



Students' Senate (2016-17) Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur



To consider the issue regarding assignment of X Grades in Research Thesis Units of Ph.D. Scholars

[Assignment of X Grades in Research Thesis Units for Ph.D. Scholars]

Proposed by: Garima Bawa, [Ph.D. Senator]

The Problem: IITK campus community is aware of the student's protests which occurred after the sudden, and untimely death of Ph.D. scholar after being "treated" in the health centre. Many complaints about Ph.D. scholars being pressurised by their supervisors not to participate in the protest has been heard, though the complaints may not have been formally recorded (do such mechanisms exist?). It has also been reported that some of the Ph.D. student protestors have been given 'X' grades (X-dissatisfactory). In this report specific names are not being taken to protect identity of the students. It is alleged by some students that no clear, mutually agreed criteria is followed while awarding the X grade. Some students from HSS, Chemistry, etc. departments have complained that *they have been given 'X' grade after the protests, without any clear explanation*. This need not be interpreted as a mere coincidence. This raises questions regarding transparency, and accountability, as opposed to arbitrary exercise of power, in the process of awarding grades. It is the career of the student which is at stake. It is also reported that in some departments, such as Materials Science, research student's scholarship may have been withheld by the supervisor. In a democracy, where freedom of expression is guaranteed, students should have the right to raise questions regarding transparency, and accountability in the process of being awarded grades. This is desirable in the larger interest of better student-supervisor relations.



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Areas of Concern/problem: Students from HSS, Chemistry, etc. departments have complained that *they have been given 'X' grade after the protests, without any clear explanation.* Systematic, objective, and transparent procedure in assigning research work, and awarding grades is desirable to prevent avoidable complications. Keeping in mind research students discontent, and also incidents of suicide in research students, it is important that this problem be discussed. How does one know whether the grades are being misused to intimidate, and curb the democratic voice of the students?

Towards a Solution: We know that in written examinations, students have the right to ask for copy of their answer scripts, and seek re-evaluation. What steps may be taken to ensure that *the research student has Practically Effective Means to address their legitimate concerns about their grades? In case of a complaint, or a dispute what effective mechanism exists to address the concerns of the student with fairness, and transparency? Since these issues are apparently unique to research students, can they expect the solicitous students senate to sincerely pursue their pressing problems ?*