

# **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

## **INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship Component (IFF)**

### **1. What is INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship is a component under Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE), which is a flagship programme of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. It offers contractual research fellowships to young achievers and opportunity for independent research in the near term to emerge as future leaders in science & technology. The guideline of this component is available at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

### **2. Who can apply under INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship? What are the eligibility criteria for availing INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

Indian citizens and people of Indian origin including NRI/PIO status with Ph.D. (in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, Pharmacy, Medicine, and Agriculture related subjects) from any recognized university in the world. Those who have submitted their Ph.D. thesis and are awaiting award of the degree are also eligible. However, the Fellowship will be conveyed only after confirmation of awarding of the Ph.D. degree.

### **3. What is the tenure of INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

The INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship is tenable for a maximum period of 5 (five) years and no further extension will be given as per existing rules.

### **4. When should I apply for INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

Call for applications are advertised once in a year in the month of July/August on the online portal. The online application can be made through the link: <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

### **5. How should I apply for INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

One can apply for the Faculty Fellowship through online portal only. To apply online, please follow the link <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

### **6. What is the upper age limit? Is there any age relaxation?**

The upper age limit as on 1st Jan of the year of advertisement for General category applicants is 32 years. However, the upper age limit for SC/ST/Women candidates will be 37 years. For persons with bench mark disability the upper age limit, is 42 years.

**7. I am already having a permanent position. Am I eligible to apply?**

Candidates who are employed at the time of application (in any form i.e. permanent, contractual etc.) with any organization within India are eligible to apply. However, they have to relinquish their jobs for accepting INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship. No lien/deputation/ leave will be permitted.

**8. I did not submit my Ph.D. degree certificate at the time of my application? Will I be considered for Faculty fellowship?**

Yes. You will be considered. You may be called for presentation if found suitable under various selection criteria as fixed by the expert committee. In case of selection you will receive an intimation to submit your Ph.D. degree certificate within 3 months. Only after verification of your degree certificate, offer letter will be issued. Time taken in submission of Ph.D. degree certificate will be counted within the joining time given by DST.

**9. What is the method of Selection?**

a. INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship (IFF) is implemented through Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi which coordinates selection of candidates for awarding INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship.

b. Selection process involves recommendations by Discipline-based Expert Committee followed by the Apex Level Committee.

c. Discipline-wise committees evaluate and shortlist the candidates.

d. Apex Committee shall finally recommend the short-listed candidates for offering INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship to DST.

e. Candidates, who have not identified host institutions at the time of their application, should do so immediately after their final selection. All selected candidates should avail the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship within 3 months of issue of offer letter.

**10. What is the new area called Translational Research in S&T? What are the terms and expectations under this subject area and how is the selection done under this?**

a. Translational Research is an area aimed at maturing deep-tech research emerging out of PhD thesis towards higher TRL levels (technology readiness level), so that the matured deep tech research could result in innovations and startups, leading to commercialization of the deep-tech research. As such, the new area is intended for Doctorates who aspire to develop their deep-tech research further, make it more robust through incubation and maturation, and commercialize their research, by either creating a startup themselves or licensing the matured (i.e. to higher TRL level) technology to a third party. In short, inclusion of this new subject area is targeted towards applicants with an entrepreneurial bent of mind and who wish to pursue such opportunities fully, or in part, of their professional journey.

b. It is desirable that the deep-tech research proposed to be carried out and matured by the applicant, should have at least one patent granted to applicant's credit. In the 'proposed area of research and brief outline of the proposal', the applicant must clearly outline the novelty of the deep-tech idea, the breakthroughs that the idea can create, the technology problems it can solve, the markets it can address, and its commercialization potential. Typical examples of deep-tech research (but not limited to) are IoT & sensors, advanced and new materials / composites, drugs and proteins discovery and development, biomedical devices, energy capture, energy storage, specialty materials and waste water treatment, healthcare, and environment.

c. In case of selection under new subject area 'Translational Research in S&T', it is mandatory that the host institution must be chosen as those S&T institutions which have Central/State Govt supported Technology Business Incubators (TBIs), so that the deep-tech research can be mentored and carried out in conjunction with the TBI. (For reference, applicants may visit <https://www.nstedb.com/List-NSTEDB-TBIs.htm>)

d. The ideas outlined in the proposal under the proposed area of research will be assessed by a committee of astute technology evaluators, venture capitalists and subject experts, for their originality, innovation, potential for maturation and commercialization, and productization impact.

**11. If I am working as a Post-Doctoral Fellow in India/abroad at the time of offer of IFF, will I get an extension for joining as INSPIRE Faculty Fellow?**

Maximum time duration of six months from the date of offer letter may be given after due evaluation of your request.

**12. Where can I implement the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

The INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship is generally required to be implemented at any recognized Institute/ University/ Laboratory in the country other than the Institute/ University/ Laboratory from where the candidate has received his/her Ph.D. degree or have undertaken Ph.D./post Ph.D. research activities. Implementation in S&T Organizations/Departments involved majorly in administrative work function are not permitted.

**13. How much is the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship amount?**

Faculty fellowship amount is Rs. 1,25,000/- per month with an annual increment of Rs. 2000/- and Research Grant of Rs. 7,00,000/- per year for 5 years' period.

**14. Is the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship Amount Taxable?**

Yes. As per Income Tax act, it is taxable.

**15. Is there any Breakup of Fellowship amount?**

Fellowship amount is consolidated (all inclusive). No Break-up will be provided by DST.

**16. Do I need to sign any undertaking before implementation of the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?**

Yes. Selected fellow must submit two undertakings. a) Duly signed “Undertaking by INSPIRE Faculty Fellow” and b) Undertaking duly signed by both the competent authority from the chosen Host institution and the INSPIRE Faculty Fellow. Both these documents may be found under the under Guidelines & for formats tab of the INSPIRE Web-portal.

**17. What are the documents a selected Faculty Fellow need to upload for receiving the first instalment grant?**

- a. Bank account detail of the Host Institute
- b. Joining Report
- c. Undertaking signed by the Faculty Fellow
- d. Undertaking signed by the Faculty Fellow and Host Institute
- e. Budget breakup on usage of Research Grant

The blank formats are available at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

**18. Do I have to wait for my host bank account details to be approved before submitting my joining documents?**

No. The bank account detail submission page consists of a list of Institute/College/University already approved by DST in the drop-down menu. Fellows need to select the required bank detail from the list, and do not have to wait for its approval and can move forward directly to upload joining documents.

**19. What to do if my Host Institute is not there in drop down menu?**

In that case, you are requested to send us the ‘Mandate Form’ as provided at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in> to enable us to add your Host Institute.

**20. How will I receive Fellowship and Research Grant after submitting required documents?**

Once required documents are received, these will be verified. If approved, these will be processed for financial approval. After approval, copy of the sanction letter will be uploaded on the INSPIRE web portal. The Fellow should download the same from the INSPIRE Web portal.

**21. What is the fund flow mechanism for the utilization of fellowship Research Grant?**

The steps of new fund flow mechanism in the CNA model are given on the Notice Board tab on INSPIRE Web portal home page. <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

**22. Can a fellow transfer the balance fund available under a given head to other head in a given year?**

A fellow can utilize the balance funds available under 'Travel & Contingency Heads' to 'Other Heads' in a given year. However, fellow is required to keep the funds under Travel head to meet the travel expenditure to participate in the progress review meeting(s) of INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship. For details, please see point 7 (G) of IFF Guidelines.

**23. How can I utilize the Research Grant?**

The Research Grant of Rs.7.0 lakh per year can be utilized for expenditures under recurring and non-recurring budget heads flexibly. The fellow has inter-operational flexibility to use the research grant in other budget heads other than the Travel, Contingency and overhead Heads. However, Expenditure under Travel and Contingencies Heads will be limited to 10% each (Rs. 70,000/- per year) and Overhead 5% (Rs. 35,000 per year). Each fellow needs to upload the estimated yearly budget break up as above for utilization of Research Grant on the INSPIRE web portal at the time of joining.

**24. Does the Research Grant of Rs.7,00,000/- per year will be carry-forwarded (i.e. unspent balance amount) to next year?**

As per the new fund flow mechanism initiated by the government w.e.f. 2022-2023 i.e. CNA Model (Refer OM - F.No.1(18)/PFMS/FCD/2021 dated 9.03.2022), grant provided to INSPIRE Faculty Fellows should be utilized within the same financial year in which it has been released. There may not be any provision of carrying forward of unspent Research Grant to next financial year.

**25. What do I do to get subsequent instalment(s)?**

Fellows need to upload annually the Utilization Certificate, Statement of Expenditure and Annual Report as per the prescribed formats available at <https://www.online-inspire.gov.in>.

**26. What happens to my fellowship amount, if I get a regular position during Fellowship tenure?**

When a fellow joins a regular position during the Fellowship tenure of 5 years, the fellowship amount shall be discontinued from the day, he/she joins the permanent position. But the fellow may continue with the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship availing only the Research Grant for the remaining period to carry out research activities.

**27. Whether any provision for employing research staff under the Research Grant?**

Provision is available for supporting research staff under the Research Grant during the fellowship tenure. In the event of getting employment/transfer elsewhere other than the present Host Institute, the fellow may also be allowed to move the research staff along with him/her to the new place within the country with the permission of the host institutes.

**28. During the tenure of Faculty Fellowship can I apply for projects from other funding agencies?**

Yes. INSPIRE Faculty Fellow is eligible for applying for competitive grants from all funding agencies during the tenure of the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship.

**29. During the tenure of Faculty Fellowship can I make National or International visits?**

Yes. Fellows are required to take prior approval of host institution for short term visit up to 8 weeks/2months for attending conference/training workshops /seminar/collaborative research work etc. in country or abroad and inform DST. Visits to undertake scientific work for more than 8 weeks would require prior permission from DST.

**30. When can I avail research opportunity abroad during the tenure of Fellowship?**

It can be availed only after completion of 1st year of Fellowship tenure.

**31. What are the roles and requirements of Host Institutions?**

- a. Host institutions should encourage and provide a congenial atmosphere for the fellows to excel in their work and should view them as potential assets for faculty development.
- b. Under no circumstances the “INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship” is renewable after 5 years. Host-institutions are expected to consider “INSPIRE Faculty Fellow” for permanent positions in due course, subject to meeting institutions’ performance assessment criteria.
- c. Host Institute(s) shall provide access to all common infrastructural facilities (including equipment), computational facility, library, acceptable laboratory and office space during the tenure of the Fellowship.
- d. Host Institute will undertake the financial and other administrative responsibilities for implementation of the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship for 5 years on behalf of the Fellow and shall be responsible for all accounting purposes with the DST-INSPIRE Program Division. Host Institute will be required to provide Financial Statements every year to consider releasing subsequent instalment/s to the Fellow.

**32. What is the minimum commitment required from Host Institutions while accepting to host an INSPIRE Faculty Fellow?**

- a. Access to all common infrastructural facilities, acceptable laboratory and office space (independently or on shared basis), computing, library access, etc.
- b. Information on whether the INSPIRE Faculty Fellow will be allowed to supervise Ph.D. students, hire research fellows, independently or jointly with a permanent faculty member.

c. Host-institution's willingness to consider the candidate for a permanent position in due course, subject to meeting statutory requirements.

**33. Does the INSPIRE Faculty Fellow entitled for any type of leave in a year?**

During the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship tenure, a fellow will be governed by rules and regulations of Host Institute regarding all type of leaves or for any other administrative matters related to Faculty Fellowship.

**34. When do I need to submit research performance reports and when will performance evaluation be done by DST?**

Fellow shall be required to submit Annual Progress Report to INSPIRE-DST on the INSPIRE Web portal after the completion of each year. Midterm/Periodic performance evaluation shall be done on the progress of research by a national level Expert Committee and further continuation of support to each fellow shall depend upon the performance assessment by the Committee. Fellow will be informed about this process through portal and email communications.

**35. Is there any provision for transfer or change of Host Institution?**

Transfer or Change of Host Institution is permissible under the Faculty fellowship upon getting permanent employment in another Institution. An unemployed fellow will be allowed to transfer the Faculty fellowship grant into a new Host Institution only once for any personal reason(s) including scope for better research.

**36. What are the requirements for the Host Institute transfer?**

Following are the main requirements:

- a. Appointment Letter in case of permanent employment or justifications for change of Host Institution.
- b. NOC from present Host Institute and Acceptance Letter from new Host Institute.
- c. Signed copy of the Undertaking (in case of permanent employment in the same Host Institution such undertaking is not required)
- d. Up-to-date financial documents from the present Host Institute (in case of permanent employment in the same Host Institute, such documents are also required).

**37. What are the documents required by DST for the approval of foreign visit?**

Following documents are required to be submitted to DST:

- a. Invitation Letter along with mentioning of 'sustenance allowance' from the visting foreign institute/ university/ laboratories.

- b. Covering letter by Faculty Fellow mentioning the topic of training/research work, duration, terms and conditions of the visiting institute (if any).
- c. Forwarding letter/NOC from Indian Host Institute where IFF is currently working.

**38. Why have I received Rs. 50,000/- less in the fifth instalment of the grant?**

This amount will be reimbursed at the time of submission of final documents after completion of INSPIRE fellowship tenure. All these documents need to be uploaded under the “transfer process” link on INSPIRE Web-portal.

**39. Can I avail any other post-doctoral fellowship as an INSPIRE Faculty Fellow?**

No, INSPIRE Faculty Fellow is not permitted to avail any other Fellowship during INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship tenure.

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