



न्यायालय मुख्य आयुक्त

COURT OF CHIEF COMMISSIONER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (DIVYANGJAN)

दिव्यांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग / Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय / Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

भारत सरकार/ Government of India

Diary No. DNO/25/CCPD/5050

Dated: 12/08/2026

Diary No: DNO/25/CCPD/5050

In the matter of:

Complainant

Shri Md. Harris Arqum

Versus

Respondent(s)

1. The Registrar, Central Universities, Aligarh Muslim University
2. Vice-Chancellor, Central Universities, Aligarh Muslim University
3. Controller Of Examination, Central Universities, Aligarh Muslim University

1. Gist of the Complaint

1.1 The Complainant, Md. Harris Arqum, a 100% visually impaired Ph.D. Scholar at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), submitted a grievance under the RPwD Act, 2016, alleging that the Respondent University arbitrarily withheld his Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) for over six (6) months, causing severe financial distress and disrupting his doctoral research. Despite fulfilling all formalities and submitting multiple representations, including a formal letter to the Registrar dated 17.03.2025, the University failed to respond, which the Complainant contends violates his statutory rights to reasonable accommodation and inclusive education under Sections 16, 17, and 19 of the Act. Furthermore, a dispute arose regarding the computation of his fellowship tenure, with the Complainant arguing it should run for five years from its actual activation date (31.12.2019) rather than being truncated by referencing his initial Ph.D. admission date. Accordingly, the Complainant seeks directions for the immediate release of his pending fellowship dues, the establishment of a compliant campus grievance redressal mechanism, and accountability for the administrative delay.

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2. Hearing Details

2.1. A preliminary hearing was conducted on 17.12.2025 in hybrid mode, wherein the following parties/representatives were present:

Sl. No.	Name of the Parties / Representatives	On Behalf of
1.	Mr. Md. Harris Arqum	Complainant
2.	Mr. Sharique Rao, Assistant Finance Officer	Respondent

3. Record of Proceedings

3.1 During the proceedings, Finance Officer Mr. Sharique Rao, submitted that the Complainant had fully exhausted his maximum five-year aggregate entitlement of institutional funding. The Complainant drew a UGC Non-NET Fellowship for six months following his June 2019 admission and subsequently transitioned to the MANF scheme for four and a half years, receiving continuous funding up to 10.06.2024. While the Complainant was granted a statutory extension of up to two years under AMU Ordinance Chapter XXV (E) to submit his thesis, the Respondent clarified that this extension requires him to act as an "ex-student." Because both university guidelines and explicit UGC instructions stipulate that ex-students fall outside the regular full-time student guidelines, he became ineligible for further fellowship releases during this extended block.

3.2 Subsequently, the Complainant contested that he was shorted his fellowship based on the 31 December 2019 commencement date listed in his MANF award letter. The Court clarified that a researcher cannot concurrently draw multiple institutional scholarships or extend fellowship funding boundaries beyond the statutory five-year ceiling for a single degree programme. Noting that the core rules governing the fellowship duration and the candidate's ex-student status appear explicit, the Court recommended the Respondent university to formally compile and submit all relevant ordinances, guidelines, and previous written communications within 15 days. The Complainant was similarly advised to submit any counter-views or documentary evidence within the same 15-day window.

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4. Respondent's reply to the Notice of Hearing

4.1 The Respondent university maintains that the Complainant, Mr. Md Harris Arqum, has fully exhausted his maximum five-year aggregate entitlement of institutional funding. The university's record shows that the scholar was admitted to the Ph.D. programme on 11.06.2019 and continuously received financial assistance for a total of five years up to 10.06.2024, drawing a UGC Non-NET Fellowship for the first six months followed by the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) for the remaining four and a half years. The Respondent submits that since the maximum duration rule for a full-time Ph.D. programme under AMU Ordinance Chapter XXV (E) is limited to five years, the scholar was transitioned to "ex-student" status for his sixth year solely to facilitate the submission of his thesis.

4.2 The Respondent asserts that because the Complainant fell outside the regular full-time student guidelines during this extended block, his non-selection for further fellowship release was a matter of objective rule application rather than systemic discrimination. The university highlights that under Ordinance XXV (E) Point 11(v), a Ph.D. scholar is explicitly not a bona fide student of the university during the extended period. Furthermore, the Respondent supports this position by citing explicit University Grants Commission (UGC) instructions stating that part-time and ex-research scholars are entirely ineligible to receive fellowship funding.

5. Observation and Recommendation

5.1 The Court has carefully considered the complaint, the submissions advanced during the hearing, the written reply filed by the Respondent, and the documents placed on record. The primary issue for determination is whether the non-release of the Complainant's Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) beyond 10.06.2024 resulted from arbitrary administrative action or whether it was in accordance with the applicable University Ordinances and the governing fellowship guidelines. From the material available on record, it is observed that the Complainant had continuously received institutional financial assistance for a period of five years, comprising six months of UGC Non-NET Fellowship followed by four and a half years of MANF. The Respondent has further relied upon Ordinance Chapter XXV (E) and the relevant UGC instructions to contend that, upon completion of the prescribed five-year period, the Complainant was placed under "ex-student" status for submission of his thesis and consequently became ineligible for continuation of fellowship benefits. The Court notes that the dispute essentially concerns the interpretation and application of the governing statutory and regulatory provisions rather than any outright denial of admission or educational opportunity.

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5.2 The Court further observes that institutions of higher education are under a continuing obligation to comply with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, particularly Sections 16, 17 and 19, which mandate non-discrimination, inclusive education and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. While adherence to fellowship regulations and University Ordinances is essential, such provisions must be implemented in a transparent, reasoned and accessible manner. In the present case, although the Respondent has furnished the regulatory basis for discontinuation of fellowship after completion of the prescribed tenure, the record indicates that the Complainant had addressed multiple representations seeking clarification and redress, which were not responded to in a timely manner. Public educational institutions are expected to communicate decisions affecting students with disabilities through reasoned orders and maintain an effective grievance redressal mechanism to ensure that disability-related concerns are addressed promptly, thereby avoiding unnecessary hardship and litigation.

5.3 In view of the foregoing, the Court is of the considered opinion that no material has been placed on record to establish that the Respondent acted in contravention of the applicable fellowship guidelines or University Ordinances governing the maximum duration of institutional financial assistance. Nevertheless, the Respondent University is advised to strengthen its institutional grievance redressal mechanism for students with disabilities and ensure that all decisions relating to scholarships, fellowships and academic entitlements are communicated through timely, reasoned and speaking orders, supported by the relevant statutory provisions and applicable guidelines. Such measures would promote transparency, procedural fairness and effective implementation of the objectives of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, while safeguarding the rights and dignity of students with disabilities. Consequently, no further intervention is warranted in the matter.

6. Accordingly, the case is disposed of.

Yours faithfully,

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(Ipsita Mitra)

Dy. Chief Commissioner

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