

(B) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC, EBC and DNT Students for studying in India

1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to the OBC, EBC and DNT students studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education.

2. SCOPE

These scholarships shall be available for studies in India only and will be awarded by the Government of State/Union Territory to which the applicant actually belongs, i.e. permanently settled.

3. DEFINITIONS

a) "**Group 1:** Degree and Post Graduate level professional courses" shall mean: all Professional courses in Medicine, Engineering, Technology, Planning, Architecture, Design, Fashion Technology, Agriculture, Veterinary & Allied Sciences, Management, Business Finance /Administration, Computer Science/ Applications (ii) Post Graduate Diploma courses in various branches of Management & Medicine(iii) C.A./I.C.W.A./C.S./I.C.F.A. etc. (iv) M.Phil., Ph.D. and Post-Doctoral Programmes (D.Lit., D.Sc. etc.) of Group I, Group II and Group III courses .(v) L.L.B, Integrated LL B, L.L.M (vi) Commercial Pilot License Courses from GoI institutes (including helicopter pilot and multiengine) (maximum 20 slots per annum)

b) "**Group 2:** Other Professional Courses leading to Degree, Diploma, Certificate" shall mean all Professional Courses leading to Degree, M Ed. / M. Pharma., Diploma, Certificate in areas like Pharmacy (B Pharma.), Nursing(B Nursing), BFS, other para- medical branches like rehabilitation, diagnostics etc., Mass Communication, Hotel Management & Catering, Travel/Tourism/Hospitality Management, Interior Decoration, Nutrition& Dietetics, Commercial Art, Financial Services (e.g. Banking, Insurance, Taxation etc.) for which entrance qualification is minimum Sr. Secondary (10+2) and Vocational stream, ITI courses and Polytechnic where entrance qualification is Class XII or above.

c) "**Group 3:** Graduate and Post Graduate course" shall mean: courses not covered under Group 1& Group 2 e.g. BA / B.Sc. / B.Com etc. M.A/ M. Sc./ M.Com etc.

d) "**Group 4:** All post-matriculation (Post Class X level) non-degree courses" shall mean: All post-matriculation level non-degree courses for which entrance qualification is High School (Class X), e.g. Senior secondary certificate (class XI and XII); both general and vocational stream, ITI courses, 3 year diploma courses in Polytechnics, etc.

Note: The list of courses in various groups is indicative and States/UTs may add courses as per laid down standard in the State/UT.

e) **"Freeship Card"** shall mean: A card issued by the State Govt/ UT Administration that entitles a student eligible for scholarship under this Scheme, to take admission in an institution, without pre-payment of tuition fee and hostel fee.

4. ELIGIBILITY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

4.1 Only such educational Institutions which maintain the laid down academic standards shall be covered under the scheme. The following conditions regarding the courses offered, performance of the institution, Aadhaar based attendance system are also required to be adhered to by the Institutions/Universities/Colleges in order to be eligible under the scheme:

i. Only Institutions/Colleges with the 'AISHE Code'/UDISE' Code' shall be eligible for the scholarship scheme. Based on the AISHE/UDISE-Code of the institution, all details of the institution such as - registration, affiliation and accreditation, courses being offered and number of seats approved for each course - will be pulled from the AISHE/UDISE server on to the scholarship portal automatically.

ii. All participating higher education institutions shall get NAAC/NBA accreditation before 2024, for continuation in the scheme from 2025-26 onwards.

iii. The scholarship benefits shall be linked with Aadhaar based attendance system. Therefore, the college/institution will maintain Aadhaar based attendance on a daily basis and will submit attendance details on the portal.

iv. The institutions will submit half-yearly self-audited reports to the State Governments in a prescribed format which shall be separately issued.

v. The institutions should be willing to honour the FREESHIP CARD issued by the State/District Authority through the scholarship portal and admit the student without insisting on pre-payment of the college/tuition fee or hostel fee. This would be paid by the student on release of the scholarship amount by the Government as per the provisions of this scheme. In this regard, the State Governments will coordinate with the institutions located in their respective States.

4.2 Scholarships will be given for the study of all recognized post-matriculation or post-secondary courses (Intermediate/Senior Secondary, Diploma, long-term Vocational Training Certificate, Graduate, Post Graduate courses etc.) pursued in recognized Institutions / Universities/ Colleges falling in any of the following 9 categories:

- i. Institutions of National Importance;
- ii. Central University/ State University/ Autonomous colleges recognized by UGC

- iii. and Universities /Colleges recognized under section 2(f) of UGC Act;
Deemed Universities;
- iv. All Private Universities recognized by State/Centre;
- v. Private Professional Institutions affiliated to a recognized Central/State University and covered by a Fee Fixation Committee as mandated by Supreme Court;
- vi. Recognized schools/colleges for Classes XI and class XII;
- vii. Diploma granting Institutions as recognized by State/UT Governments;
- viii. Vocational Training Institutes affiliated to National Council of Vocational Training (NCVT);
- ix. Institutions affiliated/ approved by the appropriate bodies like NMC/AICTE etc. or any regulatory body established by State/UT/Centre.

Provided that where a particular number of seats for a particular course have been recognized/ authorized by the concerned regulatory authority, the scholarships shall be restricted to those numbers and courses .

5. CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY

- i. The scholarships will be open to Indian nationals belonging to OBCs, EBCs and DNTs, as notified by the Central Govt./State Govt./ UT Admin.
- ii. These scholarships will be given for the study of all recognized post-matriculation or post-secondary courses pursued in recognized institutions as specified in para 3 above.
- iii. Only those candidates who belong to OBCs/EBCs/DNTs so specified in relation to the State/UT to which the applicant actually belongs, i.e. permanently settled and who have passed the Matriculation or Higher secondary or any higher examination of a recognized University or Board of Secondary Education will be eligible.
- iv. Candidates who, after passing one stage of education, are studying in the same stage of education in different subject e.g. B.Sc. after B.A or B.Com.after B.A. or M.A. in a subject after M.A in another subject will not be eligible.
- v. Students who, after having completed their educational career in one professional line, e.g., LLB after B.T/B. Ed will not be eligible.
- vi. Students studying in XI Class of the Higher Secondary School courses or the XII class of the Multipurpose High School will not be eligible for it being a continuous school course. However, in cases, where tenth class examination of such courses is treated as equivalent to Matriculation and students who after passing tenth class join other courses, such students will be treated as post-matric students and will be eligible for the award of scholarships.

vii. Students pursuing Post-graduate courses in medicine will be eligible only if they are not allowed to practice during the period of their course.

viii. Students who after failing or passing the Under Graduate/Post-Graduate examinations in Arts/Science/Commerce join any recognized professional or Technical certificate/diploma/degree courses will be awarded scholarships if otherwise eligible. No subsequent failure will be condoned except for courses in Group '1' and no further change in the course will be allowed thereafter.

ix. Students, who pursue their studies through correspondence/online courses, are also eligible. The term correspondence includes distant and continuous education for courses in Central/ State Universities only.

x. Only two boys of the same parents/guardian will be entitled to receive scholarships. This restriction will, however, not apply to girls. Accordingly, scholarship availed by girls of same parents/guardian will not adversely affect admissibility of availing scholarship upto two boys of same parents/guardian.

xi. A scholarship holder under this Scheme will not hold any other scholarship/ stipend. If awarded any other scholarship/ stipend, the students can exercise his/her option for either of the two Scholarships / stipends, whichever is more beneficial to him/her and should inform the awarding authority through the Head of the Institution about the option made. No scholarship will be paid to the students under this Scheme from the date he/she accepts any other scholarships/ stipend. The student can however, accept free lodging or a grant or ad-hoc monetary help from the State Government or any other source for the purchase of books, equipment or for meeting the expenses on board and lodging, in addition to the scholarship amount paid under the Scheme.

xii. Scholarship holders who are receiving coaching in any of the pre-examination training centers with financial assistance from the Central Government/ State Government will not be eligible for stipend under the coaching schemes for the duration of the coaching programme.

xiii. The ceiling on age limit for admission as regular student in different classes should be decided by concerned Institutions.

xiv. Employed students whose income combined with the income of their parents/guardians does not exceed Rs. 2.50 lakh per annum shall be eligible for post -matric scholarship.

xv. Unemployed students whose parents/guardians income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 2.50 lakh per annum will be entitled for the scholarship under the scheme.

Note 1: Income Certificate is required to be taken once only; i.e. at the time of admission of courses, which are continuing for more than one year.

Note 2: All seats filled through arbitrary and non-transparent processes (including management quota, NRI quota, spot admissions etc.) without following the merit criteria as decided by the State Government are not eligible for these scholarships. The fees claimed against management quota seats, spot admission seat in any Institution /University will not be reimbursed. In case of any contradiction on the classification of seats or non-clarity on the classification of seats in the State/UT, the following criteria may be followed:

If there is no arbitrariness/ discretion in the admission process and the fee for the course is fixed by the Fee Fixation/Fee Rationalization committee set up by the competent authority, the said seats may not be considered as the Management Quota Seats. However, the State Governments may satisfy themselves of the following before release of scholarships:

- a) That the applicants claiming the scholarship have been admitted through a transparent process which involved calling of applications through advertisements, preparation of ranks, selection of candidates on merit list, and publication of selection list and others as deemed fit by the State Government;
- b) That the fees for courses are duly approved by the Fee Fixation/Fee Rationalization Committee set up by the competent authority.

6. ROLE OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS

6.1 All the OBC/EBC/DNT students with annual income of up to Rs 2.50 lakh per annum would be eligible under the scheme. However, the State Government will additionally make special efforts to identify the poorest households from various sources and enroll the eligible students under the scheme in a mission mode. Further, these students would be monitored on regular basis so that they continue with their studies. Such students shall include (i) students from OBC/EBC/DNT households with three or more deprivations as per SECC-2011 (ii) students from OBC/EBC/DNT households where one or both the parents are illiterate and (iii) the students who have passed 10th standard from a State Government/ Municipality/Local Body school. In this regard, States/UTs will launch special campaigns to identify and cover such students.

6.2 States/UTs may adopt methodology suitable to the local conditions for identification of such students e.g. OBC/EBC/DNT majority districts /blocks/villages may be taken first for identification of poorest students or students leaving class 10th or 12th class may be tracked in association with the education department or data emanating from other Central/State schemes indicating the dropouts rates or other sources as deemed fit. Every State Government shall undertake a campaign every year in March/April to identify such students and mentor them to enroll and avail scholarships. Such students will be helped for identification of courses also as per their skills.

6.3 Awareness drive shall be undertaken by the State Governments/UTs about the scheme through the Gram Panchayats Notice Boards, school committees, and discussions in the parent-teacher association meetings and other public awareness measures, in order to extend its coverage and also minimize any misuse by unscrupulous elements.

6.4 The States are required to take up identification of the students for fresh enrolment by taking up systematic drive covering all the higher secondary schools and encouraging the pupils who have dropped out after Class 12th to come back to higher education.

6.5 It is essential that the fresh enrolments to the extent possible are made in the courses which are having employment potential. For this purpose, the State may do an exercise in consultation with the Higher Education Department of the State Government, and the State Skill Mission for identifying courses which would improve the employment potential of the students. It is strongly advised that fresh enrolment may be made in these courses. Such skill courses should be long term courses with periodicity of at least 1 year and conducted by the institutions as per Para 4 of the scheme guidelines.

6.6. State Government will ensure that the beneficiary, at the time of admission, applies for the scholarship also. In this regard, the State Government may open facilitation centers or nominate a nodal officer in the educational institutions so that the entry into the student database for renewals and fresh admissions can be done in a stipulated timeframe.

6.7 The State Governments shall strive to put in place a scholarship portal that has all features and share the data on a real-time basis with the Central portal.

6.8 The State/Central Government shall have robust monitoring systems, including field inspections, social audits, data analytics etc. so that timely payments are made to eligible beneficiaries.

6.9 States/UTs shall ensure that Fee Rationalization/Fixation Committees are set up for all courses.

6.10 The State Govt./UTs are required to adhere Deptt. of Expenditure, (MoF), GoI's OM No. 1(13)/PFMS/FCD/2020 dated 23rd March, 2021 regarding the procedure for release of funds under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and monitoring utilization of funds with a view to have more effective cash management and bring more transparency in the PEM. The procedure will be followed by all the State Governments and UTs regarding release and monitoring of funds under CSS.

7. COMPONENTS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

7.1 The scholarship includes the following components for the complete duration of the course:-

Category of courses	Yearly (in Rs)		
	Academic Allowance	Tuition Fee	Total
Group 1: Degree and Post Graduate level professional courses	10000	10000	20000
Group 2: Other Professional Courses leading to Degree, Diploma, Certificate	8000	5000	13000
Group 3: Graduate and Post Graduate courses not covered under Group I & Group II	6000	2000	8000
Group 4: All post-matriculation (Post Class X level) non-degree courses	5000	0	5000

Note 1. Students pursuing C A . /I.C.W.A. /C.S. /I.C.F.A. shall be treated as day scholars for the purpose of academic allowance. Students studying through correspondence /online courses shall not be eligible for academic allowance.

Note 2. Tuition fees shall be paid to online/correspondence students.

7.2 The State Governments may, if they so decide, top up the academic allowance from their own resources.

8. FREESHIP CARD AND PROCESS FOR ISSUE

8.1 All eligible students shall be entitled to take admission in the institutions without pre-payment of tuition fees and hostel fees as per the Scheme Guidelines. To enable this, a FREESHIP CARD will be issued by the State Government to the eligible students, as per procedure detailed below. This Freeship card shall make the student eligible to study in the institution without pre-payment of the fees, and on the condition that as and when amount is released to the student's account, the institution would be intimated to collect the same from the student.

8.2 The student shall, well before the expected date of admission, register for issuance of a Freeship Card on the respective scholarship portal giving the details like the Aadhaar number, the name of the course in which he/she wants to take admission (e.g. MBBS, B.Sc., Class XI etc.) and an undertaking that the institution's charges would be paid within 7 working days from the date of receipt of the scholarship amount in his/her account. For the purpose of registration of Freeship Card, the portals shall remain open throughout the year.

8.3 The verification of the income, caste and merit details should be automatically done from the databases which are linked online for instant verification. The process should be entirely paperless. Until the above system is brought into effect, the documents may be scanned and uploaded which include: passport size photograph , copy of each of the certificates for diploma, degree etc. in respect of all examinations passed, Caste certificate duly signed by the authorized officer, valid Income certificate issued by the competent

authority as prescribed by the State Govt. etc.

8.4 After the registration on the Portal, if the student is found eligible, all States/UTs will complete the verification process within 30 days from the receipt of the registration request from the students and issue the Freeship Card through the IT portal, mentioning the course for which application is made so that the eligible students are not denied admissions due to delay in depositing tuition fees. It should be possible for the student to download the Free Ship Card from the portal itself. Once complete digitization of all the required certificates is done, such Freeship Card shall be automatically generated immediately on registration, if the student is found eligible.

8.5 The Freeship Card shall contain the details given in Annexure-1, and shall be digitally signed. For the purpose of admission, the Freeship card will remain valid for period of one year from the date of issue.

8.6 If a student wants to change his/her course before taking admission in an institution, he can do so by logging on IT portal and a fresh Freeship Card shall be issued automatically for all eligible students.

8.7 In case of renewal students, there shall be no need for fresh registration for the Freeship card and a card once issued to him/her shall be valid for the entire duration of the course.

9. PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING AND VERIFICATION

9.1 Application-on-the-day-of-admission: The institutions shall ensure that all students admitted to their institution and having Freeship Cards issued as detailed in para 8 of these Guidelines, apply on the IT portal for the scholarship, along with documents needs to be uploaded as notified by the prescribed authority, on the same day as the date of admission into the institution.

9.2 On the day of admission itself, the institution shall verify on the scholarship portal that the student has taken admission in the institution with the same course as mentioned on the Freeship card and is now a bonafide student of the institution.

9.3. In case of renewal students, the student shall be auto-renewed based on the attendance and confirmation from the institution of the student having been promoted to the next class and having joined back the same course as hosteller/day scholar, as the case may be.

10. SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

All the eligible OBC/EBC/DNT candidates will be given scholarships subject to the condition of eligibility prescribed in the Scheme, Candidates belonging to one State, but studying in another State, will be awarded scholarship by the State to which they belong and will submit their applications to the competent authorities in that State. In the matter of exemption from fee or other concessions also, they will be treated as studying in their own State.

11. DURATION AND RENEWAL OF AWARDS

11.1 The award once made will be payable up to the completion of the course subject to satisfactory academic performance and attendance of 75% in every academic year. The attendance will be verified through Aadhaar based attendance System.

11.2 If a scholar is unable to appear in the annual examination owing to illness, the award may be renewed subject to production of medical certificate from prescribed authority and acceptance of the same by institution /college.

11.3 If, according to the Regulations of a University/Institution, a student is promoted to the next higher class even though he/she may not have actually passed in lower class and is required to take examination of the junior class again after sometime, he/she will be entitled to scholarship for the class to which he/she is promoted if the student is otherwise eligible for scholarship. Further, in case a student fails in any class and then again joins the same class as a regular student, he/she will be eligible for scholarship for one additional year or the actual period, whichever is lower.

11.4 If a scholar is pursuing Group I course fails in the examination for the first time, the award may be renewed. For second and subsequent failures in any class the student shall bear his/her own expenses until he/she secures promotion to the next higher class.

12. PAYMENT MECHANISM

12.1 The scholarship portals would remain open throughout the year so that all eligible students can register for the Freship Card and apply for the scholarships.

12.2 The entire scholarship amount - both from the State and Central Government - including the tuition fees, academic allowance and any other admissible allowance will be paid directly into the account of the students ONLY through DBT preferably through an Aadhaar Based Payment System (Aadhaar Payment Bridge) from 2021-22 . The States shall preferably release the payments through PFMS System so that the accounts of the students are not required to be validated again.

12.3 Scholarship will not be paid for the period of internship/housemanship in the M.B.B.S course or for a practical training in other course if the student is in receipt of some remuneration during the internship period or some allowance/ stipend during the practical training in other course.

12.4 30% of the funds allocated earmarked for girl students and 5% for students with disabilities.

12.5 Depending on availability of funds, first preference in disbursement of scholarships would be given to students of Government Institutions and then to students of Government aided institutions and thereafter disbursement will be made to the students of unaided private institutions.

12.6 The Ministry of Social Justice vide notification number 428 dated Feb,16,2017 has notified Aadhaar as identity document under Section 7 of Aadhaar Act 2016 for all Scholarship Schemes w.e.f. 16th February 2017.

12.7 The authentication through Aadhaar would be compulsory at the time of renewals, if not provided earlier at the time of admission.

13. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SCHEME

13.1 All the State Governments/UT Administrations will announce starting from April, the details of the Scheme and invite applications by issuing an advertisement in the leading newspapers of the State and through their respective websites/ Scholarship portals and other modes of media. The applicant should submit the completed application to the prescribed authority on the portal specified for this purpose before the last date prescribed for receipt of applications.

14. 'FUNDS-LIMITED' NATURE OF THE SCHEME

14.1 Due to budgetary constraint and 'funds limited' nature of the existing Scheme, it is not possible for the Central Government to meet the entire demand of the States/UTs. Therefore, a Notional Allocation (NA) under the Scheme shall be conveyed at the beginning of the financial year to States/UTs in proportion to total population as per census. The States/UTs are expected to send proposals within the notional allocation.

14.2 States/UTs will sub-allocate their NA, district-wise and group-wise, for all non-professional courses. Such sub-allocation would not be necessary for professional courses, as institutions of professional education tend to be concentrated in major cities/centres. However, the State Government is expected to lay down criteria for selection for award of scholarship under both types of courses, professional and non-professional, to the extent of available funds, based on merit-cum-means.

14.3 States will earmark at least 25% of the total outlay under the Scheme for Group 4 courses which include Class-XI and XII and all other post-matriculation level non-degree courses, diploma courses in polytechnics etc. Such earmarking would encourage more target

students to join entry-level courses of tertiary education which would enable them subsequently to take up courses leading to higher qualifications.

14.4 Central assistance given to a State/UT would have to be first utilized to cover renewal cases (i.e. students already awarded scholarships during the previous years against Central Assistance), and only the balance amount left may be utilized to cover new cases.

14.5 The proposal for Central Assistance should be accompanied with the details of physical and financial progress in the prescribed proforma.

14.6 As the total demand of the States/UTs cannot be covered under the Central Assistance, the States/UTs shall provide remaining scholarship grants to the eligible students from their own budget.

15. FUNDING PATTERN OF THE SCHEME

15.1 There will be a 60: 40 sharing ratio between the Centre and States. For North Eastern States and for the states of Uttarakhand and Himanchal Pradesh the sharing ratio will be 90:10. For UTs without legislatures, 100% funds shall be provided by Centre. The central assistance for the scheme will be apportioned to States on pro-rata basis, based on total population and other such criteria. Accordingly, a notional allocation (NA) under the Scheme shall be conveyed at the beginning of each financial year to States/UTs, with the request to send proposals within the NA. The broad procedure followed is as below:

- a) At the beginning of each financial year, notional allocation(NA) of funds of States/UTs is made by this Ministry, from the overall annual outlay of the Scheme, on the basis of population of each State/UT.
- b) States/UTs will incur expenditure under the Scheme at least to the sum total of "Central Assistance or NA and matching State share".
- c) However, they would be free to allocate funds from the State-Plan, over and above the sum total of "Central Assistance or NA and matching State share" for funding additional scholarship under the Scheme. Any such additional expenditure will have to be borne by the State Government/UT Administration itself, and will generally not be eligible for reimbursement from the Centre. However, such additional expenditure incurred by a State /UT may be considered for reimbursement by the Central Government, to the extent of availability of savings (mainly from States which are not able to fully avail of their notional allocation, for any reason), towards the end of a financial year.

15.2 The entire scholarship amount - both from the State and Central Government - including the academic allowance and disability allowance, if any, will be paid directly into the account of the students or parents ONLY through DBT preferably through an Aadhaar Based Payment System (Aadhaar Payment Bridge-AePS).

15.3 The State Govt./UTs are required to adhere Deptt. of Expenditure, (MoF), GoI's OM No. 1(13)/PFMS/FCD/2020 dated 23.03.2021 regarding the procedure for release of funds under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and monitoring utilization of funds with a view to have more effective cash management and bring more transparency in the PEM. The procedure will be followed by all the State Governments and UTs regarding release and monitoring of funds under CSS.

15.4 The Ministry of Social Justice vide notification number 428 dated Feb,16,2017 has notified Aadhaar as identity document under Section 7 of Aadhaar Act 2016 for all Scholarship Schemes w.e.f. 16th February 2017. The authentication through Aadhaar would be compulsory at the time of renewals, if not provided earlier at the time of admission.

15.5 The implementation of the scheme would be in accordance with the provisions of GFR 2017. Submission of UC should be as per prescribed forms as per GFR, 2017. Further, as per provisions of rule 230(8) of GFR, 2017, all interest or other earnings against Grants-in-aid or advances released to any grantee institution should be mandatorily remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India immediately after finalization of accounts.

15.6 **Administrative Charges:** The administrative cost for administration, monitoring and evaluation shall be limited to 1% of the annual scheme cost. The cost would be utilized for development of portal, conduct of social audits, publicity and awareness or any other activity for the efficient implementation of the scheme.

16. IT FRAMEWORK

16.1 The scheme shall be run on an online platform with robust cyber security measures that would assure transparency, accountability, efficiency, and timely delivery of the assistance without any delays. The online portal would be suitably modified for this purpose.

16.2 If any State is already a running online portal that fulfils all the laid down parameters, they can continue with it, but share the data on real-time basis to the National Scholarship Portal or any other portal as specified by the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment in due course through instructions for enabling constant monitoring. Therefore, all States/UTs implementing the scheme will migrate to online processing of disbursement of scholarships, where not already done. The scholarship portal should mandatorily have the following features:

- a) The IT portal shall be integrated with the AISHE/UDISE portal for pulling the data about the institution in which the student has taken admission.
- b) At the time of registration for Freeship Card, every student should provide an Aadhaar ID/Aadhaar EID and other alternative form of ID as per this Ministry's notification no. 428 dated 16.02.2017 which will enable elimination of duplication and false claims. The Aadhaar authentication is mandatory in case of renewals, if not provided at the time of admission. The Aadhaar number entered by the students should go through demo-auth on real-time basis before allowing entry into the registration portal.
- c) The States shall undertake fool-proof verification of the eligibility, caste status, Aadhaar identification and bank account details on the online portal.
- d) There shall be no upload of any documents or any certificates into the system. All data should be auto-verified by linking databases through digilocker or any such mechanism, such as (i) school boards' results, including the CBSE/ICSE along with the certificates maintained by them; (ii) database of income certificates, domicile and caste certificates issued by State/District Administration and (iii) databases maintained by the Universities and Colleges, using Aadhaar number as the link.
- e) All verification process of the students should be done using the above authenticated databases automatically using the digital process with little or no manual intervention. There should be no system of verification by the institutions or even the district level officers. Till such time such a system is put in place, the manual verification shall be completed within 30 days from the date of application, with a provision for 'presumed approval' if the same is not completed within 30 days.
- f) A suitable system will be put in place for taking Aadhaar based attendance system which is non-intrusive and automatic. Till such a system is finalized by the Central Govt., the institution shall upload the attendance of the scholarship holder every month in the Attendance module that would be developed in the IT system.
- g) There shall be no system of calling for the bank account details of the students and authenticating it. All payments should preferably go through Aadhaar Based Payment System (APB - Aadhaar Payment Bridge) after checking the Aadhaar number with the NPCI mapper.
- h) The renewals should be automatic based on promotion to the next class and having the required attendance, subject to confirmation of the student having joined back the same course as hosteller/day scholar, as the case may be. There should not be any requirement for the student to apply for renewals.
- i) A performance module to monitor the progress of student as well as performance of the institution should be suitably designed and incorporated.

j) Apart from this, the States shall maintain a complete database of the beneficiaries under various other scholarship schemes to ensure de-duplication of the beneficiaries.

k) The portal shall incorporate an online grievance redressal mechanism linking all the authorities responsible for implementation on the scholarship portal.

l) There shall be a provision indicating the students of the poorest households, as per the parameters provided under the Scheme, selected for scholarship.

m) The portal will make arrangements so that the students, once declared blacklisted, may not be able to apply for scholarship again.

17. ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

17.1 Every participating State/UT, on or before 28th February of the preceding year, will prepare a State level Annual Plan for the scheme. In case the State has any other initiative on similar lines to this scheme, this may be mentioned separately in the Action Plan. The Action Plan should give clearly the targets, eligibility, proposed coverage separately for poorest households, processes for identification, identification of courses having employment potential, systems for monitoring etc.

17.2 The Department will constitute a Project Appraisal Committee to appraise and approve the Annual Action Plans. These plans would be appraised at the Centre and the outlay for each State would be finalized before 30th April, of every year as per the annual increase indicated under the funding pattern. The constitution of the committee will be informed through separate instructions.

18. TIMELINES FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS: All the States/UTs/Centre would adhere to the following timelines for processing of the applications and release of scholarship amounts during a financial year:

- The scholarship portals would remain open throughout the year so that all eligible students can register for the Freeship Card and apply for the scholarships.
- Disbursal of scholarships for all applications (fresh/renewals) shall be made in one installment as per the following schedule as far as possible:

Sl. No	LineofAction	Timeline
1	Finalization of Notional Allocation	By 1 st April of the F.Y.
2	Submission of proposal by the States/UTs within Notional Allocation	By 30 th April of the F.Y.
3	Opening of Portal for registration by students	1 st April
4	Closing of Portal for registration	30 th June
5	Verification by the institutions to be completed	31 st July
6	Verification by the State Govt	15 th August

7	Release of Central Assistance into the SNA, as per the data uploaded on to the central portal	31 st August
8	Payment of scholarships by the State Govt using DBT process (before)	30 th September

19. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

19.1 The monitoring of the financial and physical performance of the Scheme will be done through seeking detailed information from the agencies implementing the Scheme and for the physical aspect the agencies implementing will be required to furnish Quarterly Progress Reports regarding the number of beneficiaries receiving award under the Scheme, both class[wise and gender-wise. On the financial side, details of actual expenditure incurred during the last financial year and expenditure proposed for the present financial year will be submitted by the agencies concerned. The agencies implementing the scheme will also be insisted upon to submit the latest audited accounts.

19.2 The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment will get the scheme evaluated by entrusting a research study to reputed institutions/ agencies, on the performance of the Scheme in different parts of the country, under this Ministry's Scheme of Research and Training.

19.3 There shall be thorough evaluation of the outcomes of the scheme in regular intervals to ascertain the effectiveness of scheme implementation and for tracking the progress of the students . This may include conduct of social audits once a year, annual third-party evaluation, and half-yearly self-audited reports from each institution.

19.4 The social audits are to be conducted by the Social Audit Units of the State Governments formed by the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India duly meeting the cost from the administrative cost of the scheme.

19.5 The State Government shall also set up a robust monitoring mechanism for monitoring the academic progress of the students enrolled to the scheme.

19.6 The students who are found to be lagging behind should be provided remedial coaching so that their academic outcome shall not be less than the average academic outcomes. The State Action Plan should contain clear provisions for this.

19.7 In order to ensure proper accountability, physical verifications at various levels viz. Block/District/State levels shall be done by the States/UTs covering at least 10% of the institutions/students, chosen randomly through an algorithm. All private institutions offering courses at the level of graduation or above shall, however, be mandatorily inspected annually.

20. ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES

20.1 The administrative cost for administration, monitoring and evaluation shall be limited

to 1% of the annual outlay.

20.2 Each State /UT shall project the requirement of funds for undertaking the monitoring of the implementation, in its Annual Action Plan. In case, funds are required for Book, these may be indicated under the Administrative charges. This would be considered by the PAC, ensuring that the total outflow on this count does not exceed 1% of the annual outlay.

20.3 The PAC shall give first priority in approving administrative charges for development of IT infrastructure, setting up of Technical Support Group cum Project Monitoring Unit at the Central/State level and social audits.

21. MECHANISM FOR REDRESSAL OF GRIEVANCES

21.1 There shall be an online grievance redressal mechanism linking all the authorities responsible for implementation on the scholarship portal.

21.2 The student shall be able to lodge a grievance either through the portal or by a mobile app.

21.3 Every institution shall have a Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO) who is responsible for entertaining the grievances and resolving them by following up with the appropriate authority.

21.4 The non-resolution of the grievance at the institution level in a given time frame shall automatically be escalated to the district and later to the State level for resolution.

22. OTHER CONDITIONS FOR THE AWARD

22.1 The scholarship is provided on the basis of satisfactory progress and conduct of the scholars. If it is reported by the Head of the Institution at any time that a scholar has, by reasons of his/her own act or default, failed to make satisfactory progress or has been guilty of misconduct such as resorting to or participating in strikes, irregularity in attendance without the permission of the authorities concerned etc., the authority sanctioning the scholarships may either cancel the scholarship or stop or withhold further payment of scholarship for such period as it may think fit.

22.2 If a student is found to have obtained a scholarship by false statement his/her scholarship will be cancelled forthwith and the amount of the scholarship paid will be recovered, at the discretion of the concerned State Government. The student concerned will be blacklisted and debarred for scholarship under any schemes forever.

22.3 A scholarship awarded may be cancelled if the scholar changes the subject of the course of study for which the scholarship were originally awarded or changes the institution of study, without prior approval of the State Government. The Head of the Institution shall inform such cases to the scholar and stop payment of the scholarship money. The amount already paid may also be recovered at the discretion of the State Government.

22.4 A scholar is liable to refund the scholarship amount at the discretion of the State Government, if during the course of the year, the studies for which the scholarship has been

awarded, is discontinued by him/her.

22.5 The provisions of the scheme can be changed at any time at the discretion of the Government of India.

Annexure-1

[Refer para 8]

The following important parameters should be contained in the FREE SHIP CARD

- i. Name of the Student
- ii. Student's ID on the portal
- iii. Fathers' Name-
- iv. Aadhaar Card Number
- v. Caste
- vi. Date of Birth
- vii. Annual Family income
- viii. Domicile State-
- ix. Address of the Student
- x. Course (in which admission is sought)-
- xi. Duration of Course-
- xii. Class (presently studying)-
- xiii. Class (Last class previously studied)-
- xiv. Major provisions of the scheme
- xv. Student's undertaking to reimburse the amount to institution within 7 days after receipt of scholarship