

REPORT ON THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN THE EVALUATION PATTERNS ADOPTED BY THE NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

The National Law Universities (NLUs) have ushered in a new era in the field of legal education in India. They introduced an inter-disciplinary curriculum which enabled students to comprehend the social, political and economic context in which laws are formulated and implemented. The aim of such a curriculum was to produce social engineers who could use law as an instrument of social change.¹ Their establishment was aimed at improving legal education throughout India, and to revitalize the legal profession by transforming law into a professional degree, wherein the opportunity to obtain such a professional degree could be accessed immediately after the completion of one's secondary education. Most importantly, NLUs were designed to provide a forum and a place of opportunity where even those from marginalised or underprivileged backgrounds would prosper. This is particularly relevant as students from such backgrounds would now be able to capitalize on the legal acumen obtained and fight for their rights, as well as fight against injustices endured.

National Law Universities were established after the *Legal Education Committee* of the *Bar Council of India* (BCI) accepted the numerous demands for modernizing of legal education.² The first law school created under this new era

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¹ Abhyudaya Agarwal, "Are Law Schools Creating Social Engineers? A Hopeful Response", available at <<http://startup.nujs.edu/blog/are-law-schools-creating-social-engineers-a-hopeful-response/>> (Last visited on May 25, 2020).

² G.S. Bajpai, "Transforming National Law Universities", *Live Law*, September 12, 2019, available at <<https://www.livelaw.in/columns/transforming-national-law-universities-147991>> (Last visited on

was the *National Law School of India University* (NLSIU), Bengaluru, India. The establishment of NLSIU, Bengaluru brought about a paradigm shift in the teaching and research methodology in law.³

The reality which prevails in these national law schools, however, does not always match their objectives. Several institutional practices are still insensitive towards marginalised and underprivileged individuals and communities.⁴ For example, even premier national law universities fail to recognize the need for making public spaces, such as entrances and washrooms, more accessible for the differently-abled, and those belonging to transgender community.⁵ These practices prevent such institutions from being regarded as equitable places. Moreover, they fail to recognize the need to provide a sense of inclusivity to those who do not fall within the ‘conventional’ understanding of individuals, particularly those who are differently-abled. Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access (IDIA), a non-profit organization in pursuance of the same, formulated a *Disability Guideline* for making workplaces friendlier to persons with disability.⁶ The guideline emphasises on a shift from an *impairment* approach to a *need-based* approach. The *impairment* approach focuses on specific difficulties faced by the individual due to the disability.⁷ The focus of the *impairment* approach is not on the addressal of the specific difficulties faced by virtue of the disability. For example, in a situation where there is an individual with partial eyesight who takes admission in an educational institute, the *impairment* based approach would make the institute cater to the immediate needs of the individual, such as provisional braille textbooks, so as to ensure that the individual can successfully complete the term at the institution without problems. However, such an approach fails to be of substantial help for differently abled individuals because of the fact that it does not address the systematic problems they faced persistently owing to the disability. The *need based* approach on the other hand focuses on the immediate needs of an individual, taking into account their specific background, hence developing solutions accordingly. The *need based* approach involved identifying the broader needs of the individual that would arise in various circumstances owing to the disability, and provide for a solution and mechanism to enable the individual to work normally. It does not make the disability of an individual the point of attention, but rather

May 25, 2020).

³ The Bar Council of India, “Legal Education”, available at <<http://www.barcouncilofindia.org/about/legal-education/>> (Last accessed May 25, 2020).

⁴ Prabodhan Pol, *The Wire*, “Social Justice in the Times of JNU Protests”, November 15, 2019, available at <<https://thewire.in/education/social-justice-jnu-protest-education>> (Last visited on May 25, 2020).

⁵ Janhavi Sharma, *Ed Times*, “NUJS Becomes the First NLU to have its Own Policy for Transgenders”, March 1, 2019, available at <<https://www.edtimes.in/nujs-becomes-the-first-nlu-to-have-its-own-policy-for-transgenders/>> (Last visited on May 25, 2020).

⁶ Guidelines for making work-places friendly and accessible for Persons with Disability, Authored by IDIA, A charitable trust founded by Mr. Shamnad Basheer.

⁷ *Id.*

enables the individual to work in a manner which is free of anxiety. For instance, in the above example of a partially blind individual, if the institution was one that was focused on the *need based* approach, it would ensure that it puts in place a mechanism which would enable any partially blind individual to find the university resources accessible even in the future, such as installing braille plates at all locations or providing for audio resources for all study materials. Thus, the shift from a focus on impairment to that of one's needs is indeed necessary for the better facilitation of the needs and solutions that must be provided to the especially abled.

Owing to the definite and obvious benefits of the *needs based* approach as explained above, the legal educational institutions would be at great advantage if they were to adopt the IDIA disability guidelines, laying emphasis on the *needs based* approach.

This report makes a humble attempt to initiate a meaningful discourse on the specific problems faced by the visually impaired students studying in the national law schools. One of the basic findings of the report is that there are visually impaired students in all the participating institutes except one. Thus, the institutions need to be pro-active in their approach towards understanding and addressing the problems of these students in order to create an inclusive space in the true sense of the term.

This report was conceptualized by Rohit Sharma (Team Leader of IDIA WB Chapter for 2017-19) and was prepared under the guidance of Rohit and Debanga Goswami. Two students of NUJS, Gatha G. Namboothiri and Lakshya Singla, have reviewed the initial draft and provided their inputs. This report would not have been possible without the assistance of IDIA volunteers of the West Bengal chapter who made relentless efforts to gather the necessary information from the NLUs. These volunteers are Raksha Raina, Shubhangi Rai, Eisha Kalra, Ashit Sarma, Anshul Dalmia, Shantanu Awasthi, Jannani M. and Apurba Karjee. The IDIA volunteers from all the NLUs which have been covered in this report worked towards providing the necessary information about their respective institutes. The authors would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude towards all of them.

II. REPORT OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this research exercise are as following;

1. To pin-point specific problems that Visually Impaired Students ('VIS') face in the evaluation patterns that are adopted by the participating National Law Universities ('NLU').

2. To suggest a framework of solutions that can be implemented by institutions in making their evaluation pattern more differently-abled friendly.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This survey uses the empirical method of research. Two questionnaires were sent to 16 NLUs, out of which 11, as listed below responded to fill the questionnaire. The data was recorded between Nov., 2018-May, 2019.

The first questionnaire was to be filled by an IDIA representative. This questionnaire consisted of eight questions which included both open-ended and close ended questions. The questions were directed to the particular institution. They were based on the reservation for Specially Abled Persons ('SAP'), presence VIS in the institutions, the conduct of 'open book' examinations and other institutional problems faced by the VIS. We also called for potential solutions which could be crafted to those questions.

The second questionnaire was to be filled up by VIS enrolled in the institution, if any. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and close ended questions. It attempted to showcase the individual experiences of VIS and the problems faced in their respective institutions. The questions were based on the suitability of the evaluation pattern for the VIS, steps taken by their institutions to make the pattern differently abled friendly and the adequacy of those measures.

The data received is arranged and analysed in order to understand the problems. This is aimed to bring us closer in finding potential solutions to the problems faced by VIS.

IV. PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES

The questionnaires were sent to 16 NLUs across the country. However, we received prompt replies from the below listed 11 NLUs. All the responses for these colleges were received through the respective IDIA representatives barring the exception of DSNLU, Visakhapatnam where the responses were received through a non-IDIA member.

The following institutions have participated in the survey (in the order of their establishment):

1. NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE
2. NALSAR UNIVERSITY OF LAW, HYDERABAD
3. NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL

4. THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES, KOLKATA
5. NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, JODHPUR
6. HIDAYATULLAH NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, RAIPUR
7. GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR
8. DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW
9. NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES, KOCHI
10. NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, DELHI
11. DAMODARAM SANJIVAYYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, VISAKHAPATNAM

Besides this, IDIA NLU, Orissa Chapter team gave a list of suggestions in January, 2020 after consulting their VIS scholars. We thank all the universities and the IDIA Chapters for providing the data for this important report.

V. TABULATED FORM OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES

A. Close Ended Questions

- Reservation for Specially Abled Person (SAP)

1. **QUESTION- Is there reservation for Specially Abled Persons (SAPs) in your institution as mandated by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, in the academic year 2018-19?**

Explanation- Under *Section 32 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016*, every government higher educational institution has to provide reservation of not less than 5% to persons with benchmark disability.

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Reservation for SAP (Yes/No)	Percentage/ no. of seats reserved for SAP
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	YES	5% (4 seats)

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Reservation for SAP (Yes/No)	Percentage/ no. of seats reserved for SAP
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	YES	5%
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	YES	5%
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	YES	5%
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur, Jodhpur	YES	5%
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	YES	5%
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	YES	5%
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	YES	3%
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	YES	5%
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	YES	5%
11.	National Law University, Delhi	YES	5%

10 out of 11 institutions recorded that they provide 5% reservation to SAPs. One institution, i.e. *Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University (RMNLU), Lucknow* recorded that reservation of 3% is provided to SAPs. Despite being a government mandated requirement, by the year 2016 merely 12 out of 22 National Law Universities had fulfilled the criteria of having a 5% reservation for Person's with Disabilities.⁸ The violation of the legislation mandate without impunity shows the lack of accountability of these law institutes.

PRESENCE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS (VIS)

2. Question- **What is the number of VIS in your institution for academic year 2018-19?**

We aimed to assess the presence of VIS in elite national law schools (NLU) across the country by asking this question. The presence of VIS in significant numbers may provide an impetus for institutions to adopt inclusionary methods such as examination patterns, which adequately respond to their specific requirements.

⁸ Centre for Disability Studies and Health Laws (CDHSL), Annual Report, 2016-17, available at <https://www.cdslindia.com/downloads/annual_rep/CDSL%20ANNUAL%20REPORT-2016-2017.pdf> (Last accessed May 25, 2020).

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Number of Visually Impaired Students
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	2
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	3
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	0
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	1
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur	1
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	3
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	6
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	1
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	1
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	1
11.	National Law University, Delhi	1

Each institution recorded a positive response, except the National Law Institute University, Bhopal.

ECONOMICS AS A COMPULSORY COURSE

3. QUESTION- Do you have Economics as a compulsory course in your institution in the academic year 2018-19?

This question was asked because Economics as a subject often requires preparing graphs and diagrammatic representations, which can be very inconvenient for a VIS to prepare or instruct his or her scribe to do so. In addition to this, graphs form an integral and component of understanding and analysing certain key economic principles and theories. Thus, not being able to understand and prepare graphs has the potential to jeopardize the effective learning of the subject, which might have a negative impact on performance in the examination.

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Whether Economics is A Compulsory Course (Yes/No)
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	YES
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	YES
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	YES

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Whether Economics is A Compulsory Course (Yes/No)
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	YES
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur	NO
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	N/A
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	NO
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	NO
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	YES
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	N/A
11.	National Law University, Delhi	N/A

VIS having difficulties in identifying small fonts and objects, find it extremely difficult to read or dictate instructions on graphical questions. This fact prompted us to ask the subsequent questions in the survey.

- Alternative questions for graph

4. QUESTION- With regard to the written evaluation component of the Economics course, do the VIS get alternative questions for those that involve preparation of graphs (2018-19)?

As discussed in the previous question, the understanding and preparation of graphs and diagrammatic representation require a certain level of visibility. The VIS, especially with significantly low visibility may find it difficult to understand them, prepare them or even instruct a scribe to do so. Because of this, they are placed at a disadvantaged position in comparison to students with adequate visibility. Thus, the institutions should provide alternative questions to the VIS for the ones that involve graphs or diagrammatic representation.

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Alternative Questions for Graph (Yes/No)
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	YES
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	YES
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	NO

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Alternative Questions for Graph (Yes/No)
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	NO
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur	YES
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	N/A
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	YES
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	N/A
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	NO
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	N/A
11.	National Law University, Delhi	N/A

As indicated by the data, a few institutions do not provide alternative questions to graphical or diagrammatic questions in the economics question paper. This particular survey question showcases the kind of unequal opportunity provided to VIS in these institutions. This places a strong bias against VIS, who are restrained from giving their best in the examination of that particular subject. It results in them wasting time and consequently losing morale, and increasing anxiety in an examination room. It has an overall effect on their well-being and mental health. What may seem like a minute measure for institutions, has grave consequences on VIS students. Thus, it is imperative that the institutions either offer economics as an optional subject or provide alternatives to questions involving graphs or diagrams, as discussed above.

- Open-book examination pattern in the institution

5. **QUESTION- Does your institution have a policy of allowing the faculty members to conduct open book examinations for their respective subjects (2018-19)?**

(Open book examination is an evaluation pattern where students are allowed to refer to any form of non-electronic study material during the examination. Examinations where only bare acts are allowed are not included within the ambit of open book exams.)

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Open Book as an Exam (YES/NO)
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	YES

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Open Book as an Exam (YES/NO)
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	YES
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	NO
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	YES
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur	YES
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	N/A
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	NO
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	NO
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	YES
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	N/A
11.	National Law University, Delhi	N/A

Open book examinations often require instant and swift reference to a voluminous amount of study material within a prescribed period to point out relevant portions, required to answer the question paper. It is not effectively possible for the VIS to undertake this process because of the increased time and effort required by them to comprehend a certain amount of text due to limited visibility.

- Alternative question papers for the subjects

6. QUESTION- Do the VIS get alternative question papers for the subjects that are evaluated through open book examinations (2018-19)?

Since open book examinations are disadvantageous to VIS, the survey asked the above question to get a clear picture of the measures universities undertake in order to ease the inhabitation process of the VIS, initiating an inclusionary process.

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Whether alternative Question Paper is provided for VIS in Open Book End Semester Examinations
1.	National Law School of India University, Bangalore	YES
2.	NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad	NO
3.	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	N/A
4.	The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata	NO

Serial No.	Name of the Institution	Whether alternative Question Paper is provided for VIS in Open Book End Semester Examinations
5.	National Law University, Jodhpur	NO
6.	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	N/A
7.	Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar	N/A
8.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow	N/A
9.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	NO
10.	Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University, Visakhapatnam	N/A
11.	National Law University, Delhi	N/A

Additionally, answering the same question paper without referring to the study materials also puts them at disadvantageous position, as the standard of the question paper in an open book examination is higher by design than a closed book examination. Therefore, institutions should provide the VIS with alternative question papers, which are in keeping with the standard of a closed book examination.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Since these are open-ended questions, it is not possible to arrange the responses in a tabulated manner. We have collated all the responses, identified the overlaps and enumerated all the distinct responses to understand what are the problems faced by VIS in different spheres of law school life.

- Problems faced by the VIS in the disability hostile pattern
- Library Facilities-

According to the responses received from two NLUs, the VIS face difficulties in accessing library facilities due to the lack of audio software and the absence of Braille books. Additionally, the size of the characters and letters in the books available in the library can pose difficulty to VIS depending upon their degree of visibility since all the books are not available in the soft copy format.

- Question Paper-

According to the responses received from three NLUs, the institutions fail to provide the VIS with enlarged versions of examination question papers. This

increases the individual's anxiety levels during the exam, therefore making the compensatory time ineffective, as they lose valuable time trying to comprehend questions.

- Scribe Facility

As per the response received from an NLU, a VIS sitting for a commerce exam was provided with a scribe for an accountancy paper. Unfortunately, the scribe did not hold basic numerical understanding, wasting ample time in just understanding basic formulae and symbols. Even otherwise, in subjects such as economics and taxation, multiple technical terms are involved, of which prior knowledge is required. Such knowledge is essential for the scribe to have before hand, to even attempt at understanding what the VIS instructs them to write in the paper.⁹ If the allocation of a scribe is not done taking into account the specific requirements of a particular subject, VIS potentially face numerous difficulties.¹⁰ We believe that these presented inadequacies stem from lack of funding, availability and lack of experience in coping with the differently abled.

- Lack of Transparency

According to the institutional response received from an NLU, the college administration fails to notify the course instructor regarding the answer scripts written with the help of a scribe. When the course instructors evaluate the answer script without being aware of this fact, it hinders them from accommodating the factors of a scribe written answer script in their evaluation. Such factors include use of correct spelling for legal terminologies as well as general words, grammar and punctuation which form an integral part of the skill set which every law student is expected to inculcate. But, these cannot be expected from a scribe.

- Solutions proposed by the students who volunteered to Fill This Form
- An audio translation of the books available in library.
- Accommodation of deviations or errors which occur as a direct consequence of the disability of the student.
- Training of teachers on the special ways and methods of teaching and evaluating VIS.
- Separate guidelines for preparation and evaluation of papers of SAPs.

⁹ Liffy Thomas, "For Students, Quality of Scribes a Huge Concern", *The Hindu*, March 3, 2013, available at <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/for-students-quality-of-scribes-a-huge-concern/article4469768.ece>>, (Last visited on June 3, 2020).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- Updating the library with Braille computers and disability friendly software.
- Where questions on graph are provided in the economics paper, the VISs should be provided with alternative questions rather than being instructed to explain the question in a theoretical manner.

If an open book examination is being conducted, the VIS who are taking the examination on a computer should be given all the necessary soft copy material on the computer. They should be given additional time so that they can effectively utilize the material at their disposal in order to frame answers to the questions. The exact duration of the additional time can be decided by the course instructor based on factors like difficulty level and length of the question paper.

VI. RESPONSES FROM THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

We received responses from EIGHTEEN (18) visually impaired students (VIS).

- 1. Do you think the examination pattern of your college is suitable, considering your situation?**

Yes, it is adequate: 6

No, it is not adequate: 12

- 2. If no, then is/are there any particular subject(s), where you felt that the evaluation was unfair and insufficient with respect to testing your abilities? (Please mention the names of the subjects.)**

The subjects and the number of students who mentioned them are listed below:

A. Economics: 5

B. English & Communicative English: 2

C. Family Law: 2

Numeric and chart-based questions require lot of visual inputs. The chart of inheritance, etc. was provided at the end of the question paper, however referring to it becomes difficult when the examination is being given on MS word with a screen reader.

A. Taxation law: 1

The computations required visual inputs, and no alternative arrangement was made;

B. Accountancy & Business subjects: 1

Advance accounting, managerial accounting, corporate accounting and financial management.

C. Political Science: 1

The concerned VIS found it difficult to attempt those questions in the political Science question paper which involve comprehending, preparing or locating places on a map.

Comments: The main problem areas identified are subjects which have image based questions, without conversion of images to words.

- 3. Could you recount any instance or aspect of the subject(s) mentioned above, where you felt that your assessment was done, not taking in consideration your situation or discomfort? (Please provide elaborate answers.)**

Yes, I can recount such instances: **16**

No, I cannot recount such instances: **2**

Responses Recorded:

- A. The evaluation, I feel was quite fair but it could have been certainly better. For instance, in economics I could not understand and draw graphs. I used to give purely theoretical answers. but this makes it hard to draw an objective line concerning the marking scheme
- B. It is very tough to draw the graphs with my limited vision. This became a problem in my economics paper
- C. The main problem in this subject was that the teacher has not considered my situation and has evaluated arbitrarily. She gave more importance to the formatting of the answer sheet rather than the content in the answer sheet.
- D. In the situation in point I. above, I lost major marks in the inheritance numerical (as the teacher called it), since it was majorly inaccessible.
- E. Yes, a little more time because I cannot write at the same pace that has perfect sight.

- F. The main issue is that people do not consider low vision as the problem and hence it becomes a big problem even to communicate my disability. Because of this problem, I am not able to perform well in the exams
 - G. Since he's an LLM Student (yet to sit for an end semester exam here), he says that in his last university the college despite providing a scribe would not notify the person correcting that one of the papers was of a person with visual impairment and would get clubbed along with the General students
 - H. If it is closely observed, in all the above mentioned subjects were not taught to me well in the class rather prepared an inappropriate question papers for the exams. The essence is that many of our faculties are not aware about the disability and how to resolve the problem. They fail to understand our explanation about the disability even after communicating multiple times and hence the problems are arriving.
 - I. English, this subject involves various methods of teaching. One of them is to show movies, especially if they are in foreign languages, by looking at the subtitles my sighted counterparts can understand whereas I am not. The teachers who are not good with language, makes it difficult for a blind to grab what the teacher is trying to say. At the same time the sighted counterparts can get away with the issue by taking notes directly from PPTs. These teachers even refuse to provide the PPT to the students
 - J. There is no need of substitution for question related to map but an enlarged or bold map could have been better
 - K. Economics and family law due to the pictorial representations in questions.
 - L. I felt discomfort in economic graphs where i have been awarded some marks instead of getting proportionate marks as equal with others even after explaining the concepts. Here I feel discomfort in a way that, if I would have been a normal person then I could at list gain somehow batter in graphs then the marks that I am getting in by simply explaining concept
 - M. Marks were cut for spelling and presentation in English subject.
4. **Do you think providing extra-time during the assessment can resolve the issues you face in course of assessment? (Yes/No)**

Yes, extra time will resolve my issues: 9

No, extra time will not resolve my issues: 9

5. Do you feel that any aspect of the examination system helps you in dealing with the disadvantages you face? (Yes/No)

Yes, the examination system does help- 15

No, the examination system does not help- 3

6. If yes, then please mention the same and the reason as well.

- A. Is it providing extra time or alternative questions? All this enables me to be at par with everyone else and this also makes the assessment fair and just.
- B. Giving bigger font question papers. This helps us allot because there is not much difficulty to read the question papers.
- C. The main aspect is that allowing us to write our exams on our own with the help of computers having screen readers.
- D. The only thing is the examination I give here in my University is computer-based, so it is pretty better as compared to giving exam with the help of a scribe.
- E. According to me the teachers need to create an environment in such a nature that we can open up ourselves and explain our problems and this will help us to improve to our fullest capacity.
- F. Extra-time helps me in attempting all the questions. However time is inadequate but this is the aspect which helps me to face my disadvantage and makes me satisfied.
- G. The best aspect about our exams in GNLU is that we are given an opportunity to write our own exams with the help of computers rather than mandating the scribes.
- H. Requirement to submit electronic copies or printed copies of term papers/projects helps in doing the work independently. Flexibility to allow me to take exams through electronic medium refutes the dependency on scribe. It also boosts confidence.
- I. Timely supply of the enlarged question paper resolves my inability to view the usual paper and start the paper on time.

- J. Extra time, computers are provided which help since I am compatible with computers.
 - K. There is more clarity require in above two questions as to meaning of the word any aspect of the examination which helps you.
 - L. The provision of extra time helps me to some extent.
 - M. They provide with bigger font size apart and it helps a lot me while paper.
 - N. Gives examination through Jos' software and feels independent.
7. **According to you, how can the evaluation system change to adapt to your requirement? If any suggestion(s), please elaborate the same. (Optional)**
- A. According to me, the teachers need to be more inclusive and should have an appropriate evaluation pattern for the students with special needs.
 - B. The teachers need to be more accommodative to the students with special needs as well as preparing question papers accordingly.
 - C. If the questions are made accessible enough, the evaluation system doesn't matter at all. I don't mind answering the computation-based questions, given that the questions are accessible enough for me to read, understand and answer them effectively. Exemptions/ accommodations in the evaluation pattern could be effective only when the accessibility of questions is being taken care of, also considering that if the latter part is being ensured, the former is not required to be addressed at all.
 - D. The evaluation system needs to be changed a bit. The evaluators should look on the matter and content provided by a student in his/her answer sheet rather than desiring to get a quantitative answer. It becomes difficult for both a Visually Impaired and Low Vision person to provide an exhaustively quantitative answer on the same time as offered to other students as a Visually Impaired person has to work in co-ordination with his/her scribe provided by the University and a Low Vision student has to view his question and answer sheets keeping it closer to his eyes for which he/she has to bent a bit more while writing. This affects his reading speed and causes strain in his back and affects his speed. However, these issues could be solved to a limit by providing extra time to such students.
 - E. Extra-time is one of the aspects which can help in attempting all the questions because sufficient time should be given for finding the key-words from the questions. Sometimes, it can be missed out.

- F. Technology is another aspect to solve this issue. When a person feels satisfaction from his/her examination, he/she will appear in the exams with more confidence.
- G. What is extremely challenging for him is the evaluation through assignments and presentations in class, because access to knowledge is much more difficult for him and is not readily available. The legal databases available are not disability friendly nor have they been taught or explained to him. The biggest hurdle he will face is with writing his thesis because none of his batch mates will be too busy with their own to help him.
- H. Preparing the study material according to the needs of Visually challenged students (having accessible soft copies for everything that is mentioned and taught in the class). Making the classes accessible (explaining the concepts orally and mentioning everything which is on the board/projector). With regards to commerce/economics/other such subjects, question papers need to be separate and the students shall be either given with an appropriate scribe or computer with appropriate screen readers.
- I. In almost all the universities, it is a rule to hide the student's identity from the answer sheet. The same should be done away, in the case of students with visual impairment who use scribe. This will help the teacher to negate their preconceived notions about good handwriting and spellings. Those subjects which require visual way of teaching such as economics, because the teachers are not trained in regards to imparting the knowledge to students with visual impairment. Therefore, they should either be trained to accommodate blind students in class in terms of teaching or they should be asked to distribute marks considering the need of situation.
- J. Extra time, computers are provided which help since I am compatible with computer
- K. According to me, it is not a matter of changing in the evaluation system instead some positive benefits which are to be awarded to visually impaired students. For example, where there is a graph, in the subject of economic equal marks should be provided as equal with other students only if visually impaired students explain concepts of the graphs, in a theoretical and proper way. In this regard the proportionate marks should be provided on the basis of his theoretical answer.

In case of numerical, in the subject of economic separate questions are to be given altogether. No evaluation pattern should change apart from above given mechanism otherwise which lead to extraordinary benefits and which will discriminate between normal and visually impaired students.

- L. Handwriting, presentation and spelling mistakes should be ignored because the paper is written by scribes. The questions with huge calculations should be changed, figure based questions should be changed.
- M. During time of submission of project, I am unable to do proper formatting, I feel that part of project should not be focused more in such cases and such student shall be evaluated on the basis of content (in dissertation my maximum marks was deducted because I was not able to edit it properly, and in such subjects we don't get opportunity to prove yourself by writing exam, so things get wrong for us.)
- N. Evaluation should not be on the basis of mode of writing but on the basis of marks.

VII. SUGGESTIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

The difficulties that VIS face, highlighted and discussed above, raise relevant and specific concerns for all educational institutions across the country. In general, the roadmap that needs to be followed by educational institutions across the country should be more or less of a similar structure as their objectives are also be similar. However, it is indeed true that universities will require specific measures in place to address the unique requirements that the courses that they offer might necessitate. For example, an economics course might require the universities to bring in a special scribe or mechanisms in place in order to assist and facilitate the VIS.

Following are some substantive suggestions that can be included as a part of this report and positive efforts must be made in universities to include these suggestions as a part of their implementation policies:

1. The first and the foremost objective of any institution should be to facilitate the smooth and easy admission of SAPs, including VIS, into their institutions. The particular examination conducting body must ensure that the admission process is conducive of the needs of the differently abled. Moreover, institutions must strive to ensure a uniform admission process for the differently-abled, for all courses available to any other abled candidate.
2. These students must also be provided with counselling and guidance regarding their future careers. This includes being made aware of the various considerations and criteria that they must evaluate in order to assess which courses they can opt for to pursue higher education.
3. A major task at hand for educational institutions is to ensure the procurement of various assistive devices that are required for use by the differently

abled. These devices should assist the use of various educational and infrastructural facilities at the educational institutions they enroll in. Finally, they should be suited as per the requirements of the specific course they enroll in. For instance, audio books of law commentaries, braille signs, ramps and lift facilities should be available at their disposal.

4. In addition to the same, institutions must also facilitate easier mechanisms to avail specialised schemes and programs to aid differently abled students. Numerous central and state government schemes provide special scholarships, allowances and funds for enabling the education of the differently abled. Though it is the individual's prerogative to avail to such schemes, the institution must facilitate the process.
5. Last but not the least, it is a positive onus on each educational institution in the country, be it private or government run, to develop and design a disability policy of its own that addresses the concerns, requirements and the problems faced the by the VIS.

VIII. CONCLUSION

There exists a wide discrepancy in the condition of institutions with respect to their stated objectives *vis-à-vis* their adopted policies. While no institution fails to embolden their declaration of being an '*inclusive institution*' for the differently-abled, the reality speaks otherwise. It has been highlighted countless times throughout this report of the non-inclusive nature of facilities provided by some of the most elite institutions in the country. It is essential to realize that mere positive recognition and declarations are futile unless the objective of a stated policy is accompanied by effective measures and facilities. These need to be put in place to give credence to such objectives, making it feasible for the target group, the SAPs in the present case, to enroll in such institutions without hesitation and uncertainty of being left out of the mainstream education and development process. The survey reveals how at different junctures institutions fail to provide support to the Visually Impaired Students (VIS).

One of the chief issues highlighted during this process is that relating to the system of providing scribes to the VIS. The Scribe sometimes needs specialized training in order to understand instructions on writing answers for technical subjects. Co-ordination with the scribe takes a lot of time and as a result the hand-writing and the presentation of the answer suffers. While writing with the help of a scribe, factors such as grammatical, spelling errors and the hand-writing; are not within the control of the VIS. In instances when the answer scripts written with the help of a scribe are not separately notified to the course instructor, the VIS student suffers for no real fault of theirs. Therefore, merely providing the VIS with a computer facility during examinations solves numerous issues.

Another major obstacle faced by the SAP in general, and the VIS in particular as discussed time and again in this paper, is the lack of infrastructural facilities to facilitate greater accessibility at par with the other students. VIS find themselves unable to navigate through the institutional buildings due to the lack of a roadmap guiding them for the same. Classrooms and other important rooms like the teachers' chambers are inaccessible for them due to the lack of braille prints for identification. Even regular activities like sports become a far cry due to inadequate sports equipment or the play grounds being inaccessible to them. Furthermore, although accessibility labs are now being paved in a few institutions, numerous major institutions still lack these. Establishing such labs in institutions must be considered top priority.

In addition, as the survey has highlighted, one of the major problems faced by the VISs is the problem of accessing library facilities and using them in a manner others are able to for projects, research and study purposes. In numerous instances, the VIS are unable to enter and occupy seats in the library without the help of another individual, and accessing electronic facilities and the books in the library becomes even more difficult and uncertain for them. Some things as simple as a university notification becomes difficult for them to access due to the unavailability of the scanned copy in a format or in display that can be read by them for necessary and relevant information. Also, teachers in the institution lack the basic training and a level of sensitization required to teach and coach the VIS. As a result, they are unable to impart these students with the requisite training to access the various university databases for research and study purposes.

Furthermore, the evaluation pattern in the assessments and examinations for the VIS, as well as the responses given show a dire need to bring about change or at the very least, some recognition of the differential needs and capabilities of the VIS to make the process fairer.

The problems faced by the VIS are not only restricted to the examination stage but also prevail in the preparation stage. Students are unable to properly access all study materials which are available to their peers. Thus, the institutions should try to provide electronic copies of at least the compulsory reading materials of all subjects studied by the VIS.

In addition to these detailed technical problems, the bigger problem lies in the lack of awareness of the university administration, teachers and student community towards the issues faced by the disabled students. There is a need to sensitize, train and educate all the stakeholders about the problems faced by differently-abled people, including the VIS. Institutions need to adopt the *need based* approach in order to make them better places to live and learn for all.

The very purpose of the collection of the data as presented in the paper was to gain insight into the specific aspects where VIS face problems, and the steps

and active initiatives that can be taken in order to address them in the quickest and most effective manner. The collection of the data from a diversity of colleges and the questionnaire followed by it was to ensure that the data provided a holistic picture of the variety of problems faced along with solutions that can be curated.

The solutions suggested are not just recourses to increase inclusivity, rather they should be considered to fulfill policy measures which these institutions have already promised to abide by as they seek to comply with the governmental disability guidelines. It is indeed a positive obligation and responsibility upon all academic institutions of varied disciplines to provide more accessible and inclusive spaces for the SAPs to make the world of education all the more far reaching and dynamic, fulfilling the aspirations of all sections of society for the collective good of all those who seek a better life through knowledge and enlightenment.