

File No. 22-07/2020-DD-III
Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi.

Dated: 09th June, 2020

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th June, 2020 at 11:00 AM through Video Conferencing regarding online examination being conducted by various academic institutions during COVID 19 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, DEPwD, New Delhi.

The undersigned is directed to enclose herewith a copy of the minutes of the above meeting held under the Chairmanship of Secretary, DEPwD on 08.06.2020 through video conference for information and necessary action.

Encl: As above



(K.V.S. Rao)

Director

Tel: 24369054

To:

1. Secretary, D/o Higher Education
2. Secretary, D/o School Education
3. Secretary, UGC
4. Chairman, AICTE
5. Secretary, CBSE
6. Controller of Exams, Delhi University
7. Shri SK Rungta, NFB
8. Shri Dipendra Manocha, NAB
9. Shri S. Narayan, NAD
10. Ms. Merry Barua , Action for Autism
11. Shri Arman Ali, NCPEDP
12. Directors of NIHH, NIVD, SVNIRTAR, NIPEID, NIEPMD

Copy to:

1. PPS to Secretary, DEPwD
2. PPS to JS(PS)

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th June, 2020 at 11:00 AM through Video Conferencing regarding online examination being conducted by various academic institutions during COVID 19 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, DEPwD, New Delhi

List of participants is at **Annexure**.

2. Secretary, DEPwD, while welcoming the participants, stated that an unprecedented situation has arisen due to COVID 19 pandemic. All the schools, colleges, universities and academic institutions have been closed due to pandemic since mid-March, 2020 thereby affecting regular classes and conduct of examination at all levels. The academic institutions, on their own have been taking decisions to continue with the learning process for evaluation of student's performance. When it comes to the students with disabilities, the situation is worse as compared to their counterparts. These students have been facing the following difficulties in attending online classes/prospects of joining online examination:

- Non-availability of laptops/smart phones
- Non-availability of internet/poor network quality.
- Non-availability of accessible study material or online platform (i.e. e-pub or OCR format) and accessible websites as per DAPG circular.

3. The Department has received representations from various quarters, particularly regarding possibilities of conducting examinations from July 2019. In order to take a conscious view on the issues raised in these representations, this meeting has been convened with the stakeholders to elicit their views and suggestions.

4. Issues raised and the decisions taken are summarized below:-

A. Issues Raised:

- i. University of Delhi issued a notification on 04.06.2020 for conducting online examination including that for students with disabilities. These guidelines, *inter-alia*, provide for certain relaxations to persons with disabilities in open book examination such as providing 5 hours time during the examination as against 3 hours duration of the examination for others; provision for own scribe; option for taking examination at nearest CSC. However, the notification of Delhi University does not fully address the concerns of persons with visually impaired, etc.

- ii. Lack of Scribes and inadequate devices particularly in rural areas are major challenges.
- iii. Due to COVID 19 pandemic, the principle of social distancing is to be ensured, as such the scribe for person with disability is likely to violate social distancing.
- iv. Most of the students with disabilities belong to remote villages and hence finding a scribe to match the requirements of the examination is a serious challenge.
- v. The internet quality at village level is very poor. Around 12,000 Panchayats do not have internet connectivity.
- vi. Ensuring accessibility of computer applications at CSC level in every nook and corner of the country is another major challenge.
- vii. CBSE has already decided to exempt the students with disabilities such as visually impaired from taking examination. Some of the University/academic institutions have also decided to do away with semester based examination as a one-time measure for the academic year 2019-20. It has been decided by them to consider performance of the students in the previous and current semester, and allow promoting in the next grade/semester. Some methodology could be adopted for final semester examination for students with disabilities.
- viii. In the absence of dedicated helpline at the University/college/institution level, the students with disabilities are facing difficulties in getting information and guidance.

B. Position as explained by UGC/AICTE/academic institutions:

- i. UGC has issued general advisory to all Universities allowing them to conduct offline/online mode of examination as per their requirement.
- ii. The advisory provides for the University to take utmost care to ensure that not a single student is left out in the process.
- iii. A dedicated helpline at AICTE and UGC has been set up to respond to the queries of students with disabilities.

C. Conclusions arrived at:

- i. Ministry of Human Resource Development, UGC, University, Colleges and academic institutions need to go through the provisions of the RPwD Act, 2016 to understand their role with regard to reasonable accommodation at educational institutions for the purpose of universal education inclusive of students with disabilities of various categories

such as visually impaired, hearing impaired, neuro developmental disabilities, etc.

- ii. The University and academic institutions need to find technological solutions in order to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities in attending online classes as well as examination. Availability of such resources/infrastructure need to be taken into account while evolving such technological solutions.
- iii. Flexibility should be given to university/academic institutions to work out a mechanism based on their local requirements.
- iv. Keeping in view the issues related to non-availability of scribe, poor internet connectivity and the requirement of social distancing norms, UGC may consider issuing revised advisory to all the Universities including Delhi University considering the following in mind:-
 - a. Students with disabilities may be given the option of appearing/not appearing in the online/offline examination;
 - b. Those who do not opt for online/offline examination may be exempted from the examination system and may be evaluated on the basis of their performance in the previous semester and performance in the class test during the current semester;
 - c. To ensure accessibility of information (physical accessibility as well as accessibility of website and documents with disabled friendly software) at the University/College/academic institutions and also accessibility of online examination at the centre; and
 - d. All the Universities/academic institutions may be advised by Ministry of Human Resource Development/UGC to set up dedicated helpline for students with disabilities with sign language interpreter and video calling facilities, etc.

5. Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure

List of the participants in the Video Conference for Video Conference regarding examination being conducted by various academic institutions during COVID 19 held on 8th June, 2020 at 11.00 AM

1. Smt Shakuntala D. Gamlin, Secretary, DEPwD in Chair
2. Shri Prabodh Seth, Joint Secretary, DEPwD
3. Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), New Delhi
4. Prof Rajnish Jain, Secretary, University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi
5. Shri K. V. S. Rao, Director, DEPwD
6. Shri Viswajeet Kumar, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), New Delhi
7. Dr. S.P. Das, Director, NIRTAR, Cuttack
8. Dr. Suni Mathew, Director, AYJNISHD, Mumbai
9. Dr. Himangshu Das, Director NIEPMD, Chennai
10. Sh. B. V. Ram Kumar, Dy. Director NIEPID, Secunderabad
11. Sh. S. K. Dhaliwal, Professor, NIEPVD, Dehradun
12. Dr. Anil Sahastrabudde, Chairman, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi
13. Dr Rajiv Kumar, Member Secretary, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi
14. Shri Manoj Ahuja, Chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi
15. Shri Ravi Katyal, Director, Department of School Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), New Delhi
16. Shri P. Bhaktavatslam, Under Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), New Delhi
17. Shri D. K. Panda, Under Secretary, DEPwD
18. Shri SK Rungta, NFB
19. Shri Dipendra Manocha, NAB
20. Shri S. Narayan, NAD
21. Ms. Merry Barua, Action for Autism
22. Shri Arman Ali, NCPEDP
23. Dr. Nidhi Singhal, Action for Autism