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JNU faculty guides excess PhD students

600 professors guide 5,219 students in various fields, but UGC guideline says they can only enroll 4,000 in all

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New Delhi: Early this year when Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) decided to massively cut down its seats for MPhil/PhD, there was uproar amongst the students and teachers. The decision was taken after JNU was instructed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to restrict the maximum number of students that a faculty member can guide.

The number of MPhil/PhD seats in JNU came down drastically from 1174 to 194 seats in this year's prospectus.

In JNU currently there are over 600 faculty members and the number of students enrolled in PhD courses are 5,219. But if the UGC rule is followed only around 4,000 students can pursue PhD in the university. Currently each faculty member is guiding more students than the limit fixed by UGC.

When it comes to the student versus faculty ratio here, JNU is the worst compared to other prominent central universities like Delhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Hyderabad University and Aligarh Muslim University.

As per the guidelines of UGC released on May 2, 2016, a professor can guide upto eight PhD students, an associate professor upto six, and an assistant professor upto four. In JNU currently there are 316 professors, 156 associate professors and 175 assistant professors, who can guide around 4,000 students. The number of students currently enrolled for PhD courses in JNU is however exceeding by 1,000 students and after the admission of new batch, the numbers will further go up.

"We are aware that faculty strength is less in JNU. We have already given advertisement for filling up 300 posts. It is not possible that we will get candidates for all 300," said an official in JNU.

On the contrary, the same UGC rule when applied on other universities will give them a chance to add more seats for PhD. Allahabad University has a faculty strength of 347 and the number of students pursuing PhD currently are 328. If the UGC rule is applied here, the university can actually expand the number of seats. Similar is the case with Jamia Millia Islamia where there are 689 faculty members and over 1000 PhD students. For DU where over 3,000 students are pursuing PhD, the faculty strength is over 800, which will be accordance to the UGC rule. "The idea behind fixing a cap on students per faculty member is to improve the quality of research. Except JNU, all other varsities are already following the ratio of 4-5 students under one supervisor for PhD. Since JNU has less number of faculty members the ratio was skewed up in the university. Hence the cutting down of MPhil/PhD seats should be seen as a positive move. Once more faculty is recruited, the balance will be restored," said a senior HRD Ministry official.

SKEWED RATIO

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- 3 Since JNU has less number of faculty members the ratio was skewed up in the University. The number of students enrolled in PhD courses are 5,219