

In the Pakistan Information Commission, Islamabad

Appeal No. 097-08/19

Sajid Mehmood

(Appellant)

VS

National University of Modern Languages

(Respondents)

Date: 11.02.2020

Fawad Malik. Information commissioner

A. APPEAL

1. The brief facts of the appeal are that Sajid Mehmood (appellant) filed an application to the Head of Department, Faculty of Languages, National University of Modern Languages (Respondent) on 04.03.2019, seeking following information under the Right of Access to Information Act 2017.

“1. Please provide me the minutes of my defence along with the remarks of my examiners.

2. Please provide me all the rules with reference to PhD degree formulated by the University.”

3. Later on 20.08.2019 appellant filed an appeal before the Commission with the assertion that the University did not respond and failed to provide him the requested information. In the appeal he asked for the following information:-

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1. *Which of the answers given by me during the defence were not satisfactory?*
2. *In which area of my thesis, I could not defend myself?*
3. *How does my research not deserve PhD degree?*
4. *On what grounds, my thesis was not approved by the defence committee?*
5. *I need the minutes of my defence in details based on the remarks of every member of the defence committee, the questions asked by the examiners and the answers given by me.*

Moreover, I have requested the university to provide me the policy/rules about PhD degree. Specifically, I need the information based on the answers of the following questions for which I have already requested the university.

- .6. *Why did the defence committee offer me MPhil instead of PhD?*
7. *What were the remarks of my supervisor about my work given to the thesis defence committee?*
8. *On what grounds a PhD candidate can be awarded PhD degree. Please inform me about the criteria of success and failure in PhD program.*
9. *What is the criterion of selecting examiners for PhD candidates in English literature and linguistics?*
10. *On what grounds, a PhD candidate can be suggested either major or minor changes in their respective dissertations.*
11. *Please provide me with the updated profiles/CVs of my examiners.*
 - a) *Dr. Akhtar Aziz, Assistant Professor, Department of English, International Islamic University Islamabad*
 - b) *Dr. Amna Saeed, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Humanities, COMSATS, Islamabad*

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- c) *Dr. Humaira Ahmad, Professor Department of English NUML, Islamabad*
 - d) *How many theses, each of them has evaluated up till now?*
 - e) *How many PhD scholars, each of them has supervised?.*
12. *Please provide me with the minutes of the in-house discussion of the review committee meeting held on 19th February 2019. In this regard, I need the following information.*
- a) *Why was the decision about my defence reviewed?*
 - b) *What issues regarding my thesis and the defence were raised and discussed?*
 - c) *What was the opinion of my supervisor about my research work?*
 - d) *How was my case presented?*
 - e) *Who were the participants in the committee and What were their respective opinions?*
 - f) *What was the yardstick to review the decision of the defence committee?*
 - g) *Why was the decision of the defence committee honoured and sustained by the review committee?*
13. *Why did the university not decide before the foreign evaluation that whether my thesis is appropriate for MPhil or PhD?*
14. *Similarly, please provide me with the detailed minutes of the BASR meeting held on 12th April, 2019 along with the complete information relevant to the questions raised above.*
15. *If the examiners are not fair in the evaluation of PhD thesis and its defence, what can a candidate do? Does HEC or the university take any notice of poor evaluation? Is there any forum for the students to justify themselves, if the examiners within Pakistan do not deal with justice and make poor evaluation?*
16. *I requested to arrange an impartial and independent committee for the scrutiny of my case to grant me justice. I requested to grant me a chance to appear before the committee to*

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justify the quality of my research in the presence of the examiners who decided without regarding my document. I have concrete evidences. But the university is not ready to find the facts of my case. In this perspective, I want to know that why does the university not arrange an impartial committee for the inquiry of my case. Why is my case misrepresented in BASR? Why am I not allowed to be present in an impartial inquiry?

B. PROCEEDINGS

3. Through notice dated 26.08.2019, the registrar of the respondent public body was asked to provide reasons in writing within 7 working days as to why the requested information has not been provided to the appellant.

4. In response to the notice the respondent vide letter dated 17 September, 2019 provided the following information / documents which were shared with the appellant, to acknowledge his satisfaction.

- a. Thesis Defence Committee (TDC) Decision.
- b. Minutes of Review Committee.
- c. Decision of Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR).

5. The appellant has shown his dissatisfaction with the information shared by the respondent and has reiterated for the provision of complete information in detail, vide his letter dated 04.12.2019.

6. The appeal was set for hearing on 02.01.2020 through hearing notice dated 06.12.2019 and both the parties were informed accordingly.

C. DISCUSSION AND COMMISSION'S VIEW

- a. The PhD dissertation is evaluated by at least two PhD experts from technologically / academically advanced foreign countries in addition to local committee members, as required under the minimum criteria for MS/M.Phil and PhD programs.
- b. The respondent University has provided all the information permissible under the law to the applicant. The appeal if accepted would lead to dangerous consequences for it would open doors for every unsuccessful candidate, involving educational institution

with unethical engagement bringing whole system in vogue at stake. Solemnity of Educational institutions and process of examination cannot be sacrificed, on the alter of information.

- c. The Commission after going through the detail of the demand made by the appellant in his appeal is of the opinion that the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017 is instrumented in providing the information based on record as defined in section 6 rather to answer the queries.
- d. The appellant earlier in his application to the public body has asked for the provision of minutes of his defence along with the remarks of the examiner and the rules with reference to PhD degree formulated by the University but later on in the appeal before the Commission has thrown a wider net pregnating the list of requested information. The Act does not permit and allow the appellant a free hand to alter, change or expand his requested information at the later stage of filing the appeal before the Commission, over and above his original request

D. ORDER

7. The appeal is dismissed. The requisite information permissible under the Act has already been provided to the appellant by the respondent.

Mohammad Azam

Chief Information Commissioner

Fawad Malik

Information Commissioner

Zahid Abdullah

Information Commissioner

Announced on 11.02.2020.

Certificate: It is certified that this order consists of five (5) pages. Each page has been read and signed.