preventing the disease from spreading further. The 21 days lockdown has been adopted as one of the measures by which the Government of India plans to combat this disease. This lockdown has restricted the movement of people from one place to another which has impacted all of us, including persons with disabilities. Javed Abidi Foundation conducted several discussions via online platform with people having different types of disabilities and it was found that there are many challenges which need to be addressed in time-bound manner. We would like to draw your attention towards the following challenges which are faced by the students with disabilities studying in higher education institutions and we have also made certain suggestions that may help in the reconciliation process.

1. Access to online classes: In this lockdown period online classes are being conducted by many universities. These classes which are being provided are inaccessible for persons with disabilities because of diverse reasons.

The study material which is provided is at times inaccessible because it is either in the image form and no alternative text is provided for the description of the images. The scanned documents are at times not properly scanned or at times not converted via OCR reader. We therefore request you to direct the universities to make sure that the study material which is being provided is accessible for those having visual disabilities and specific learning disabilities.

Students with hearing disabilities are not able to participate as the lectures do not have transcripts and there are no sign language interpreters. We therefore request you to please direct colleges to have sign language interpreters and transcripts for ensuring inclusion of people with hearing and communication disabilities. The list of interpreters can be found at (provide the link)

Some students may not have access to laptops and the internet. Hence, we therefore suggest providing free laptops and internet if the lock down period continues.

Some people with disabilities need individualised support in specific subjects. We request you to please direct colleges to assign teaching assistants to provide the needed support.

2. Examination Schedule: In several universities, exams are being scheduled to take place after the lockdown period gets over. However, when students with disabilities do not have access to the study material or many of them do not even have access to the electronic devices to access the online classes, how will the students prepare for their examination? Due to the lockdown they don't have access to specific organisations which also provide extra assistance to these students, be it for conversion of the material, or extra tutor facilities. Therefore, it is requested that you direct/advise the universities to keep these challenges in mind while releasing the amended date sheets for conducting the examinations. This would also help the students with disabilities to arrange for scribes and other facilities to write the examination in a proper manner.

3. Preventing Discrimination in the name of Social Distancing: It is believed that social distancing is the one and only solution available as of now to control this invisible enemy. Persons with certain disabilities cannot follow this standard operating procedure as they require assistance from caregivers on a day to day basis. It is the concern of many people that once the lockdown period is over, that these people with disabilities should not be subjected to any kind of discrimination in the name of not practising social distancing. Therefore, we request you to kindly issue an advisory/direction making people aware of the fact social distancing should be adopted however in case it is not possible other alternatives should be adopted. Some of the alternatives can be wearing of gloves, using hand sanitizers, etc.

We request you to urgently issue appropriate guidelines/advisory/directions for making sure that persons with disabilities are not discriminated against in carrying forward the above mentioned practices so that the rights & entitlements provided as per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016 can be realized in its truest sense.

\Yours Sincerely,

Tapas Bharadwaj

Volunteer Javed Abidi Foundation,