

July 19, 2013

To the Academic Council
West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences,

Dear Honourable Members of the Council,

Subject: Expression of discontent over deteriorating quality of faculty and other academic irregularities

On behalf of the students of NUJS, it is with immense disappointment and anguish that we write this letter to all of you highlighting various issues plaguing our University and causing a rapid decline in academic standards.

Loss of Faculty:

We believe that the role and importance of quality faculty in the growth and reputation of any institution need not have to be stated much. In the recent past, NUJS has consistently been acknowledged for having the best faculty amongst all the law schools in the country. Every year, hundreds of students join this institution in the hope of being taught by India's finest legal minds and being guided towards excellence in various spheres of law. As a result of the efforts of such guiding stars, in a very short span, NUJS had phenomenally emerged as an institute of repute across the globe, largely owing to the excellence of the faculty and their extraordinary efforts beyond the normal calls of duty. As a testament to this fact, we attach herewith several media articles which acknowledged the competence of our faculty. Such documents are marked as **Annexure "A."**

However, since the beginning of the last calendar year, a disturbing trend of attrition has been observed due to which we have been deprived of learning from some of the best faculty members, who our seniors were fortunate to learn from. The outcome of such good faculty can be felt throughout the legal fraternity where our alumni hold various respectable positions. In the recent past, almost nine distinguished faculty members have either left their positions for other offers or are on leave for higher studies or other commitments. We attach herewith the names of the faculty

members who have left the University or have been on leave for a considerable number of years. This document is marked as **Annexure “B.”**

It is most surprising to note that in spite of these vacancies, we have not been able to commensurately fill up the vacant slots. Consequently, we are left with an acute shortage of good faculty members and the teaching standards have fallen drastically from previous years.

It is particularly shocking to note that we have a woefully short number of permanent faculty members, very few visiting faculties and no emeritus professors. We believe that the problem is two pronged. Not only is it becoming curiously difficult for a prestigious institution like ours to retain its best faculty, but its inability to find suitable replacements is even more tragic. A natural consequence of this problem has been that many a time, teachers are compelled to double up for courses that are not their area of specialization or are overburdened with too many courses.

We would especially like to point out that the past tradition of new appointees being made to present a paper before the entire faculty has been discontinued. As a result, the new appointees are not going through a reasonable screening process before they are being inducted. Admittedly, any educational institution has a mix of teachers whom the students think are excellent and inspiring and those who are not so much. Unfortunately, the growing opinion amongst the student body is that NUJS is now being filled up by the latter category.

Recent Faculty Recruits:

We would also like to bring to your notice that the most recent faculty recruitments that have been undertaken have been such as to arouse suspicion, on account of the transparency and quality of the recruits, both of which we find lacking. It may be pertinent to note here that an LL.M. student in the university (who has not yet obtained his LLM) has been entrusted with the daunting task of teaching two specialized courses to the senior batches, one of which is a compulsory course, namely banking law. He has already begun taking classes and teaches around 12 hours a week in two subjects. This fact exemplifies the extent of paucity of faculty members in the university. In another instance, the fifth year students are being taught by a teacher who is legally not allowed to teach law in any University in India.

It is suspected that recent teacher recruitments have not taken place as per the required norms. There was no proper advertisement given in the newspapers or the website. Advertisements for teacher recruitments must be made in such manner so as to attract the best legal minds from across the country, which has clearly been missing in the recent faculty appointments.

While the situation here continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate, it is being observed that other universities are recruiting top notch faculty members aggressively with enviable academic records. **Annexure “C,” “D” and “E”** provide the details of the faculty recruitment undertaken by NALSAR, NLU-Delhi and NLU Jodhpur respectively in the previous academic year alone. In comparison, NUJS has barely added to the large number of vacancies, neither has it made attempts to bring on campus the best legal professionals to impart education. This has also dampened NUJS’s reputation in the legal circle in the last few years.

Elective/Optional Courses

Our University also holds the unique distinction of pioneering an extremely versatile and innovative model of imparting education in the form of various elective courses, allowing a student ample opportunity to nurture his talent by pursuing his areas of interest and gaining an expertise in them. This arrangement has subsequently been incorporated in a number of law schools in India. However, despite such a glorious beginning, we now find ourselves in a position where the choice of optional subjects is down to an unprecedented low and we barely have electives to choose from. What was seen as an extremely progressive mechanism has now become a reason for students’ opting for courses they have no interest in. This problem can again be attributed to the fact that we have lost several extremely distinguished faculty members who offered a wide variety of elective courses. The present batches of students are witnessing a steady decline in the academic standards due to lack of adequate faculty recruitments and the improper quality of the recruitments. Students have been arbitrarily informed through e-mail that their elective or compulsory courses shall not be taken by the regular faculty members, but on the contrary by newcomers with no demonstrable teaching experience and who’ve not been put through any rigorous screening process.

The elective courses at NUJS were supplemented by diverse credit courses from not only professors all over the world, but also by several of our alumni and other litigators and people working in law firms. In a semester, there were no less than ten such credit courses offered. Sadly, such courses

from diverse individuals are now rarely offered. The joy of learning from professors who have taught at the best universities in the world sitting in Kolkata is something that only the batches that have graduated can boast of.

Transparency Issues and Lack of Redressal:

Additionally, we would like to bring another serious matter to your attention. There is absolutely no transparency with respect to academic matters. In order to inform the authorities of our grievances, we filed a petition with the Vice Chancellor, enlisting all the details. This petition was submitted on the 15th of March 2013 and as per Clause 9(9) of the West Bengal University of Juridical Sciences Act, 1999, these grievances ought to have been presented before the Executive Council. We did not get any response from the Vice Chancellor's office. We are including a copy of the aforementioned petition as **ANNEXURE F**. Another connected petition was submitted to the Vice Chancellor, pointing out grave discrepancies in the assessment of answer scripts in the monsoon semester of 2013 and demanding consultation and reassessment of answer scripts among other irregularities. This petition is included as **ANNEXURE G**.

Another petition, regarding the arbitrary, unfair manner of allocating elective courses was filed with the Vice Chancellor on 8th July 2013. It has been included as **ANNEXURE H**. Once again, there was no response from the Authorities and the same 'first come first serve via email' basis used for allocation persists even now. We strongly believe that this college is not just for the rich and privileged with sophisticated smart phones that can access emails and send emails immediately and gain the benefit of first come first served policies. It is also meant to represent many of us who have no access to such devices. This policy is discriminatory and effectively prevents poorer students to effectively opt for elective subjects, which are instrumental in advancing their careers prospects.

Further, it is pertinent to note that most of the decisions made with respect to issues like plagiarism and project submissions are not only unreasonable but are carried out in the most arbitrary and ad hoc manner. What is even worse is that there is absolutely no grievance redressal mechanism and students are made to run from pillar to post, having to endure long and painstaking hours before a decision is arrived at. Students charged with plagiarism are not informed if their appeals have been considered even as late as one day before the end semester exam and it has also happened that at

times, the result of the plagiarism inquiry has been conveyed only after the student has written the exam.

We urge you to treat this matter with utmost urgency and act upon it in a way that can restore NUJS to its former glory of boasting the best faculty in the country.

Thanking you,

(On behalf of the entire student body of NUJS)

Yours sincerely,

Akshat Gupta

(President, SJA)

Adithya Iyer

(Vice-President, SJA)

Copy to: Executive Council members.