



AWARD CATEGORIES, ELIGIBILITY RULES & BALLOTING GUIDELINES

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PART – I

GENERAL RULES FOR ELIGIBILITY & AWARD CATEGORIES

SECTION- I

GENERAL RULES FOR ELIGIBILITY

1.1 A feature film and all artists/technicians credited for its making shall be eligible for consideration under the award categories listed in *Section II*, provided they comply with the general eligibility rules set out in this section, as well as the applicable category-specific rules mentioned in various sections of *Part II*.

1.2 The feature film must be primarily in Hindi or English and must be a work of fiction. Dubbed or subtitled films originally produced in other primary languages shall be considered ineligible. However, films simultaneously shot in multiple languages (including Hindi or English) shall be considered eligible.

1.3 For feature films produced solely by production companies based in India, the film must have its first public and commercial release—either theatrically or on a digital streaming platform accessible to Indian audiences—between 1st January and 31st December (both days inclusive) of the year under consideration.

1.4 For feature films produced as international collaborations, at least one of the production companies must be based in India. The release date for such films shall be considered as the date on which the film is first made available to Indian audiences through theatrical exhibition or digital streaming platforms in India, and must fall between 1st January and 31st December (both days inclusive) of the year under consideration.

1.5 For feature films produced solely by production companies based outside India, the following conditions must be met:

- a) The feature film must be primarily in the Hindi language.
- b) The cast and crew must include a significant proportion of artists and/or technicians of Indian origin.

The final determination of eligibility for such films shall rest with the Jury. If deemed eligible, the release date shall be considered as the date on which the film is first made available to Indian audiences through theatrical exhibition or digital streaming platforms in India, and must fall between 1st January and 31st December (both days inclusive) of the year under consideration.

1.6 A feature film premiered exclusively at a film festival or through private screenings shall be considered ineligible, unless it subsequently receives a public and commercial theatrical or digital release.

1.7 Feature films released digitally via OTT or video-on-demand platforms shall be eligible only if the streaming platform has active commercial operations in India.

1.8 Short films (with a duration of 40 minutes or less, excluding credits) are not eligible. However, an anthology comprising multiple short films released collectively as a feature film shall be considered eligible, subject to the following conditions:

- a) The anthology shall be evaluated collectively as a single feature film and not as individual short films.
- b) Actors appearing in individual segments shall remain eligible for Actor/Actress in a Leading or Supporting Role, and screen time shall not be used as a disqualifying factor.
- c) Songs featured in individual segments shall remain eligible for Original Song, Vocalist – Male/Female, Lyricist, and Choreography categories.
- d) For all other categories, the anthology shall be treated as a single feature film, and any nomination shall credit the respective artists associated with each segment, as applicable.

1.9 Animated feature films that satisfy the production and release eligibility criteria outlined above shall be considered eligible.

1.10 Documentary and non-fiction feature films shall be considered ineligible.

1.11 For special cases or genres not explicitly covered under the above provisions, the Jury reserves the right to independently determine the eligibility of the feature film.

1.12 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 – II

AWARD CATEGORIES

2.1 FOI Online Awards (FOIOA) shall annually honour artistic achievements in feature films and among artists/technicians credited for their making under the following twenty-four (24) categories:

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Best Feature Film | 13. Best Music Direction – Score |
| 2. Best Direction | 14. Best Music Direction – Album |
| 3. Best Writing – Original | 15. Best Original Song |
| 4. Best Writing – Adapted | 16. Best Vocalist – Female |
| 5. Best Actress in a Leading Role | 17. Best Vocalist – Male |
| 6. Best Actor in a Leading Role | 18. Best Lyricist |
| 7. Best Actress in a Supporting Role | 19. Best Production Design |
| 8. Best Actor in a Supporting Role | 20. Best Costume Design |
| 9. Best Casting & Ensemble | 21. Best Make-Up & Hair Styling |
| 10. Best Cinematography | 22. Best Visual Effects |
| 11. Best Film Editing | 23. Best Choreography |
| 12. Best Sound Design & Mixing | 24. Best Action Direction |

2.2 A feature film and all artists/technicians credited for its making shall be eligible for consideration under the award categories listed above, provided they comply with the general eligibility rules set out in *Section I*, as well as the applicable category-specific rules mentioned in the relevant sections of *Part II*.

2.3 The Jury shall elect a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of five (5) nominations in each of the categories listed above. An exception shall apply to the category of Best Feature Film, which may have a maximum of eight (8) nominations.

2.4 The Jury, by mutual agreement, may decide to skip one or more categories for a particular year if a sufficient number of deserving nominations are not found to be electable.

2.5 In addition to the categories listed above, the Jury may confer Jury Spotlight mentions to artists for achievements in crafts not otherwise covered by the existing award categories, subject to compliance with the additional rules set out in *Section V*.

PART – II

CATEGORY SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY RULES

SECTION – III

WRITING AWARDS

3.1 For a feature film to be considered for the Best Writing – Original award, the screenplay shall be a work of original fiction or original research and shall not be substantially derived from any source listed under Rule 3.2 governing Adapted Screenplays.

3.2 For a feature film to be considered for the Best Writing – Adapted award, the screenplay shall be substantially derived from one or more of the following previously published or released sources, and such source(s) shall be officially credited:

- a) A book, novel, short story, or other printed media.
- b) A play, skit, or any previously performed work of art, whether live or recorded.
- c) A previously released feature film or short film (in any language), including official remakes, spin-offs, parodies, or mock commentaries.
- d) A previously released or ongoing web series, television programme, video sketch, or anthology film/series (in any language), including official remakes, spin-offs, parodies, or mock commentaries.
- e) A prequel, sequel, or franchise feature film series, provided that one or more of the following conditions is met:
 - i. The screenplay continues a storyline from the previous film(s) in the series or franchise; or
 - ii. The screenplay features one or more principal characters adapted from or reprised from the previous film(s) in the series or franchise.

3.3 Feature films in the genre of biopic shall not be considered for the Best Writing – Adapted award unless the filmmakers officially credit a specific source material, such as a biography, printed media, or a film/documentary from which the film is inspired from.

SECTION – IV

MUSIC AWARDS

4.1 To be eligible for the category of Best Music Direction – Score, the majority of the music or background score considered must have been specifically composed for the feature

film. Scores comprising a majority of previously released songs, remixes, or reworked material shall be deemed ineligible.

4.2 The category of Music Direction – Album recognises the overall composition of a feature film's music album or soundtrack and is awarded to the music composers(s) responsible for the album. Music albums featuring contributions from multiple music directors/composers shall be considered under a single nomination. To be eligible for this category, the following essential eligibility rules shall apply:

- a) The soundtrack/album must contain a minimum of four (4) songs specifically composed and written for the feature film.
- b) If a previously commercially released song is reprised in the feature film's music album—whether in its original or remixed form—the music directors associated with such reprised song (including both the original composer and the composer responsible for the reprise) shall not be eligible for credit in this category.
- c) An exception to Rule 4.2(b) may be granted in cases where only the lyrics of a previously released and commercially utilized song or poem are used, provided that the musical composition is entirely original and not inspired by or reused from the earlier version. The decision to grant such an exception shall rest solely with the jury.
- d) In the event of a tie during the nomination or winner shortlisting process, preference shall be given to music albums that exhibit greater compositional consistency, namely albums in which all songs are composed by the same composer or group of composers, for the category of Best Music Direction – Album.

4.3 The category of Original Song recognises the collaborative contribution of artists involved in the creation of a song. In addition to its merit as a standalone musical composition, due consideration shall be given to the effective use of the song within the feature film, particularly its contribution to storytelling. When awarding the Best Original Song category, credit shall be accorded to the music composers(s), lyricist(s) and vocalist(s) of the song. To be eligible for the category of Best Original Song, the following essential eligibility rules shall apply:

- a) The song must be specifically composed and written for the feature film. A previously released and commercially utilized song, reprised in the feature film's music album – whether in its original or remixed form – shall be deemed ineligible for this category.
- b) The song under consideration must be used within the narrative of the released feature film, and not solely as part of the film's music album or as a promotional or marketing purposes. Songs featured during the opening or closing credits of the film shall also be deemed eligible.

4.4 The vocalist(s) of a reprised song shall be eligible for the category of Best Vocalist (Male/Female), provided that they are not credited as a vocalist on any previously released version of the reprised song.

4.5 The lyricist(s) of a reprised song shall be deemed ineligible for the category of Best Lyricist. An exception may be granted in cases where only a limited portion of the lyrics from a previously released song is used in the song under consideration. The final determination of eligibility in such cases shall rest with the majority decision of the jury panel.

SECTION – V SPOTLIGHT MENTIONS

5.1 The jury may separately honour Spotlight Mentions, to recognize achievements in the craft of filmmaking that are not otherwise covered within the standard award categories, mentioned in *Section II*.

5.2 The recognition is may be awarded to an individual, a group of collaborators, or a creative or craft studio, for contribution to a single film or across multiple films released in that year.

5.3 A suggestion window shall be opened each year for jury members to submit their choices for such achievements. Submission of a suggestion by a jury member shall not, by itself, guarantee conferment of the recognition. All such suggestions shall be put to a vote, and only those receiving approval from at least seventy percent (70%) of the jury members shall be conferred the recognition.

5.4 There shall be no restriction on

- a. the number of Spotlight mentions conferred in a given year
- b. the number of individuals or collaborators recognized under a single mention
- c. the number of films associated with a single mention for the purpose of recognizing achievement in a particular craft.

5.5 There is no obligation to confer Spotlight Mention in every award year, and in the absence of sufficient consensus, valid suggestions, or the required majority, no Spotlight mention shall be awarded.

PART – III

BALLOTING GUIDELINES

SECTION – VI

THE VOTING PROCEDURE

6.1 For shortlisting and final selection of nominations and winners, three (3) successive rounds of balloting/voting are proposed, namely:

- I. Preliminary Submissions
- II. Nominations Voting
- III. Final Voting

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

SECTION – VII

SCORING GUIDELINES FOR FINAL VOTING

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 The cumulative scores from all jury members will then determine the final score for each nominee in the category.

SECTION – VIII

GUIDELINES TO RESOLVE CASES OF TIE

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

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