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Educational (1905) Department.

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G.O., No. 761

DATED 21-11-05

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INDEXED

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[Despatch Abstract.]

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21-11-05

Matriculation Examination

Recording, with remarks, letter from the Govt. of India, Home Department, forwarding a copy of a letter which has been addressed to the Govt. of the Punjab on the subject of the minimum age at which a student may appear at the University —

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Government of Madras.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

Recd.

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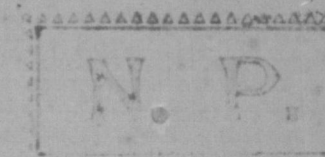
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Enclosures

Spare copies

ORIGINAL

G.O., No. 761, 21st November 1905.



Matriculation Examination.

Recording, with remark, letter from the Government of India forwarding copy of a letter addressed to the Government of the Punjab on the subject of the minimum age at which a student may appear at the University —

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper :—

Letter—from H. H. RISLEY, Esq., C.S.I., C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department (Education).
To—the Secretary to the Government of Madras, Educational Department.
Dated—Simla, the 24th October 1905.
No.—678.

I am directed to forward for the consideration of the Government of Madras a copy of a letter which has been addressed to the Government of the Punjab on the subject of the minimum age at which a student may appear at the University Matriculation Examination. The Government of India attach importance, for the reasons stated in the letter, to the adoption by all the Universities of the uniform limit of sixteen years, and I am to express a hope that this view will commend itself to the Governor in Council.

ENCLOSURE.

Letter—from H. H. RISLEY, Esq., C.S.I., C.I.E., Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department (Education).
To—the Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, Education Department.
Dated—Simla, the 10th October 1905.
No.—649.

I am directed to address you on the subject of the minimum age limit for Matriculation at the Punjab University.

2. The attention of the Government of India has been drawn to the published reports of the proceedings of the Senate of the Punjab University on the 26th June last at which it was decided, after some controversy, that the minimum age for Matriculation should be fixed at 14. From the earliest stage of the comprehensive reform of University Education in India, which was initiated by the report of the Universities Commission, the Government of India have insisted upon the principle that boys should not be permitted to proceed to the University until they are old enough to profit by more advanced methods of study and to adapt themselves to the larger responsibilities and greater freedom of collegiate life. These important ends can only be attained by fixing a minimum age for Matriculation. The views of the Commission on the subject are given in paragraphs 163 and 164 of their Report. They recognized the existence of considerable difference of opinion on the subject, and examined the main arguments against fixing an age limit, viz., (1) that it might debar students of Indian Universities from competing in England for the Civil Service Examination, (2) that it would tend to keep back specially brilliant students, and (3) that some candidates might evade it by making false statements as to their age. On the first point the Commission observed that the argument had lost all its force with the raising of the minimum age limit at the competition for the Indian Civil Service to 21. Their opinion has since been confirmed and strengthened by the recent decision of the Secretary of State fixing the minimum age limit for the examination at 22 years and the maximum at 24. In dealing with the second point the Commission dwelt upon the desirability of checking the tendency of parents to press their boys to matriculate at an immature age; on the deplorable physical evils produced by this over-pressure; and on the necessity, in view of the enhanced responsibilities of University life, of drawing a clear line between the school boy and the undergraduate. As to the third difficulty, while admitting that instances of evasion had occurred in the past, they pointed out that their recurrence could be guarded against by maintaining a continuous record of a boy's age from the time when he first goes to school.

3. Having thus disposed of the general objections to fixing an age limit at all, the Commission proceeded to consider what the limit ought to be. They observed that there was much to be said for fixing the age at 16, and the Government of India understand that all of the members, except one, were in favour of adopting that limit. In view however of the fact that this would preclude medical students from obtaining a degree or diploma qualifying them to practise their profession until they were 23 years of age, the Commission made a rather hesitating recommendation that the minimum age should be fixed at 15.

4. The Government of India reviewed the proposals of the Commission in paragraphs 27, 28, of their letter No. 859, dated the 24th October 1902, which was published at the time. They declined to admit that the convenience of a small class of students should be permitted to override the educational interests of the students at large. They observed that the natural precocity of the Indian youth, the deplorable physical and mental consequences of over-pressure upon young boys, and the dangers attending their premature entry upon collegiate life furnished weighty arguments in favour of fixing the age at which a candidate may present himself for examination at 16 rather than 15. They added that the inducement to overstate age with the object of matriculating earlier would be greatly reduced if in the case of Government servants such a statement were held to be conclusive and could in no circumstances be revised after entering Government service. These views were accepted by most of the authorities then consulted, and they have been consistently adhered to by the Governor-General in Council down to the present time.

5. The Governor-General in Council sees no reason now to recede from the position which was taken up, on full consideration, three years ago, and he considers the question of securing uniformity in the age for Matriculation to be one of sufficient importance to justify the exercise of the powers conferred in this behalf by the Indian Universities Act, 1904 (VIII of 1904). The experience of the best educational experts confirms the opinion that the admission to the University of boys of less than 16 years of age is ultimately harmful to themselves, since the secondary school course ought to extend over the whole of their boyhood up to at least that age, and when they are pressed to complete it in a shorter time their intellectual energies soon afterwards show signs of exhaustion. Consideration of the moral aspects of the question points to a similar conclusion. The standards of discipline at school and at college differ in essential respects and there is abundant evidence to prove that college is not a fit place for boys under 16 years of age. It does not follow that a lad who is intellectually exceptional is therefore a fitter subject for the comparative freedom of University life than one of average ability, or that he can be permitted with less risk to associate with college students of more advanced experience. Nor can the interests of the schools and colleges be left out of account. It is inevitable that whatever age is fixed as the minimum will at once become the standard, and if a low limit is adopted pressure will be brought to bear upon the schools to pass as many boys as possible at that age. Thus the standard of tuition in the schools will be debased, and this in its turn will react upon the college teaching, which will have to be adapted to the requirements of immature pupils who have imperfectly assimilated the subjects taught to them at school.

6. To these arguments it may be added, that in view of the close relations existing between the different Universities, it is desirable to place no obstacles in the way of students who have commenced their studies at one University and desire to complete them at another. In this view the general adoption of 16 as the minimum age for Matriculation is, in the opinion of the Governor-General in Council, almost a necessary consequence of the fact that this limit has been recommended by the Allahabad University, and has been sanctioned by the Government of the United Provinces. Uniformity in the age of Matriculation is further demanded by the fact that the Matriculation Examination is at present recognised in most provinces as a test qualifying for admission to a large number of Government appointments. The conditions under which this test is applied must be identical everywhere, and it would be detrimental both to the public service and to the candidates for employment in it to accept in a particular province the inferior standard of educational attainments which would result from a reduction of the age for Matriculation to 14 or 15.

7. For these various reasons the Government of India look upon the action taken by the Allahabad University as introducing a reform of vital importance to the future of Indian education. It is equally in the interests of the schools, the colleges and the Universities themselves that the age for Matriculation should not be fixed at less than sixteen years. Occasional precocity is no great gain: universal immaturity is a national loss. The Governor-General in Council hopes that these considerations will not be lost sight of by the remaining Universities, and he commends them to the attention of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in dealing with the University at Lahore.

8. The Government of India recognise the praiseworthy efforts which the Punjab University has made in framing its regulations to promote the interests of sound education, and they trust that the Senate will realize that the modification of their proposals upon which the Government of India feel bound to insist will operate to the advantage of the students themselves by relieving them of the harmful pressure to which they are at present subjected.

Order—No. 761, Educational, dated 21st November 1905.

Recorded. The Government will defer consideration of the question of the age limit for Matriculation until they have received the proposals of the Senate in respect of the new regulations which are at present under its consideration.

(True Extract.)

H. D. TAYLOR,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Director of Public Instruction.
,, Registrar, University of Madras.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

**NOTES CONNECTED WITH G.O., No. 761, EDUCATIONAL, DATED
21ST NOVEMBER 1905.**

[SUBJECT.—*Minimum age limit for Matriculation.*]

*From the Government of India, Home Department, No. 678, Education, dated 24th
October 1905.*

Circulated with copy of letter No. 859, dated 24th October 1902.

H. D. TAYLOR—30-10-05.

A[MPHILL]—31-10-05.

What powers have Government in this matter under the Act.

G. S[TOKES]—2-11-05.

Seen.

G. S. F[ORBES]—3-11-05.

Please note with reference to Hon'ble Mr. Stokes's query. The papers are for Council to-morrow.

H. D. TAYLOR—6-11-05.

Under section 25, sub-section (2), clause (o), of the Indian Universities Act, 1904, the Senate may, with the sanction of Government, make regulations providing for "the conditions to be complied with by candidates for matriculation." Under section 26 sub-section (1), clause (b), "if any additions to or alterations in the draft submitted "appear to the Government to be necessary, the Government after consulting the "Senate, may sanction the proposed body of regulations, with such additions and "alterations as appear to the Government to be necessary."

P. T. THARYAN—6-11-05.

The letter of the Government of India will be referred to the Director of Public Instruction u.o. for early remark.

H. D. TAYLOR—7-11-05.

To the Director of Public Instruction.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION OFFICE.

It does not appear that there is much more to be said. The Government of India have put forward practically all the arguments which have been advanced on both sides. It seems to me that any reasonable limit may be fixed by any University without its being made a matter of almost national importance. Sixteen used to be the limit in the London University and I never heard complaints.

1,000-14-6-05

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

A. GALLETTI—13-11-05.

H. D. TAYLOR—13-11-05.

READ AGAIN G.O., No., dated 190

READ ALSO:—

C. No. 1820, From the Port of India, Home Departt, No. 678, dated 24-10-1905

H. D. TAYLOR--16-11-05.

H. D. TAYLOR—20-11-05.

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ORDER

No. 761, dated 21-11-1905.

A. GALLETTI—20-11-05.

H. D. TAYLOR—21-11-05.

Recorded. The Govt will defer consideration of the question of the age limit for matriculation until they have received the proposals of the Senate in respect of the new regulations which are at present under its consideration.

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u Registrar, University of Madras

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