



## AWARDING CATEGORIES & BALLOTING GUIDELINES

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

SECTION – I  
**Award Categories**

- 1.1 FOI Online Awards would 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 – Soundtrack
  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 ten (10) 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 special rules for particular categories 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 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> December (both days included) of the year being considered for.
- 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. 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 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> December (both days included) of the year being considered for.
- 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.
- 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 duration excluding credits of 40 minutes or less) are not eligible. An exception is given to the collection of short films released as an anthology; however, they would be collectively considered as a single feature film.
- 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 take decisions on subject matter of 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 principal credit holder(s) for the respective achievement would be named under the nomination. Determination of these artists/technicians would be done in accordance to the credits mentioned by the filmmakers in the commercially released version of feature film. Any addition or modification in credits otherwise would not be permitted.

### SECTION – III

#### **Specific Rules for Award Categories**

- 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 film (in any language), which includes remakes (both official and unofficial).
  - d) Sequels and franchise features, if storyline or characters are adapted from the previous/original.
  - e) A previously on-air/released television show, documentary or short film (in any language), which has been officially credited.
- 3.4 Feature films in the genre of biopic are not to be considered for *Best Adapted Screenplay* award, unless the filmmakers officially credit the 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 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 three (3) performers. If possible, while awarding, this primary cast of the feature would be credited.
- 3.11 All technicians responsible for the crafts of sound design, editing and mixing would be collectively eligible for the category of *Best Sound Design & Mixing*. The list of such crafts as credited by the filmmaker(s) includes (but not limited to):
- a) Audiography
  - b) Sound Design or Sound Editing
  - c) Location/Production Sound Recording/Mixing or Sync Sound Design
  - d) Final/Post-production Sound Mixing 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 – Soundtrack*, 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 soundtrack/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.
- 3.14 The song being 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 original or remixed format, would stand ineligible for this category.
- 3.15 While awarding the *Best Original Song* category, the music director(s), playback singer(s) and lyricist(s) of the song would be credited.
- 3.16 Playback singer(s) of a reprised song would be considered eligible for the category of *Best Playback Singer (Male/Female)*, provided he/she is not the original artist of any version of the song being reprised.

- 3.17 Lyricist(s) of a reprised song would be considered ineligible for the category of *Best Lyricist*. Exception would be given to cases where only a few lines from the lyrics of another song is used in the one being considered, however, the final decision for the eligibility of such songs in the category is based on the majority received on the jury panel.
- 3.18 For the category of *Best Production Design*, if the filmmaker(s) separately include Set Decorator or Art Director in principal credits along with the Production Designer, they would be included in nomination credit.
- 3.19 For the category of *Best Costume Design*, if the filmmaker(s) separately include equivalent crafts such as that of Jewellery or Armour design in principal credits along with the Costume Designer, they would be included in nomination credit.
- 3.20 For the category of *Best Make-Up & Hair Styling*, the nomination credit would include the prosthetic artists, if any.
- 3.21 While awarding the *Best Visual Effects* category, the respective VFX supervisor of the feature film would be credited.
- 3.22 For the category of *Best Action Direction*, if the filmmaker(s) separately include Stunt Choreographer or Action Designer in principal credits along with the Action Director, they would be included in nomination credit.
- 3.23 In case a craft studio, creative studio or production studio is credited by the filmmakers instead of individuals for crafts catering to the technical categories, they would be allowed to 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 which was not nominated. Same artist can be awarded such Special Jury Mention for more than one work of art performed/represent by him/her.
- 4.4 Number of Special Jury Mentions awarded in a year cannot be more than five (5).

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 *Preliminary Submissions* round, which would require the jury members to submit their choices for 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 be then eligible for *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 the respective category.
- 5.4 Final nominations shortlisted after the *Nominations Voting* round would be then eligible for *Final Voting* round. The rank-based voting round would require the jury members to rank the shortlisted nominees in each category. The nominee with 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 mode of voting would be followed during the Final Voting round. For each category, the Jury members would be requested to rank the nominees.
- 6.2 If there are (say) N final nominees in a category, the one with topmost rank would be awarded N points while, one with the second rank would be awarded (N-1) points and so on; such that one with the lowest rank would be awarded 1 point. This set of scores would represent a single jury member's vote.

- 6.3 Set of scores from all Jury members would be totalled to get the final score of each nominee in the category.

SECTION – VII

**Guidelines to Resolve Cases of Tie**

- 7.1 For cases resulting after the Preliminary Submissions round where the number of contenders with equal votes exceeds the remaining available qualifying spots on the shortlist, all such contenders would be considered qualified for the Nominations Voting round.
- 7.2 For cases resulting after the Nominations Voting round where the number of contenders with equal votes exceeds the remaining available spots on the Final Nominations List, the Jury should vote again for the contenders (with equal votes) to fill the remaining available spots on the nominations list. Highest scorer(s) would qualify as nominee(s).
- 7.3 Under no circumstances, a tie final winner would be declared for an award category. While awarding scores as per the guidelines mentioned in Section VI, if a case of tie eventually occurs, the contender earning higher score not considering the scores due to the last rank would be considered as the final winner. If the conflict remains unresolved, the contender earning higher score not considering the scores due to the last two ranks would be considered as the final winner, and so on. If the conflict still remains unresolved, the Jury should vote again for the contenders (with equal scores) to decide the final winner.

SECTION – VIII

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

- 8.1 After the conclusion of Final Voting round, all members on the Jury panel would 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 who receive votes from more than 25% of the Jury members participating in this round would be finalised as Special Jury Mention awardees.
- 8.3 If the number of awardees finalised (as per the rule mentioned in Clause 8.2 above) is found to be more than five (5), only the higher scoring five (5) would be chosen. In case contenders with equal votes exceed remaining final spots, then these remaining spots should be left void, and thus no such contender (with equal votes) would be chosen as awardee.
- 8.4 In case none of the achievements receive votes from more than 25% of the Jury members participating, a maximum of three (3) higher scoring achievements would finalised as awardees, provided each of them have received votes from 15% of the Jury members participating. In all remaining cases, no Special Jury Mention would be awarded.

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