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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**
+ W.P.(C) 3406/2026 & CM APPL. 16371/2026, CM APPL.
16372/2026
ASHISHPetitioner

Through: Mr Satayam Singh, Mr. Diwas
Kumar, Ms. Aditi Sharma, Ms.
Neema, Ms. Vipasha Jain,
Advs.
Mr. Rishabh Kumar, Adv.

versus

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION & ANR...Respondents
Through: Mr. Sanjay Khanna SC, Ms.
Pragya Bhushan, Ms.
Vilakshana Dayma, Mr.
Saurabh Pandey, Ms. Anshu
Kumari, Advs.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE JASMEET SINGH

ORDER

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17.03.2026

1. This is a writ petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking the following prayers :-

“a. issue an appropriate writ, order or direction in the nature of mandamus or any other appropriate writ directing the Respondents to examine the correctness or incorrectness of the answer key in respect of Question ID No. 4324496215 of the UGC-NET December 2025 Examination for the subject Buddhist, Jaina, Gandhian and Peace Studies (Subject Code 060);

b. direct the Respondents to constitute an independent Expert Committee / body to examine and determine



the correctness of the answer key in respect of the aforesaid question;

c. direct the Respondents to rectify or revise the answer key in respect of the said question in accordance with the decision of this Hon'ble Court or the findings of the Expert Committee;

d. direct the Respondents to revise the result of the Petitioner accordingly, and grant all consequential benefits including eligibility for Assistant Professor, as the Petitioner would cross the qualifying threshold prescribed for the Petitioner's category upon award of the said marks..."

2. It is the case of the petitioner that the Question bearing ID No. 4324496215 of UGC-NET December 2025 examination in the subject of Buddhist, Jaina, Gandhian and Peace Studies (Subject Code 060), has been incorrectly evaluated and the answer to the said question has wrongly been shown in the final answer key. The petitioner in the present case has secured 188 marks qualifying for admission to the Ph. D. only and he is 2 marks short for qualifying the cut-off marks for Assistant professor eligibility. Hence, the present petition is filed.

3. Mr. Khanna, learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent No. 2/NTA, has handed over a copy of the notice dated 14.01.2026, which is reproduced as under:



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राष्ट्रीय परीक्षा एजेंसी
National Testing Agency
उच्च शिक्षा विभाग



विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग
University Grants Commission
Quality higher education for all

(उच्चतर शिक्षा विभाग, शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के तहत एक स्वायत्त संगठन)
(An Autonomous Organisation under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India)

Public Notice
14th January 2026

Display of provisional answer key(s) and question paper with recorded responses for inviting challenges to the provisional answer key(s) of UGC-NET December 2025 Examination.

- The National Testing Agency conducted UGC-NET December 2025 examination for 85 subjects in Computer Based Test (CBT) Mode at different cities across the country. The provisional answer key(s) for UGC-NET December 2025 examination conducted on 31st December 2025, 02nd January 2026, 03rd January 2026, 05th January 2026, 06th January 2026 & 07th January 2026 along with the subject question paper with the recorded responses are available on the website <https://ugcnet.nta.nic.in/> for candidates to challenge. The procedure for the challenge of answer keys is attached as at Annexure-I.
- The candidates who are not satisfied with the provisional answer key(s), may challenge the same by paying a non-refundable processing fee of ₹200/- (Rupees Two Hundred only) per question challenged. The details are as under:

UGC-NET December 2025 Examination		
S. No.	Description	Date(s)
1	Duration for Answer Key Challenge window	18 th January 2026 to 17 th January 2026 (upto 11:50 p.m.)
2	Last date for Payment	17 th January 2026 (upto 11:50 p.m.)
- The payment of the processing fee may be made through (through Credit Card/ Debit Card/Net Banking/AIPI Payment Modes till 17th January 2026 (upto 11:50 p.m.). No challenge will be entertained without receipt of the processing fee. The Challenges will not be accepted through any other mode.
- Challenges made by the candidates will be verified by the panel of subject experts. If the challenge of any candidate is found correct, the Answer Key will be revised and applied in the response of all the candidates accordingly. Based on the revised Final Answer Key, the result will be prepared and declared. No individual candidate will be informed about the acceptance/non-acceptance of his/her challenge. The key finalized by the Experts after the challenge will be final. Candidates are advised to visit NTA Official website: <https://ugcnet.nta.nic.in/> for latest updates.



Director (Exams), NTA



पहली मंजिल, एनएसआईसी-एमडीवीपी बिल्डिंग, ओखला इंडस्ट्रियल एस्टेट, नई दिल्ली - 110020
First Floor, NSIC-MDVP Building, Okhla Industrial Estate, New Delhi - 110020

फ़ोन/Telephone: 011-40750000 वेबसाइट/Website: <https://ugcnet.nta.nic.in> ई-मेल/E-mail: ugcnet@nta.nic.in

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This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above.

The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 25/03/2026 at 13:28:11



5. A perusal of the aforesaid notice dated 14.01.2026, shows that any candidate having any grievance/objection with the provisional answer key, was required to challenge the same within a fixed time frame of 14.01.2026 to 17.01.2026 up to 11:50 p.m. After, duly considering the objections raised during this time frame, the provisional answer key is converted to the final answer key with requisite corrections and modification, if any required.

6. In the present case, there is no document placed on record to show that the petitioner duly challenged the question bearing ID No. 4324496215. The only document available on record in this regard is annexure P-10, which is an email dated 05.02.2026, i.e. about 15 days after the window for raising objections was closed i.e. on 17.01.2026.

7. My attention has also been drawn to paragraph No. 9 and 10 of the observations made by the Hon'ble Division Bench in a batch of similar petitions, one of them being W.P.(C) 4157/2025 titled as **“Shivraj Sharma v. Consortium of National Law Universities And Ors”**. The paragraph No. 9 and 10 of the said judgment read as under:-

“9. In respect of the Question no. 14 of the Master Booklet, learned senior counsel for the respondent/Consortium submitted that within the window period provided by the respondent/Consortium, none of the candidates had availed of such facility and only one of the petitioners herein namely Ms. Harshita had objected to, for the very first time in the writ petition bearing W.P.(C) 2363/2025 preferred by her. He stoutly contended that



this type of objections being raised at this stage before this Court under Article 226 is not permissible. According to him, this question, not having been objected to, was neither referred to the Expert Committee nor reviewed further by the Oversight Committee. In such circumstances, learned senior counsel submitted that this Court cannot examine the said objection in place of an Expert Committee and substitute its own view. He relies upon the judgment of this Court in Salil Maheshwari (supra), wherein it was held that an individual cannot be heard to challenge the answer key to a particular question after discovery that no marks have been awarded particularly when such individual did not think it necessary to object to the question before the deadline for submission of objection were not availed of.

10. We find from the record that the submission of learned senior counsel is factually correct. The petitioner in W.P. (C) 2363/2025 did not ever file any objection within the window period provided by the respondent/Consortium and only after declaration of the final results, has petitioned this Court to consider her objection for Question no.14 of the Master Booklet. In case this Court were to entertain such highly belated objections, it would open a pandora's box. We can take note of the fact that sympathy, in the



*above context would entail an unending multitude of litigations, what with any and every individual filing writ petition at any time on their whims and fancies resulting in there being no finality to the examination process or to the final result. This is clearly impermissible. Additionally, there is no averment in the pleadings with respect to this question. In our considered opinion, no such question, which has not been challenged at the appropriate stage, can or should be permitted to be objected to before a Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. It would also be relevant to note that Courts are not sitting as expert bodies or subject matter experts over the questions formulated by the examination conducting authority; nor can a Court assert expertise over multifarious subjects. It is trite that the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Ran Vijay Singh (supra)* and this Court in *Shubham Pal (supra)*, reiterated the principle that if two views are possible, then the view taken by the examination conducting authority should be preferred and upheld. We concur with the view taken in *Salil Maheshwari (supra)* that an individual cannot be permitted to challenge the answer key in relation to a particular question after discovery that no marks have been awarded, particularly when such individual did not think it necessary to object to the question*



before the deadline for submission of objection. Ergo, since in the present matter, the petitioner had admittedly not submitted her objection within the window period provided, it would preclude her from raising the objection before this Court for the first time. On that score, we refrain from rendering any opinion one way or the other.”

8. In this view of the matter, it is clear that the petitioner did not raise any objection between the scheduled timeline from 14.01.2026 to 17.01.2026 with regards to the question bearing ID no. 4324496215 and he has preferred the present writ petition only after publication of the final key.

9. In view of the reasons as aforesaid, I am unable to entertain the petition at this belated stage.

10. The circular handed over is taken on record.

11. Accordingly, the writ petition is dismissed and disposed of, along with pending applications, if any.

JASMEET SINGH, J

MARCH 17, 2026/NG