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JU exam put off as invigilators stay away after harassment claim

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Kolkata: The journalism and mass communication exam in Jadavpur University (JU) scheduled on Friday was postponed an hour before it was to begin when some professors and research scholars refused invigilation duty, a day after a student reportedly caught using unfair means in another exam alleged sexual and mental harassment by a senior professor. The official notice from the controller's office cited "unavoidable circumstances" as the reason for deferring the exam.

Research scholars unanimously took the decision to refrain from invigilation duty and informed the head of the department that they feared they might face similar charges when they perform

their task and prevent malpractice by students. "The complaint is not just against the senior professor. There are hints of allegations against us of facilitating such an incident. We did not feel safe to attend invigilation duty until justice is rendered and our rights are safeguarded," said a research scholar. A teacher said the incident has morally broken them and they are scared to do their work with dedication.

"The exam cancellation on Friday was done to target and isolate me in the department," the complainant said.

The ICC, which is probing the case, called her to record her statement on Friday. Students spoke of unnecessary trouble due to the last-minute cancellation as many had already reached the campus.

“We met the pro-VC to know about the future dates of the exam. After a discussion with him, it was decided that the exams scheduled on Feb 27 and 29 stand. Friday’s exam will be held on March 1,” said a student. A senior official said the pro-VC has asked the department to conduct a teacher-student committee meeting to discuss the current situation.

In a letter, the complainant said that the invigilator had suddenly stopped her from writing the paper and took her to the accused professor’s chamber, where he forcibly held her hand, put ink on her hand and dragged her outside the chamber to prove that answers were written on her palm. Sources said the accused professor was not in charge of the examination but was present with the head of the department HoD when the student was brought to the department after she was reportedly caught using unfair means.

“The HoD told her to wash her hands and rewrite the answer. She returned to the hall within 10 minutes and started writing again,” said a source.

Many in the department said that if there had been CCTV cameras in the department, it would have been easier to find out the truth.