



DECISION

Complaint No.

: POS/KR-002/2024

Name and address of the complainant

: Ms. Madiha Bano,
R/o. House No. N-H/192, Labour Square,
Korangi No.3 ½ , Karachi

Name of the Agency Complained against

: Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Human Resource Research & Development Board (BBSHRR&DB), Universities & Boards Department

Name & Designation of Investigating Officer

: Mr. Muhammad Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqui,
Advisor-in-Charge, R.O Korangi

Vetted by

: Mr. Ghulam Abid Shaikh,
Advisor-K

Subject

**REQUEST FOR ALLOWING TO COMPLETE
GRAPHIC DESIGNING COURSE WHICH WAS
LEFT INCOMPLETE DUE TO LOCKDOWN
DURING COVID-19.**

COMPLAINT

Ms. Madiha Bano filed a complaint on 04.07.2024 against BBSHRR&DB, stating that she had been selected under Scholarship Programme Phase XII for four-month Graphic Designing course at IBA University City Campus, Garden. She attended classes initially, but the training was discontinued due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Consequently, she could not complete the training and did not receive certification. She requested us for intervention.

PROCEEDINGS

2. The complaint was referred to the Secretary, BBSHRR&DB, for report. In response, the Assistant Director-II, BBSHRR&DB vide letter dated 30.10.2024 reported that:

- a) The complainant had attended the first two months with 87% and 80% attendance, but attended only 7 days in the third month.
- b) Training was suspended on 24.03.2020 due to lockdown and resumed on 29.09.2020, with examinations held thereafter.
- c) The complainant did not return to the institute nor appeared in the examinations.
- d) Subsequently, she requested permission to complete the training or re-enroll, but could not be accommodated as she had crossed the upper age limit of 35 years and, as per policy, once enrolled a trainee cannot be re-registered.
- e) Nevertheless, she was permitted to sit in Phase-XV (November, 2023) as an extra trainee, without stipend and certification.

(2)

3. The complainant was advised to justify her non-attendance after resumption of training. The complainant submitted her reply dated 23.07.2025, but failed to provide the required clarification.

FINDINGS

4. The record establishes that Ms. Madiha Bano was unable to complete her course primarily due to the unprecedented COVID-19 lockdown. While it is correct that she did not resume training after 29.09.2020, despite opportunity, this omission does not diminish the genuine hardship caused by the pandemic, which disrupted students and trainees across the Province.
5. It is noted that the agency acted strictly in accordance with its existing rules, applying the age limit of 18–35 years and the one-time enrolment restriction. No element of maladministration is established against the agency. On the contrary, it extended goodwill by allowing the complainant to attend Phase XV as an extra trainee.
6. However, education and skill development are not merely technical exercises bound by rigid criteria; they are instruments of human advancement. Policies in this domain should be facilitative and flexible, particularly when extraordinary global circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, deprive individuals of fair opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. In light of the above, the following measures are recommended for the agency's policy review:
- a) Hardship Clause: Incorporation of a hardship clause in training policy to address interruptions caused by circumstances beyond the trainee's control.
 - b) Bridging/Certification Options: Policies may allow:
 - Completion of remaining modules through a bridging programme, or
 - Provisional certification reflecting skills attained.
 - c) Special Consideration for the Complainant: Although the complainant failed to justify her absence after resumption, the extraordinary context of COVID-19 and the educational principle of promoting lifelong learning justify a one-time compassionate exception. She may therefore be granted an opportunity to complete the Graphic Designing course with entitlement to certification.

(3)

DECISION

8. In view of the above, it is clear that no maladministration could be established against the Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Human Resource Research & Development Board in this matter.

9. *However, in the interest of fairness and in view of the wider public interest in promoting education and vocational training, the Secretary, BBSHRR&DB, is advised to sympathetically consider the case of Ms. Madiha Bano as a special hardship matter and explore the possibility of her re-enrolment with full rights to certification. The Board is further advised to review its policy framework to incorporate a hardship clause and flexible certification options for future cases.*

Given under my hand and seal of office.



Sd/-
(Muhammad Sohail Rajput)
Sitara-e-Imtiaz. PAS
Ombudsman Sindh
Karachi, dated: 2nd September, 2025