

University Grants Commission (UGC), Nepal

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Impact and Effectiveness of Scholarship and Equity Grants on Higher Education in Nepal

Duration: Up to 5 months | Location: Nepal

Issue Date: December 16, 2025

1. Background

University Grants Commission (UGC) Nepal, is an autonomous and statutory government body that provides financial policy and regulatory supports to higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nepal. The main objectives of UGC are to coordinate among universities; allocate and disburse government grants to universities and higher educational institutions and take appropriate steps for ensuring quality service delivery of HEIs. UGC has been providing scholarships to needy students, following its guidelines for enhanced transparency and equity. These scholarships are aimed at supporting students who would otherwise not continue their higher education. UGC seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of its scholarships in terms of access, enrollment, retention, and completion rates to date, including application criteria and processes; stakeholder feedback from students, parents, schools, local governments and universities; adequacy of scholarship amounts; accuracy of targeting (inclusion/exclusion errors); quota and recipient distributions by subject; and equity across gender and socioeconomic background. The study will compare Nepal's scholarship model with international best practices and conclude with actionable policy recommendations to strengthen the model to better serve the most needy students.

2. Objectives

- Assess the effectiveness of scholarships in supporting students who would otherwise not continue higher education, and whether this investment leads to tangible outcomes such as improved completion rates and employment opportunities.
- Review the application criteria and selection process, including stakeholder feedback (student, parents, HEIs, local governments, universities).
- Analyze adequacy of scholarship amounts and accuracy of targeting (inclusion and exclusion errors).
- Examine recipient profiles by subject, gender, province, and socioeconomic background.
- Review and compare Nepal's PMT approach with best practices from other countries and identify transferrable lessons.
- Assess the impact of scholarship in terms of access and enrollment of disadvantaged groups in HEIs.
- Analyze relationship between scholarship and student performance (drop out, completion rate/pass rate, employment rate) .
- Understand the complementarity between UGC-funded and university-funded scholarships.
- Provide prioritized policy recommendations to enhance design, delivery, and outcomes of PMT-based scholarships.

3. Scope of Work

- Document Review: UGC scholarship guidelines, PMT methodology, allocation and disbursement data, and relevant laws/rules.
- Document Review: University-based scholarship guidelines, and assess the complementarity with UGC scholarships.
- Data Extraction & Management: Build clean analytical datasets (applications, awards, amounts, demographics, subjects, provinces).
- Stakeholder Consultations: Surveys/focus group discussions (FGDs) of students and parents; key informant interviews (KIIs) with HEIs, local governments, and UGC staff.
- Targeting Assessment: Measure inclusion/exclusion errors using available socioeconomic indicators and PMT scores.
- Adequacy: Analyze the level and structure of scholarship amounts, and determine if they are sufficient to cover tuition, living expenses, and other costs; assess by subject and recipients.
- Equity Analysis: Disaggregate findings by gender, socioeconomic background, province, and school type.
- Process and Implementation: Review the transparency, simplicity, and fairness of the application and selection process, and
- Administrative Efficiency: Assess how efficiently scholarships are allocated and disbursed.
- International Benchmarking: Review comparator-country scholarship targeting models (PMT or equivalent).
- Review of international good practices for scholarship financing models and assessment of a suitable model for Nepal.
- Recommendations: Develop a cost-conscious policy options menu with implementation pathways and timelines.
- Analyze relationship between scholarship support and student performance, retention, and post-graduation employment outcomes.
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4. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach will combine quantitative and qualitative techniques: quantitative analysis of UGC administrative data; statistically valid surveys of scholarship applicants, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries; FGDs and KIIs with key stakeholders; and a structured international benchmarking review. Ethical protocols will cover informed consent, data protection, and safeguarding.

- Sampling: Stratified sampling across provinces, HEIs types, gender, and socioeconomic groups.
- Quantitative Analysis:
 - Descriptive statistics; targeting accuracy metrics; regression models to identify determinants of access and outcomes. Analysis of Student Enrollment, retention and student performance Indicators
- Qualitative Work: Semi-structured KIIs and FGDs to capture process experiences and perceived adequacy.

- Benchmarking: Rapid policy scans of other comparator systems and synthesis of best practices.
- Validation: Stakeholder workshop to test emerging findings and refine recommendations.

5. Expected Deliverables

- Inception Report (Week 2): refined design, instruments, sampling, and work plan.
- Survey/Interview Instruments & Ethics Protocol (Week 3).
- Cleaned Dataset & Codebook (Week 12).
- Draft Analytical Report (Week 16) including benchmarking and preliminary recommendations.
- Validation Workshop materials and proceedings (Week 18).
- Presentation of Findings to UGC (19).
- Final Report (Week 20) and concise Policy Brief for decision-makers.

6. Duration

Up to 5 months from mid-January 2026.

- Weeks 1–2: Mobilization & inception
- Weeks 3–12: Fieldwork
- Weeks 13–16: Analysis
- Weeks 17–20: Validation & finalization

7. Team Qualifications

Relevant university research centers mobilizing research team with:

- Team Leader: Advanced degree in economics/education/social policy; 10+ years in scholarship evaluation/community based targeting; knowledge of PMT or equivalent models globally; Nepal/South Asia Region experience preferred.
- Data Analyst: Expertise in quantitative methods, targeting accuracy, and administrative data management.
- Qualitative Researcher: Proven FGDs/KIIs design and analysis.
- Field Coordinators: Nepali language fluency; stakeholder engagement; ethical compliance.
- **Research Assistants** : Master level students (interns eligible)

8. Proposal Submission Requirements

- Technical Proposal: Understanding of ToR; methodology; work plan; team composition and CVs; ethics/data protection plan; risk mitigation.
- Financial Proposal: Itemized budget covering fieldwork, workshops, analysis, and dissemination; payment schedule and assumptions.

9. Evaluation Criteria

- Technical Approach (50%): Rigor, feasibility, and innovation.
- Relevant Experience (20%): Scholarship/PMT evaluation and comparable assignments.
- Team Qualifications (20%): Expertise and role-fit.
- Financial Proposal (10%): Cost-effectiveness and clarity.

10. Submission Details

- **Deadline:** January 16, 2026
- **Email for Submission:** research@ugcnepal.edu.np
- **Subject Line:** "Proposal – Scholarship Effectiveness Study"