



# AWARD CATEGORIES, ELIGIBILITY RULES & BALLOTING GUIDELINES

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Documentation Version: ODRG / 200049  
Last Revised: 07<sup>th</sup> January, 2024

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PART – I  
**ELIGIBILITY, CATEGORIES & RULES**

SECTION – I  
**Award Categories**

- 1.1 FOI Online Awards will annually honour titles for artistic achievements under the following twenty-five categories (25) to feature films and artists/technicians credited for its making:
1. Best Feature Film
  2. Best Direction
  3. Best Original Screenplay
  4. Best Adapted Screenplay
  5. Best Dialogues
  6. Best Actor in a Leading Role
  7. Best Actress in a Leading Role
  8. Best Actor in a Supporting Role
  9. Best Actress in a Supporting Role
  10. Best Performance by an Ensemble Cast
  11. Best Cinematography
  12. Best Film Editing
  13. Best Sound Design & Mixing
  14. Best Music Direction – Score
  15. Best Music Direction – Songs
  16. Best Original Song
  17. Best Playback Singer – Male
  18. Best Playback Singer – Female
  19. Best Lyricist
  20. Best Production Design
  21. Best Costume Design
  22. Best Make-Up & Hair Styling
  23. Best Visual Effects
  24. Best Choreography
  25. Best Action Direction

- 1.2 A feature film and all artists/technicians credited for its making are eligible to be considered for various award categories mentioned above, provided they comply with the eligibility rules mentioned in *Section – II*.
- 1.3 The jury would elect a maximum of five (5) nominations in each of the above enumerated categories. An exception is made for the category of Best Feature Film, which can have a maximum of eight (8) nominations.
- 1.4 The jury under mutual agreement may decide to skip one or more categories for a particular year if sufficient number of deserving nominations are not electable. If only one (1) contender is found suitable as a nominee in a category, the entry would be directly declared as the winner on the day of final announcements without being revealed in the List of Nominations.
- 1.5 In addition to the categories mentioned above, the jury may separately honour Special Jury Mentions to artists and technicians, provided they comply with the additional rules mentioned in *Section IV*.

## SECTION – II

### **Rules for Eligibility**

- 2.1 A feature film and all artists/technicians credited for its making are eligible to be considered for various award categories mentioned in *Section – I*, provided they comply with the eligibility rules mentioned in this section, along with the category-specific rules as applicable and mentioned in *Section – III*.
- 2.2 For feature films produced solely by production companies based in India, the feature film should have its first public and commercial release on Indian theatrical screens or digital streaming platforms to Indian audiences between 1st January and 31st December (both days included) of the year being considered.
- 2.3 For feature films produced as an international collaboration and headlined by production companies from various countries, at least one of the production companies should be based in India. The release date for such feature films would be considered on the day it is premiered to Indian audiences on Indian theatrical screens or digital streaming platforms, and should be between 1st January and 31st December (both days included) of the year being considered.

- 2.4 The feature film should be primarily in Hindi or English language. Dubbed or subtitled films, originally produced in some other primary languages, would be considered ineligible. However, films simultaneously shot in multiple languages (including Hindi or English) would be considered eligible.
- 2.5 A feature film premiered/released at a film festival or a private screening is considered ineligible unless a public and commercial theatrical or digital release follows.
- 2.6 Feature films having digital release through OTT commercial streaming or video-on-demand services require the streaming platform to have active operations in India. Such productions do not include web series or other episodic formats.
- 2.7 Short films (having a duration, excluding credits, of 40 minutes or less) are not eligible. A collection of short films released as an anthology feature film is eligible, subject to the following terms:
- a) The film will be judged for its craft 'collectively' as a single feature film and not as separate standalone short films.
  - b) Actors in individual short films of the anthology will remain eligible for the categories of Actor/Actress in a Leading/Supporting Role – screentime won't be counted as a factor to deny them consideration.
  - c) Songs in individual short films will remain eligible for the categories of Original Song, Playback Singer – Male/Female, Lyricist & Choreography.
  - d) For all other categories, the anthology will be judged as a single feature film, and credit (if the anthology is eventually nominated) will include respective artists under each short film of the anthology.
- 2.8 Animation feature films meeting release and production eligibility mentioned in the rules above would be considered eligible.
- 2.9 Documentary feature films are not eligible.
- 2.10 For special cases or genres of feature films not covered in the above rules, the Jury reserves the right to independently make decisions on the subject matter of the film's eligibility for consideration.
- 2.11 If an eligible feature film eventually earns a nomination for a certain award category after voting, only the primary/main credit holder(s) for the respective achievement would be named under the nomination. Determination of these artists/technicians would be done in accordance with the credits mentioned by the filmmakers in the commercially released version of the feature film. Any addition or modification in credits otherwise would not be permitted.

SECTION – III

**Category-Specific Award Rules**

- 3.1 While awarding the **Best Feature Film** category, the producer(s) and director(s) of the feature film would be credited.
- 3.2 For a feature film to be considered for the **Best Original Screenplay** award, the screenplay should be a work of original research or fiction and should not be based on any of previously released work, as mentioned in Rule 3.3 for Adapted Screenplays.
- 3.3 For a feature film to be considered for the **Best Adapted Screenplay** award, the screenplay should be based on one or more of the following sources, previously published/released:
- a) A book, novel, short story or any printed media, which has been officially credited.
  - b) A play, skit or any previously performed art, live or recorded, which has been officially credited.
  - c) A previously released feature, short film (in any language, fiction or non-fiction), which include official remake, spin-off, parody or mock commentary.
  - d) A previously released or continuing web series, television show, video sketch or anthology film/series (in any language, fiction or non-fiction), which include official remake, spin-offs, parody or mock commentary.
  - e) A prequel or franchise feature series, if one of the following conditions is met:
    - i. A continuing storyline from the previous film(s) in the series/franchise.
    - ii. A stand-alone storyline with one or more principal character(s) adapted or reprised from the previous film(s) in the series/franchise.
- 3.4 Feature films in the genre of biopic are not to be considered for **Best Adapted Screenplay** award, unless the filmmakers officially credit a source material such as biography, printed media or a film/documentary highlighting the person from which it is being adapted.
- 3.5 Feature films based on true life stories/events are not to be considered for **Best Adapted Screenplay** award, unless the filmmakers officially credit any other media for its inspiration.
- 3.6 If the filmmakers credit a story writer in addition to the screenplay writer, he/she/they would be included in the nomination credit for the screenplay categories.
- 3.7 The **Best Dialogues** award would stand ineligible for dubbed dialogue writing. Features with multilingual dialogue can be considered, provided the film's primary language remains Hindi or English.

- 3.8 If the filmmakers don't credit a dialogue writer separately, the screenplay writer is to be credited for **Best Dialogues** category, by default.
- 3.9 A performance by an actor/actress would be open to be voted in both categories meant for Leading and Supporting roles. Final categorisation would be based on the majority of votes received in either category.
- 3.10 To be considered in the category of **Best Performance by an Ensemble Cast**, the primary cast of the feature film should have at least five (5) performers. If possible, while awarding, this primary cast of the feature would be credited.
- 3.11 All artists and technicians responsible for the crafts of sound design, recording and mixing would be collectively eligible for the category of **Best Sound Design & Mixing**. The nomination credit for the category will include individuals credited by the filmmaker(s) in the primary/main credits under the following crafts/departments:
- a) Audiography
  - b) Sound Design
  - c) Location/Production Sound Recording/Mixing or Sync Sound Design
  - d) Final/Post-production Sound Mixing/Remixing or Sound Re-recording
- 3.12 To be eligible for the category of **Best Music Direction – Score**, the majority of music/background score being considered should have been specifically composed for the feature film.
- 3.13 For the category of **Best Music Direction – Songs**, the following additional eligibility rules would be applicable:
- a) The category is defined for the direction/composition of feature film's whole music album/soundtrack. Soundtracks with multiple music directors would be counted in a single nomination.
  - b) For consideration in this category, the song listing/album should have a minimum of three (3) songs specifically composed and written for the feature film.
  - c) If a previously released and commercially utilized song is reprised in the feature film's music album, in original or remixed format, the music directors of such reprised song (both the original composer and the composer reprising it) are to be barred from being credited for this category.
  - d) Additionally, for a music album to be eligible in this category, number of reprised songs should not exceed 40% of the total number of songs in the soundtrack.

- e) An exception to *Rule 3.13 (c)* is granted to such songs (and respective the composers) where only the lyrics of a previously released and commercially utilized song or a poetry is used and the composition is not inspired/reused from the original/previous versions. The decision to grant this exception lies solely with the jury.
- f) Additionally, it is stated here that the exception *Rule 3.13 (e)* is only applicable to the category of *Best Music Direction – Songs*.

- 3.14 The song considered for the **Best Original Song** award should be specifically composed and written for the feature film. A previously released and commercially utilized song, reprised in the feature film's music album in its original or remixed format, would be ineligible for this category.
- 3.15 When awarding the **Best Original Song** category, credit will be given to the music director(s), playback singer(s), and lyricist(s) of the song.
- 3.16 Playback singer(s) of a reprised song would be considered eligible for the category of **Best Playback Singer (Male/Female)**, provided that he/she/they are not the original artist of any version of the reprised song.
- 3.17 Lyricist(s) of a reprised song would be considered ineligible for the category of **Best Lyricist**. An exception will be given in cases where only a few lines from the lyrics of another song are used in the one being considered. However, the final decision on the eligibility of such songs in the category is based on the majority decision of the jury panel.
- 3.18 For the category of **Best Costume Design**, if the filmmaker(s) separately include equivalent crafts such as Jewellery or Armour Design in the primary/main credits along with Costume Design, they may be included in the nomination credit, if the jury so deliberates.
- 3.20 For the category of **Best Make-Up & Hair Styling**, the nomination credit will include prosthetic artists, if any, as credited by the filmmakers in the primary/main credits.
- 3.21 While awarding the **Best Visual Effects** category, the respective VFX supervisor of the feature film will be credited, as credited by the filmmakers in the primary/main credits.
- 3.22 For the category of **Best Action Direction**, if the filmmaker(s) separately include a Stunt Choreographer or Action Designer in the primary/main credits along with the Action Director, they may be included in the nomination credit, if the jury so deliberates.



- 3.23 In cases where a craft studio, creative studio, or production studio is credited by the filmmakers instead of individuals for achievements under any award categories, the same will be included under the nomination credit.

SECTION – IV

**Special Jury Mentions**

- 4.1 In addition to the categories mentioned in *Section-I*, the jury may separately honour Special Jury Mentions to artists and technicians, provided they comply with the additional rules mentioned below.
- 4.2 Special Jury Mentions could be awarded to only those performances/work of arts which were not elected as a final nominee in any of the award categories mentioned in *Section – I*.
- 4.3 An artist who is already nominated in one of the award categories may be awarded Special Jury Mention for some other work of art performed/represented by him/her/them which was not nominated. Same artist can be awarded such Special Jury Mention for more than one work of art performed/represented by him/her/them.
- 4.4 Number of Special Jury Mentions awarded in a year cannot be more than five (5).
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PART – II  
**BALLOTING GUIDELINES**

SECTION – V  
**The Voting Procedure**

- 5.1 For shortlisting and final selection of nominations, winners and Special Jury Mention awardees, four (4) successive rounds of balloting/voting are proposed, namely:
1. Preliminary Submissions
  2. Nominations Voting
  3. Final Voting
  4. Voting for Special Jury Mentions
- 5.2 The voting procedure would commence with the *Preliminary Submissions* round, requiring the jury members to submit their choices for the five (5) most deserving nominees in each award category. A maximum of twelve (12) most-voted entries in the *Best Feature Film* category and a maximum of eight (8) most-voted entries in the remaining award categories would be shortlisted for the next round of voting.
- 5.3 Entries shortlisted after the *Preliminary Submissions* round would then be eligible for the *Nominations Voting* round. The choice-based voting round would require the jury members to choose six (6) most deserving nominees of their choice in the *Best Feature Film* category and four (4) most deserving nominees of their choice in the remaining award categories. A maximum of eight (8) most-voted entries in the *Best Feature Film* category and a maximum of five (5) most-voted entries in the remaining award categories would be shortlisted as the final nominees in their respective categories.
- 5.4 Final nominations shortlisted after the *Nominations Voting* round would then be eligible for the *Final Voting* round. The rank-based voting round would require the jury members to rank the shortlisted nominees in each category. The nominee with the highest score (as awarded according to scoring guidelines mentioned in *Section VI*) would be declared as the final winner of the respective category.
- 5.5 *Voting for Special Jury Mention* awardees would commence once the *Final Voting* concludes, as per the rules mentioned in *Section VIII*.

SECTION – VI

**Scoring Guidelines for Final Voting**

- 6.1 A rank-based voting system will be employed for the *Final Voting* round. Jury members will be required to rank the nominees within each category.
- 6.2 In the case of N final nominees within a category, the nominee with the highest rank will receive N points, the second-highest rank will be awarded (N-1) points, and so forth, with the lowest rank earning 1 point.
- 6.3 The cumulative scores from all jury members will then determine the final score for each nominee in the category.

SECTION – VII

**Guidelines to Resolve Cases of Tie**

- 7.1 In instances arising post the *Preliminary Submissions* round, where the number of contenders with equal votes surpasses the remaining available qualifying spots on the shortlist, all contestants with equivalent votes will advance to the *Nominations Voting* round.
- 7.2 Following the *Nominations Voting* round, if the number of contenders with equal votes exceeds the remaining available spots on the Final Nominations List, the Jury is obligated to conduct a second vote for those specific contenders. In this additional voting round, the highest scorer(s) will then qualify as nominee(s) to fill the remaining available spots on the nominations list.
- 7.3 In no situation will a tie be declared for the final winner in an award category. While assigning scores according to the guidelines mentioned in Section VI, if a tie occurs, the contender with a higher cumulative score, excluding the scores from the last rank, will be recognized as the final winner. If the tie persists, the contender with a higher cumulative score, excluding the scores from the last two ranks, will be considered the final winner. This iterative resolution continues until the tie is successfully addressed.

SECTION – VIII

**Criteria for Selection of Special Jury Mention Awardees**

- 8.1 After the conclusion of Final Voting round, all members of the Jury panel will be requested to submit a maximum of three (3) deserving achievements for Special Jury Mentions. Entries eligible should comply with the terms mentioned in *Section IV*.
- 8.2 All contending achievements that receive votes from more than 25% of the Jury members participating in this round will be finalised as Special Jury Mention awardees.
- 8.3 If the number of awardees finalized (as per the rule mentioned in *Clause 8.2* above) is found to be more than five (5), only the top five (5) highest-scoring achievements will be chosen. In the event that contenders with equal votes exceed the remaining final spots, these spots should be left void, and thus no contender (with equal votes) will be chosen as an awardee.
- 8.4 If none of the achievements receive votes from more than 25% of the Jury members participating, a maximum of three (3) higher-scoring achievements will be finalized as awardees, provided each of them has received votes from 15% of the Jury members participating. In all remaining cases, no Special Jury Mention will be awarded.

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