Reserved on 29.04.2026
Delivered on 08.05.2026

HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD

SPECIAL APPEAL No. - 135 of 2026

Consortium of National Law Universities Through its Convenor

…..Appellant(s)

Versus

Avneesh Gupta (Minor) Through His Father and Natural Guardian Shri Atul Gupta

…..Respondent(s)

Along with:-

SPECIAL APPEAL No. - 137 of 2026

Avneesh Gupta Minor

…..Appellant(s)

Versus

Consortium of National Law Universities

…..Respondent(s)

Counsel for Appellant(s)	:	Mr. Ashok Khare, Senior Advocate, Mr. Avneesh Tripathi, Mr. Nishant Mishra
Counsel for Respondent(s)	:	Mr. Nishant Mishra, Mr. Abhinav Gaur, Mr. Vibhu Rai, Mr. Ashok Khare, Senior Advocate, Mr. Avneesh Tripathi

Court No. - 3

HON'BLE SAUMITRA DAYAL SINGH, J.
HON'BLE SWARUPAMA CHATURVEDI, J.

(Per: Swarupama Chaturvedi, J.)

This common order is arranged in accordance with the following index, to facilitate a systematic elucidation of the issues arising for consideration:

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I
Factual Background and Course of Proceedings

1. Both intra-court appeals, namely Special Appeal No. 135 of 2026 and Special Appeal No. 137 of 2026, arise out of the order dated 03.02.2026 passed by the learned Single Judge in *Avneesh Gupta (Minor) vs. Consortium of National Law Universities, Writ C No. 45517 of 2025*. Since both appeals arise from the same order, based upon same factual background, and involve common questions of law, they are being heard and decided together by this common order.

(i) Background Facts

2. The background fact in these special appeals are not in dispute. The Consortium of National Law Universities (hereinafter referred to as ‘Consortium’) conducted the CLAT-UG 2026 examination on 07.12.2025 at various centers across the country. The examination witnessed a participation of 75,009 candidates, with attendance of 96.83%. Question paper comprised five sections, namely English

Language, Current Affairs/ General Knowledge, Legal Reasoning, Logical Reasoning and Quantitative Aptitude. The original writ petitioner, Avneesh Gupta, appeared for the exam in an examination centre in Ghaziabad. It is an undisputed fact that one question came to be withdrawn and the evaluation was consequently carried out for a total of 119 marks.

3. Records demonstrate that a provisional answer key was published on 10.12.2025 inviting objections. The writ petitioner submitted objections on 11.12.2025 in respect of Question Nos. 6, 9 and 13 of Set-C, which correspond to Question Nos. 88, 91 and 95 of Set-A. The objections were examined by subject-wise Expert Committees constituted by the Consortium, which submitted reports on 13.12.2025. Thereafter, the matter was placed before the Oversight Committee, which reviewed objections, and the justification of the paper setters as well as recommendations of the Subject Expert Committees. The Oversight Committee ultimately concluded that the provisional answer key did not warrant any modification. Relying upon the said opinion, the final answer key was published on 16.12.2025 without any change.

4. Aggrieved by the result declared on the basis of the final answer key, the writ petitioner approached this Court by filing Civil Misc. Writ Petition No. 45517 of 2025 under Article 226 of the Constitution. By the judgment and order dated 03.02.2026, learned Single Judge partly allowed the writ petition and directed that for Question No. 9 of Set-C, both options ‘B’ and ‘D’ be treated as correct, with a consequential direction to revise the merit list for subsequent rounds of counselling, while protecting admissions already concluded in the first round.

(ii) Filing of Special Appeals

5. The Consortium, being dissatisfied with the aforesaid direction, has preferred Special Appeal No. 135 of 2026, on the ground that the learned Single Judge was not justified in interfering with the opinion of the expert bodies, particularly when the issue had undergone a two-tier scrutiny culminating in the decision of the Oversight Committee. The

lead appeal, therefore, prays for setting aside the impugned judgment and restoration of the evaluation as finalized by the Consortium.

6. The connected Special Appeal No. 137 of 2026 has been filed by the original writ petitioner, who, while supporting the interference made by the learned Single Judge to the extent it granted partial relief, contends that the relief ought not to have been confined to a single question. Learned counsel submits that Question No. 88 of Set-A (corresponding to Question No. 6 of Set-C) and Question No. 95 of Set-A (corresponding to Question No. 13 of Set-C) also suffered from errors. On that basis, direction is sought for revision of the merit list after awarding appropriate marks for the said questions and for consequential grant of admission.

(iii) Course of Proceedings

7. When the special appeal was heard at the admission stage, this Court *vide* its order dated 20.02.2026, stayed the direction in the impugned order to revise the entire merit list. Relevant paragraphs of the above-mentioned order is reproduced below:

> *"5. To the extent, the course studies would begin in July, 2026, we do not find any occasion to allow for revision of the entire merit list on the strength of single challenge, nor the ongoing counselling that is already over for two stages, may be interfered, at present.*
>
> *6. Thus, pending the present intra-Court appeal, the petitioner may be granted provisional admission at National Law University, Sonipat. It shall remain subject to outcome of the present appeal, which may entitle him admission to a higher/better institution. At the same time, if the petitioner otherwise becomes entitled to admission at any higher institute through upgradation etc. outside this litigation, that benefit may be provided to the petitioner irrespective of the pendency of this appeal.*
>
> *7. Put up as fresh on 09.03.2026 for final disposal, showing the name of Sri Nishant Mishra, as counsel for the respondent.*

8. The direction of the learned single judge to revise the entire merit list based on the Expert Opinion shall remain stayed."

8. Pursuant to the said order, the operation of the judgment and order dated 03.02.2026 passed by the learned Single Judge remained stayed to the extent indicated therein. The present appeals are, therefore, being decided in the backdrop of the said interim arrangement which governed the implementation of the impugned judgment during their pendency.

9. Further, when these appeals were listed for the final hearing, this Court considered it necessary to understand the genesis of expert committee and Oversight Committee and to explain the query in detail, learned counsel for the consortium prayed for and granted time to file supplementary affidavit.

10. In compliance of order dated 13.04.2026 the affidavit got filed on by Consortium which brought clarity on status of committees, where **i**t was clarified that the Subject Expert Committee and Oversight Committee are constituted each year by the CLAT Convenor, acting under authority delegated by the Executive Committee. While there is no provision in bye-laws explicitly mandating the creation of these specific committees, they are formed as a matter of healthy academic and institutional practice to ensure accuracy in academic function.

11. It appears from the above mentioned affidavit that the basis for forming these committees on three provisions within the Consortium's Bye-Laws, *i.e.* Clause 13.3, which allows the Executive Committee to delegate necessary powers to the CLAT Convenor for the smooth conduct of the exam, Clause 7.3.5, which empowers the Executive Committee (and by delegation, the Convenor) to take all "necessary and consequential actions" to conduct the CLAT, and Clause 7.3.7, which grants the authority to determine the exam pattern and improve the quality of the question paper. The Subject Expert Committee is formed post-examination after the publication of the Provisional Answer Key,

while the Oversight Committee is constituted in parallel to review the Subject Expert Committee's findings and resolve any disputes.

12. Thereafter, the matter was taken up for further hearing on 29.04.2026, during which learned counsel for the parties advanced their respective submissions in detail. Upon conclusion of the arguments, the judgment was reserved for the pronouncement.

II
Impugned Judgment and Findings

13. Learned single judge in the impugned order held that in exercise of jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, the High Court would have territorial jurisdiction where the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises, notwithstanding the seat of the authority being elsewhere.

14. The impugned order further observed that the Court would not be precluded from examining the correctness of the answer key in an appropriate case. Accordingly, the learned Single Judge directed the appellant Consortium of National Law Universities, who was respondent in writ, to revise the merit list by awarding marks in respect of Question No. 9 of Set-C, and to re-notify the revised merit list within a period of one month.

15. The learned Single Judge further observed that since the first round of counselling had already been concluded, candidates who had already been admitted pursuant to the said round shall not be disturbed. However, for subsequent rounds of counselling, the revised and re-notified merit list was directed to be acted upon.

16. In reaching the above conclusion, learned single judge has placed reliance on the decisions of the Supreme Court in ***Ran Vijay Singh Vs. State of U.P. (2018) 2 SCC 357***, ***Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission Vs. Rahul Singh (2018) 7 SCC 254***, and ***Disha Panchal Vs. Union of India AIR 2018 SC 2824***, and emphasized that while the courts generally refrain from re-evaluating answer sheets, interference may be warranted where the answer key is demonstrably incorrect.

III
Submissions on behalf of the Parties

17. Mr. Ashok Khare, learned Senior Advocate, assisted by Mr. Avneesh Tripathi, learned counsel appearing for the Consortium of National Law Universities in Special Appeal No. 135 of 2026, submitted that learned Single Judge has erred in law in interfering with the final answer key of the CLAT-UG 2026 examination. However, Mr. Khare submitted that the objection regarding territorial jurisdiction is not pressed by the appellant.

18. It was further submitted by Mr. Khare that the final answer key was prepared after a structured two-tier scrutiny process involving subject experts at the initial stage and a duly constituted Oversight Committee at the subsequent stage. The Oversight Committee affirmed the correctness of the provisional answer key upon due consideration of objections and other relevant material.

19. Mr. Khare further urged on behalf of the Consortium that in academic matters, particularly in the field of evaluation of answers, the scope of judicial review is extremely limited. He submitted that Courts, ought not to substitute their own opinion for that of expert bodies unless the decision was shown to be wholly unsustainable. It was therefore contended that the direction to treat multiple options as correct answer for Question No. 9 of Set-C is unsustainable in law and has the effect of unsettling a duly concluded academic evaluation process.

20. On the other hand, Mr. Nishant Mishra, learned counsel appearing for the respondent in the lead appeal and for the appellant in the connected appeal, who is also the original writ petitioner, submitted that learned Single Judge has erred in not providing complete relief to the appellant despite having noticed infirmities in the answer key.

21. It was contended by Mr. Mishra that errors are not confined to Question No. 9 of Set-C, but also extend to Question Nos. 6 and 13 of Set-C, which, according to the original writ petitioner, suffer from error apparent on the face of the record. It was urged that the jurisdiction of

this Court under Article 226 is not excluded in cases where answers are demonstrably incorrect. It was submitted that judicial review, though limited in academic matters, extends to correcting manifest errors to ensure fairness, and integrity in the selection process.

22. It was further contended that respect for expert opinion cannot prevent correction where the mistake is clear on the face of the record and directly affects merit and ranking. According to learned counsel, candidates cannot be left without remedy merely because the evaluation had been undertaken by expert bodies. It is, therefore, prayed that appropriate directions be issued for revision of the rank-cum-merit list after awarding marks for the disputed questions, along with consequential admission based on the revised evaluation.

IV
Points for Consideration

23. Upon perusal of the record and after hearing learned counsel appearing for the respective parties at length, following points arise for our consideration in both appeals:

(a) Under which circumstances and up to what extent Courts can go into the merits of academic decisions taken by expert bodies.

(b) Whether final key answer of Question Nos. 6, 9 and 13 of Set-C, are correct or interference is warranted in any of these questions.

(c) Whether learned Single Judge was justified in the impugned order, having regard to the limited scope of the judicial review in academic matters relating to evaluation and answer keys.

V
Scope of Judicial Review in Academic Matters

24. The scope of judicial review in matters concerning evaluation of answer script in examinations is very limited and guided by well-

established principles. Supreme Court has consistently recognized that issues relating to the correctness of answers, and the evaluation standards fall within the domain of concerned academic professionals, who possess the requisite expertise in the subject. Interference in an examination result under the Article 226, is therefore warranted only in exceptional circumstances, such as manifest error apparent on the face of the record. At this juncture, we proceed to refer to judgments of the Supreme Court which lay down the governing principles.

25. The first judgment that may be taken guidance from in this regard is ***Ran Vijay Singh Vs. State of U.P., (2018) 2 SCC 357***, wherein the Supreme Court explained the limited scope of interference in matters relating to academic evaluation. Relevant observation in above-mentioned judgement is reproduced below:

> *"30. The law on the subject is therefore, quite clear and we only propose to highlight a few significant conclusions. They are:*
>
> *30.1. If a statute, Rule or Regulation governing an examination permits the re-evaluation of an answer sheet or scrutiny of an answer sheet as a matter of right, then the authority conducting the examination may permit it;*
>
> *30.2. If a statute, Rule or Regulation governing an examination does not permit re-evaluation or scrutiny of an answer sheet (as distinct from prohibiting it)* ***then the court may permit re-evaluation or scrutiny only if it is demonstrated very clearly, without any "inferential process of reasoning or by a process of rationalization" and only in rare or exceptional cases that a material error has been committed****;*
>
> *30.3. The court should not at all re-evaluate or scrutinise the answer sheets of a candidate—it has no expertise in the matter and academic matters are best left to academics;*
>
> *30.4.* ***The court should presume the correctness of the key answers and proceed on that assumption; and***
>
> *30.5.* ***In the event of a doubt, the benefit should go to the examination authority rather than to the candidate****."*
>
> *(emphasis supplied)*

26. The next decision that may also be referred to is ***Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission Vs. Rahul Singh, (2018) 7 SCC 254*****,** wherein the Supreme Court emphasised that the burden of demonstrating any error in the answer key rests squarely on the candidate challenging it. The Court observed that academic evaluation is primarily within the domain of expert bodies, and judicial interference is warranted only in cases of clearly demonstrable error. The relevant observations are reproduced hereunder:

> *"12. The law is well settled that* ***the onus is on the candidate to not only demonstrate that the key answer is incorrect but also that it is a glaring mistake which is totally apparent and no inferential process or reasoning is required to show that the key answer is wrong****. The constitutional courts must exercise great restraint in such matters and should be reluctant to entertain a plea challenging the correctness of the key answers…*
>
> *13. As far as the present case is concerned, even before publishing the first list of key answers the Commission had got the key answers moderated by two Expert Committees. Thereafter, objections were invited and a 26-member Committee was constituted to verify the objections and after this exercise the Committee recommended that 5 questions be deleted and in 2 questions, key answers be changed. It can be presumed that these Committees consisted of experts in various subjects for which the examinees were tested. Judges cannot take on the role of experts in academic matters.* ***Unless, the candidate demonstrates that the key answers are patently wrong on the face of it, the courts cannot enter into the academic field****, weigh the pros and cons of the arguments given by both sides and then come to the conclusion as to which of the answers is better or more correct."*
>
> *(emphasis supplied)*

27. The law relating to judicial interference in matters of academic evaluation is well-settled. The Supreme Court in ***Ran Vijay Singh (supra),*** and ***Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (Supra)*** held

that courts should exercise restraint in matters involving evaluation of answer keys and should not act as appellate authorities over expert opinions. It has been emphasised that re-evaluation or scrutiny by courts is impermissible unless the error is manifest, demonstrable on the face of the record, and such as would vitiate the entire evaluation process.

28. The issue regarding CLAT examination has also travelled till Supreme Court in ***Siddhi Sandeep Ladda Vs. Consortium of National Law Universities and Another, 2025 SCC OnLine SC 1144***, where it was observed that:

> *"8. Insofar as the present appeals are concerned, at the outset, we must state that* ***in academic matters, the Courts are generally reluctant to interfere****, inasmuch as they do not possess the requisite expertise for the same. However,* ***when the academicians themselves act in a manner that adversely affects the career aspirations of lakhs of students, the Court is left with no alternative but to interfere****."*
>
> *(emphasis supplied)*

29. In ***Siddhi Sandeep Ladda (supra),*** the Supreme Court analysed questions and interfered with the answer, and held that in order to put all the candidates on equal footing, Question No. 116 be deleted from all the Sets as well. This settles the law regarding not only having the scope of judicial review in evaluation of examination, but it also settles that the outcome shall not only benefit the candidate, who has approached the Court but it also gets extended to every candidate participated in the same examination in all fairness whenever there is an apparent error on the face of it.

30. Above discussion establishes that judicial review is not completely excluded in examination and evaluation matters, where the answer key is shown to be patently incorrect or where there is an apparent error affecting the fairness of the selection process. However, only limited interference may be required to ensure that the process does not suffer from arbitrariness and therefore facts of each such cases require careful perusal.

31. Having considered view that the scope of interference in academic matters is available yet limited, it becomes necessary to examine the correctness of the reasoning adopted by the Expert Committees and the Oversight Committee in relation to the disputed questions, as well as the basis on which the learned Single Judge has differed from the said expert opinion. For this purpose, the relevant questions, the answers as notified in the final answer key, and the reasons recorded by the Subject Expert Committee as well as the Oversight Committee, as placed on record through the counter affidavit and annexures, are being considered herein below.

VI
Analysis of Questions

32. Having regard to the legal principles governing judicial restraint in academic matters, the disputed questions are examined after careful perusal of the question paper, answer key, and experts opinion placed on record.

(i) Question No. 6 Set-C

33. Facts on which the disputed question no.6 is based is reproduced below for the easy reference:

> *"In a language laboratory, students were given an interesting puzzle involving the word"ELECTROCARDIOGRAPH." The teacher explained that such exercises not only test logical skills but also sharpen attention to detail. According to the challenge, the word had to undergo a series of transformations. First, the class was asked to take the first half of the letters, reverse their order and make the arrangement of letters look quite different from the original. Next, the students were told to identify the last but one letter of the original word and place it at the very beginning, a step that changed the opening appearance of the sequence completely. Finally, as a finishing touch, they had to add the letter 'S' at the end. Following these steps carefully would lead them to the correct transformed word, and only those who*

adhered to each condition in the exact order could solve the puzzle successfully."

…

6. *Which letter is prefixed to the word after the first half is reversed?*

(A) G *(B) P*

(C) H *(D) S"*

34. The dispute in Question No. 6 is essentially based on the interpretation of the sequence of transformations prescribed in the above passage. The answer of the question varies if one reads only one step and decides the answer or if one reads all steps and thereafter decides the answer.

35. The question, *i.e.*, which letter is prefixed to the word after the first half is reversed, cannot be read in isolation from the subsequent directions, as the passage expressly indicates that only those who follow each condition in the exact order arrive at the correct transformed word. When the sequence is applied in its entirety and the intermediate stages are properly understood in that context, the prefixed letter can be correctly identified. The answer indicated by the examiner, Option (B) "P", is consistent with such a structured and contextual reading of the problem.

36. The objection filed by the original writ petitioner proceeds on a fragmented interpretation, isolating one step without appreciating the cumulative design of the exercise. Such an approach is misconceived.

37. In our considered view, holistic reading of the question makes it clear that the exercise is not confined to a single step in isolation, but requires comprehension of the cumulative effect of the stated operations, while strictly adhering to the order in which they are to be applied. Accordingly, we find no error in the answer key and holds that the answer provided by the examiner to Question No. 6 is correct.

(ii) Question No. 9 Set-C

38. Two questions, namely 9 and 13 in Booklet C, whose answers are in dispute, are based on common facts provided in the question paper. These facts are reproduced below for proper appreciation of the background on which the answers were to be based:

> *"On the night of October 12th, the "Sunburst Medallion" was stolen from the highly secured display case in the city museum. The theft occurred sometime between the museum closing at 10:00 PM and the night guard, Mr. Hemant, completing his final round at 1:00 AM.Three primary suspects were identified, all of whom had recently been dismissed from their museum positions: Anjali, the former curator; Bharat, the former security expert; and Chitra, the former exhibits designer.*
>
> *Here are the established facts and their alibis:*
>
> ** The security system logs show that the display case was opened using a specific five-digit code, which only Anjali and the museum director (who was out of the country) knew.*
>
> ** Bharat's alibi is that he was at a distant relative's birthday party from 8:00 PM to 1:30 AM. Multiple independent witnesses confirmed his presence throughout the entire period.*
>
> ** Chitra's alibi is that she was working late at a downtown graphic design studio. A time-stamped security camera from the studio's entrance shows her entering at 7:00 PM and exiting at 11:45 PM. The studio is a 20-minute drive from the museum.*
>
> ** Mr. Hemant, the night guard, stated he checked the medallion at 10:30 PM, and it was still there. Further investigation revealed that a small, distinctive silver button was found near the display case. Anjali is known to frequently wear a coat with similar unique silver buttons. The security expert, Bharat, had previously boasted that he could remotely disable a certain type of magnetic lock-the same type used on the medallion's case-without needing the code, though the log suggests the code was used."*

39. Question No. 9 Booklet C is reproduced below, which is to be answered based upon facts reproduced in above paragraph:

"Deduction and Contradictory Evidence

If the theft was committed by Bharat, which established fact must be incorrect, based on the provided information?

(A) The medallion was present at 10:30 PM

(B) The security logs indicating the code was used

(C) The museum closing time of 10:00 PM

(D) The time frame of his alibi (8:00 PM to 1:30 AM)"

40. Above question presents a hypothetical outcome on the basis of given facts, *i.e.*, Bharat has committed the theft and requires identification of the established fact that must necessarily be incorrect for such a hypothesis to hold good. The material placed on record unequivocally establishes that Bharat's *alibi* is supported by multiple independent witnesses confirming his presence at a different location throughout the relevant time period, *i.e.*, from 8:00pm to 1:30am. If, notwithstanding the same, Bharat is assumed to be the perpetrator, the inevitable consequence is that the stated time frame of his *alibi* cannot be correct.

41. No other options carry the same degree of logical conclusion without importing any fact or presumptions, and do not necessarily negate the hypothesis. Therefore, the only fact that must necessarily be incorrect, if Bharat is to be treated as the offender, is the time frame of his *alibi*. Therefore, the answer indicated by the examiner, *i.e.*, Option (D), is in consonance with settled principles of deductive reasoning. The contrary view taken by the Oversight Committee, which aligns with the original writ petitioner's contention, fails to appreciate this necessity to eliminate all true facts, and is therefore unsustainable. Accordingly, the answer provided by the examiner to Question No. 9 is correct in our view.

(iii) Question No. 13 Set-C

42. Question No. 13 Booklet C is reproduced below, which is also required to be answered on the basis of facts given in para 36 of this order:

"Assessing Necessary Conditions

What condition is necessary for Chitra to have stolen the medallion?

(A) She must know the five digit code

(B) She must have left the graphic design studio before 11.45 pm

(C) The theft must have occurred after she left the studio and before 1 am

(D) She must have worked with Anjali to disable the locks."

43. Question No. 13 requires identification of a necessary condition for Chitra to have committed the theft on the basis of the common factual background given above. The undisputed facts show that Chitra remained at the graphic design studio from 7:00 pm until 11:45 pm, and that the theft occurred within the broader window between 10:00 pm and 1:00 am. Given this timeline, it is evident that Chitra could not have committed the theft prior to 11:45 pm. Consequently, for her involvement, the theft must necessarily have taken place after she left the studio and before the night guard's final round at 1:00 am.

44. This requirement of timing is essential and is the minimum condition to support the possibility of her involvement. The other options suggested in the question, including knowledge of the access code or collaboration with another suspect, may be relevant considerations but do not constitute necessary conditions in the strict logical sense. Therefore, the answer indicated by the examiner, Option (C), is the only condition that must necessarily be satisfied. The objection raised by the petitioner is devoid of merit, and the examiner's answer to Question No. 13 is correct in our view.

VII
Discussion and Analysis

45. Having considered the rival submissions and the material placed on record, and finding on all disputed questions in above paragraphs, we proceed to examine points before us for the consideration in the present appeals in the light of the settled principles governing judicial review in

academic matters, particularly in the context of evaluation of answer keys in competitive examinations.

46. On the scope and extent of judicial review in academic decisions, it is well-settled that in matters relating to academic evaluation, the scope of interference under Article 226 of the Constitution is available under very narrow compass. Courts do not act as appellate authorities over the decisions of subject experts although indulgence can be given when interference is warranted in exceptional cases where the error is demonstrable on the face of the record.

47. The principles established by the Supreme Court also recognise that while answer keys are prepared with due care and expertise, the possibility of human error cannot be entirely ruled out. It is for this reason that the system of publishing provisional answer keys and inviting objections has been evolved as a matter of fair practice. Such objections are examined by subject experts, and corrections, wherever found necessary, are incorporated before finalisation of the answer key. This institutional mechanism is intended to ensure transparency and accuracy in the evaluation process.

48. In ***Ran Vijay Singh (supra),*** the Supreme Court emphasised that courts must exercise restraint in academic matters and should not substitute their own views for that of expert bodies. The consistent view of the Supreme Court in ***Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (Supra)*** and ***Siddhi Sandeep Ladda (supra)*** makes it clear that where the answer adopted by the expert body is a plausible and reasonable view, interference is not warranted merely because another interpretation may also be possible.

49. The legal position, therefore, is that the judicial review in such matters is not prohibited but it is to be confined to examining whether the decision making in finalizing key answer suffers from manifest error. The Court cannot enter into an exercise of alternative interpretation of questions.

50. On the point of validity of answers to Questions Nos. 6, 9 and 13 of Set-C, it is relevant to note that the Consortium of National Law Universities has placed on record that the evaluation process involved scrutiny at multiple levels, including examination by subject experts and further review by an Oversight Committee constituted as customary practice to ensure accuracy and fairness and in the conduct of the examination.

51. The record indicates that the process of finalisation of the answer key, has undergone a structured and layered scrutiny mechanism. Such an exercise by experts in the related field establishes a strong presumption of correctness, particularly in academic matters, unless a clear and demonstrable error is established.

52. Upon examination of Questions Nos. 6, 9 and 13 of Set-C, we find that the answers accepted as final, is plausible and reasonable interpretation of the questions. Submissions as well as records could not demonstrate that the answers suffer from any patent error or that they are such that no reasonable expert could have arrived at them.

53. In such circumstances, we are of the considered view that no interference is warranted with respect to the answer key pertaining to Questions Nos. 6, 9 and 13 of Set-C.

54. In so far as the justification of the learned Single Judge’s interference in one of the answer and merit list is concerned, the learned Single Judge proceeded to interfere with the evaluation and directed modification of the answer key in respect of Question No. 9 of Set-C, however, in view of the limited scope of judicial review in academic matters, such interference can be justified only if the answer is shown to be demonstrably incorrect or wholly unreasonable.

55. The settled position of law makes it clear that courts must refrain from substituting their own opinion in place of that of subject experts. Even where two views are possible, the view taken by the final academic authority must ordinarily prevail, provided it is a plausible view based on academic reasoning.

56. In the present case, the answers adopted by the consortium fall within the realm of a reasonable academic interpretation. There is nothing on record to suggest that in between expert committee and Oversight Committee one was above other as per the main consortium documents and both committees are comprising of experts and established in due course of time as a matter of practice to ensure accuracy.

57. The institutional mechanism adopted by the Consortium, involving subject experts and an Oversight Committee, reflects a structured and reasoned approach to finalisation of the answer key. Such determinations, having been arrived at after due academic scrutiny, ought not to be unsettled in the absence of compelling and demonstrable error.

58. In that view of the matter, the interference by the learned Single Judge, though well-intentioned, does not align with the settled parameters governing judicial review in academic matters.

59. For the above reasons, this Court finds no justification for judicial interference with the impugned evaluation process in the facts of the matter and in the light of above analysis of each disputed questions.

VIII
Order

60. Accordingly, Special Appeal No. **135 of 2026 is allowed** and the judgment and order dated 03.02.2026 passed by the learned Single Judge is **set aside**. Special Appeal No**. 137 of 2026** stands **dismissed**.

61. No order as to costs.

(Swarupama Chaturvedi,J.)

I agree.

(Saumitra Dayal Singh,J.)

May 08, 2026
#Vikram/-