

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

INSPIRE Fellowship Component (IF)

Q.1. What is INSPIRE Fellowship?

INSPIRE Fellowship is one of the components of INSPIRE scheme implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India to strengthen the Science and Technology base of the country. This Component focusses on attracting students to pursue doctoral degree in basic and applied sciences including engineering, medicine, agriculture, veterinary, pharmacy etc. after either master's degree in science/engineering or bachelor/ master's degree in Medicine.

Q.2. Who are eligible to apply for INSPIRE Fellowship scheme?

INSPIRE Fellowship is offered to:

- i) 1st Rank Holders in any recognized University and academic Institutions (Excluding Autonomous Colleges) in India in Post-Graduate (PG) level examination in Basic/Applied Sciences including Engineering, Pharmacy, Agricultural sciences and Veterinary Sciences. 1st Rank Holders at the Graduate/Post-graduate Level Examination in Medicine only conducted by a University/ Institution in India are eligible to apply. 1st Rank should be obtained in university in basic/applied science subject course/program having batch size of minimum **07** students with minimum aggregate of 70% marks (or CGPA equivalent) for the entire course/ program.

OR

- ii) INSPIRE Scholars who have secured minimum 70% marks (or CGPA equivalent) in aggregate at M.Sc. or integrated M.S. / M.Sc.

Students who i) are 1st Rank Holder in College including Autonomous College Examination, ii) have obtained degree (s) through Distance Education Mode and iii) are 1st Rank Holder in any specialization at M.Sc. 2nd year/last Year, are not eligible for the offer of INSPIRE Fellowship. The Fellowship will be offered based on competitive basis to maximum number of 1000 fellowships annually.

Q.3. When can we apply for INSPIRE Fellowship?

Call for INSPIRE Fellowship applications is announced during 3rd/4th quarter of each financial year. Applications are sought from the eligible students through INSPIRE Web-portal: <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>

Q.4. How should I apply for INSPIRE Fellowship?

One can apply for the INSPIRE Fellowship, through online mode, only against the call. To apply online, please visit the link <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in> and follow the guidelines as given therein.

Q.5. Is it mandatory to produce the First Rank certificate in the INSPIRE Fellowship format or we can submit what we have received from institution?

Yes. It is mandatory to produce a First Rank certificate in the prescribed INSPIRE Fellowship Format only (Format is available at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>). Provisional Rank certificate or mark sheet will not be acceptable for consideration of the INSPIRE Fellowship application. **Applicants are also advised to upload all Semesters/Annual Mark sheet(s) combined in a single PDF and upload in the Marksheet Tab.**

Q.6. What is the selection procedure?

Selection among the applicants is done in two stages i.e. Level-I Screening for eligibility criteria and Level-II Evaluation by Subject Expert Committee (SEC).

1. Applicants who are already admitted into the Ph.D. Program in S&T subject areas prior to the submission of application and upon recommendation at both the Levels (Level-I & Level-II) shall be awarded **Final** Offer of INSPIRE Fellowship.
2. Applicants who have not admitted into Ph.D. Program in S&T subject areas prior to submission of application and get recommendation at Level I, shall be awarded a **Provisional** Offer for INSPIRE Fellowship.

The Provisional Offer is made to the eligible applicant(s) on the basis of scrutiny of application with respect to its completeness including the requisite documents (Level-I). However, issue of Provisional Offer does not guarantee the award of INSPIRE Fellowship. Final Offer is made to the eligible applicants on the basis of evaluation of the application at Level-II considering i) Academic merit ii) Host Institution including Research Supervisor CV and iii) detailed Research Proposal by the Subject Expert Committee. In the Level-II Evaluation process, applicants need to secure a minimum qualifying score/cut-off and the cut-off score may vary based on the competitive framework of the selection process.

Q.7. What is the difference between Provisional Offer and Final Offer of INSPIRE Fellowship?

Provisional Offer: Students who are eligible for INSPIRE Fellowship but not admitted into Ph.D. program, would get Provisional Offer and they will be given one-year validity to take admission into Ph.D. program.

Final Offer: Students who are eligible for INSPIRE Fellowship as well as got admitted into Ph.D. program and their applications are recommended at both the levels (Level-I and Level-II) would be given a final offer INSPIRE Fellowship.

Q.8. What is the tenure of this Fellowship?

Fellowship shall be tenable for a maximum period of five years from INSPIRE Fellowship “Effective Date” or completion of the PhD program (i.e. up to the date of successful Ph.D. viva-voce), whichever is earlier. The fellowship shall be governed by administrative norms and guidelines of Host University/Institute.

Q.9. What would be our designation after selection under INSPIRE Fellowship?

The entry in INSPIRE Fellowship would be only as Junior Research Fellow (JRF). There is no direct entry into Senior Research Fellow (SRF). The JRF or SRF under this scheme shall be termed as '**INSPIRE Fellow**'.

Q.10. What is the amount of Fellowship?

The Fellowship shall be governed through the Office Memorandum of this Ministry of Number A.20020/11/97-IFD dated 6th August 2007; 31st March 2010; 21st October 2014 [No. SR/S9/Z-09/2012] and SR/S9/Z-08/2018 dated 30th January 2019 and DST/PCPM/Z-06/2022 dated 26th June 2023. However, HRA to the Fellows shall also be applicable as per GoI norms depending upon the location of the Host Institute.

Q.11. What are the norms for Contingency Expenditure?

Expenditure of contingency grant would be governed as per host institution norms. The limit of contingency grant is Rs. 20,000/annum. The unspent balance of contingency grant at the end of a year shall be adjusted to the next year with a maximum ceiling of Rs.20,000.

Q.12. Where will be the amount of Fellowship transferred?

Fellowship grant shall be transferred through PFMS to the student’s host-institute’s ZBSA Bank Account in Bank of Maharashtra following CNA (Central Nodal Agency) Model. Host institute shall transfer monthly fellowship to students’ bank accounts following the host institute norms. Sanction Order of the respective Fellow shall be available in their web-portal account. INSPIRE Fellows will download a copy of the sanction order and submit the same to the Host institution for further necessary action. To receive Fellowship grant, Host institute(s) need to have a Zero-balance A/c [Preferable Name of A/c: Organization Name-STIHCB(1817) Scheme] to operate as a Sub Agency A/c at an institutional level (i.e. respectiveinstitute/organization) in Bank of Maharashtra and get mapped the ZBSA in PFMS (Public Finance Management System: <https://www.pfms.nic.in>). Institute will operationalize the new process for flow of fund through ZBSA at Bank of Maharashtra for utilization of the Fellowship grant (for further details please visit “Notice Board Section” of INSPIRE web-portal (<https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>)).

Q.13. What is PFMS?

Public Financial Management System (PFMS: <https://pfms.nic.in>) is being implemented by the Office of Controller General of Accounts, Ministry of Finance in partnership with National Informatics Centre. PFMS has established a common transaction-based on-line fund management and payment system for the Schemes of Government of India.

Q.14. Is it mandatory that Host Institute should be registered under PFMS for receiving the Fellowship Grant?

Yes. It is mandatory. Else Fellowship fund transfer shall not be done.

Q.15. What will be the effective date of INSPIRE Fellowship?

The effective date for availing of the INSPIRE Fellowship would be as under:

Fresh applicants who have already taken admission into Ph.D. course prior to submission of application, the date of acceptance or joining or switching over from any other fellowship to INSPIRE Fellowship will be the Effective Date. However, in any case the Effective Date would not be earlier than the date of application received at the DST.

Applicant who will be placed during selection process under “Provisional Selection” category and subsequently will be issued “Final Offer” by gaining admission into Ph.D. Program, “Effective Date” would be the date of uploading documents related to confirmed Ph.D. Admission or date of Ph.D. admission, whichever is later.

Q.16. What is the procedure to transfer the Fellowship from one host institute to another host institute?

INSPIRE Fellow once accepts the offer of Fellowship at a particular University/ Institute/ Laboratory shall not be allowed to transfer the Fellowship to another University/Institute/Laboratory across the country during the 5 years of Fellowship tenure. However, in unavoidable circumstances, the Fellow must seek prior permission from INSPIRE Program Division for transfer/ change of Host Institute by submitting application with the following documents:

1. No Objection Certificates (NoCs) from both Host Institutes and Research Supervisors.
2. Detailed Justifications for changing/shifting of Host Institute for continuation of Fellowship.
3. An up to date Research Progress Report.
4. CV of the Research Supervisor at the new Host Institute.
5. Up to date Financial Statement from the initial Host Institute.

6. An undertaking from the INSPIRE Fellow that he/she will be able to complete the Ph.D. program within the initially approved fellowship duration. Undertaking shall be forwarded through the new supervisor. However, shifting/ change of Host Institute without prior approval from DST-INSPIRE will lead to withdrawal of the INSPIRE Fellowship. Moreover, such shifting/ change of Host Institute may be allowed only once in 5 years tenure of Fellowship and within one year of effective date of Fellowship at the respective Host Institute. If INSPIRE fellow leaves without permission, the due stipend shall not be paid to him/her by the Institution without the permission of DST. Unspent balance and other earnings against the released grant (if any), shall be remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India (through Non-Tax Receipt Portal (NTRP) i.e. www.bharatkosh.gov.in immediately.

Q.17. I am already receiving other fellowships what should I do to switch over to the INSPIRE Fellowship?

When you receive the Final offer under INSPIRE Fellowship please resign from the previous fellowship for switching over to INSPIRE Fellowship and put these details in Joining-cum-Acceptance letter (Format provided at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>). Please do not resign unless you receive the Final offer of INSPIRE Fellowship.

Q.18. I have received an invitation to do a short research internship program that is relevant to my Ph.D. degree, can I avail this short-term internship during my INSPIRE Fellowship tenure?

INSPIRE Fellow shall be allowed to avail short-term Research Internship at any national or international Laboratory/ University/ Institute up to a maximum period of **18 months** either in one or multiple slots during 5 years tenure of Fellowship. **This research internship would be arranged by the individual Fellow.** The Fellow shall obtain prior permission from DST-INSPIRE on the recommendation of Ph.D. Research Supervisor as well as confirmation from Research Internship provider. In case the Fellow receives full financial support for the internship from the overseas institution(s), the INSPIRE Fellowship for the period of Overseas stay shall not be remitted. After availing the Research Internship, the Fellow must submit his/her Internship Report as well as Joining Report to Host Institution, with intimation to DST.

Q.19. I have to attend an International Conference, would INSPIRE Fellowship pay to and journey fare charges?

No.

Q.20. What should be done for getting next instalment of my Fellowship?

INSPIRE Fellow need to upload Utilization Certificate (UC), Statement of Expenditure (SE), Claim Bill (if any) and Annual Progress Report in the prescribed format(s) (available at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>) in the INSPIRE web-portal at the end of every year of completion for release of next instalment.

Q.21. What are things to be remembered while preparing the correct and acceptable SE, UC and claim bill?

Second installment onward release to an ongoing Fellow will be considered if the unspent balance from the previously released Fellowship grant including HRA shall be less than Rs.40,000/-. In case, multiple SE and UC have to be uploaded, please make single file of multiple SE (s) and another file of multiple UC(s) and upload at appropriate place. SE and UC without the Seal of Competent Authority shall not be accepted. Uploaded SE and UC should be clearly visible.

Q.22. How much time will be taken after uploading SE, UC and claim bill for processing?

From the date of upload of requisite documents, generally, the fellowship grant will be released within 2 months.

Q.23. When will I be eligible for the upgradation of my Fellowship from JRF to SRF?

The up-gradation of Fellowship from Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) to Senior Research Fellowship (SRF) would normally be considered after completion of two (2) years of INSPIRE Fellowship. However, it can be considered after completion of one year as JRF if INSPIRE Fellow has an acceptance of at least one research paper (as a 1st Author) in any international peer-reviewed journal from the Ph.D. work carried out at the respective Host Institute.

Q.24. What is the procedure for upgradation from JRF to SRF?

For the up-gradation of Fellowship, a three (3)- member Assessment Committee shall be constituted by the Vice-Chancellor/Director/Head of the Host Institute to assess the progress of the concerned INSPIRE Fellow. The Assessment Committee shall include the Research Supervisor of the concerned INSPIRE Fellow and one Faculty from the Host Institution as a Members and a DST-nominated expert who will act as the Chairperson. The host institute need not approach DST for the name of the DST-nominated expert who will be the chairperson of the Assessment Committee.

The Host institute may choose one Fellow of any of the following four National Academies as the DST-nominated Expert and the Chairperson of the Assessment Committee subject to i) his/her being in the concerned area of research, ii) his/her being from an institution other than the Host Institution;

- iii) his/her being not related to the INSPIRE Fellow and/or his/her Research Supervisor; and
- iv) Research Supervisor of the INSPIRE Fellow not having been his/her research student:

Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi
Indian Academy of Sciences (IAS), Bengaluru
National Academy of Sciences, India (NASI), Prayagraj, and
Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE),
Gurugram.

INSPIRE Fellow has to upload Assessment Report on the INSPIRE Web-portal as detailed in the JRF to SRF up-gradation guidelines.

Q.25. I got a Job please tell me what is the procedure to discontinue my INSPIRE Fellowship?

Upon getting a job, INSPIRE Fellow shall upload the following documents in his/her INSPIRE Web- Portal account:

- a. Ph.D. Discontinuation Report (Status Report) along with resignation letter forwarded by the Supervisor,
- b. Statement of Expenditure (SE), Utilisation certificate (UC) and claim form (if any) of complete fellowship duration,
- c. Unspent balance receipt if any (unspent balance and other earnings against the released grant (if any), shall be remitted to the consolidated Fund of India (through Non-Tax Receipt Portal (NTRP) i.e., www.bharatkosh.gov.in
- d. Soft copy of the status report, published research papers and patent details if any, shall be submitted in USB storage device to the INSPIRE Programme Division of DST by speed post.

Q.26. I have completed my Ph.D. under INSPIRE Fellowship, what are the completion formalities?

- i) After completion of Ph.D./fellowship tenure to settle the fellowship grant, INSPIRE Fellow shall upload the following documents in his/her INSPIRE Web-Portal account:

A copy of the Ph.D. degree certificate, Ph.D. completion report, Statement of Expenditure (SE), Utilization Certificate (UC) and Claim form (if any) of complete fellowship duration, Unspent balance receipt if any (unspent balance and other earnings against the released grant (if any), shall be remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India (through Non-Tax Receipt Portal (NTRP) i.e. www.bharatkosh.gov.in)

- ii) Soft copy of the Ph.D. thesis, published research papers and patent details, if any, shall be submitted in USB storage device to the INSPIRE Programme Division of DST by speed post.

INSPIRE Fellows must settle their claims within one year of leaving the Fellowship. No claim will be admitted by DST after one year of leaving the Fellowship.

Q. 27. I am INSPIRE Fellow, I got a government job. Can I join my job and hold my INSPIRE fellowship for some period? I want to join INSPIRE Fellowship again after completing my probation period of job, with permission from Employer?

If you join any job (full time or part-time), there is no provision of holding INSPIRE Fellowship and rejoining again after some time. Your Fellowship will be discontinued from the date of joining of job.

Q.28. What are the other things which I need to remember during my tenure under INSPIRE Fellowship?

1. All communication related to the INSPIRE Fellowship should be through INSPIRE web-portal, therefore, keep updating yourself by visiting your INSPIREweb-portal account.
2. Keep checking the website and registered email for any updates.
3. Acknowledge the financial support of DST -INSPIRE in your research credentials (Publications, patents etc.) during the Fellowship tenure.

Q.29. I have to wait for my bank details to be approved before submitting my joining-Cum- acceptance documents.

Already DST approved bank details of respective institutions are available on the INSPIRE Web-portal. If you select the required bank details from the list, then need not to wait for its approval. You can directly upload your joining- cum-acceptance report.

Q.30. I was awarded final offer of INSPIRE Fellowship. I had to upload bank details then Joining- cum-acceptance (JCA) within one month of Fellowship Final offer. I could not do it within validity?

If selected INSPIRE Fellow fails to upload JCA within one month from the date of issue of final offer letter, the offer shall automatically stand withdrawn.

Q.31. My provisional offer validity is now over. I could not upload my Ph.D. admission documents in online portal?

This is an automated process. If student fails to upload his/ her Ph.D. admission documents within the validity duration, the portal will get automatically closed and then he/ she will not be able to upload Ph.D. admission documents for its consideration for Final Offer. In that case his/ her provisional offer will automatically stand withdrawn.

Q.32. I had filled my Bank details after receiving Final offer and waiting for its approval. How would I know that my documents are approved?

Once you submit host institute Bank details, usually it takes one week for approval. You are requested to regularly check your INSPIRE web-portal account for updates.

Q.33. Whether Re-evaluation of any rejected application is possible or not If so, details.

Yes. Re-evaluation is possible. Once INSPIRE Fellowship application is not recommended for support at Level-2 Evaluation, applicant(s) can request for re-evaluation of their application(s) within 45 days from the date of issue of the letter. The re-evaluation would be done only on the existing application including Research Proposal available on his/her INSPIRE web-portal. Revaluation requests shall be submitted through online INSPIRE web-portal <https://online-inspire.gov.in/Account/reevaluation> . Applicants are advised to provide their research work updates only in the Remarks column provided.
