



Guidelines for the BRAOU Samatha Support Scheme

Towards an Equitable and Inclusive Higher Education in Telangana

I. Introduction: Embracing Ambedkar's Vision for an Equitable Society within Telangana, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), deeply rooted in the principles of accessible and inclusive education, is proud to introduce the "Samatha Support Scheme" (Samatha Freeships). This initiative is a concrete manifestation of our commitment to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy, which champions an equitable society built on equal opportunities and social justice. Recognizing that education is the most potent tool for social change and empowerment, the Samatha Support Scheme seeks to dismantle existing barriers to higher education for historically marginalized communities within the jurisdiction of Telangana State. The 192nd Executive Council (EC) of the university held on June 18th approved the policy and accordingly the guidelines are prepared.

II. The Imperative for Inclusive Education: Addressing Cultural and Social Exclusions in Telangana Despite significant strides in educational access, certain sections of society within Telangana remain critically underrepresented in higher education due to deep-rooted cultural and social exclusions. BRAOU has identified key communities in Telangana facing these challenges:

1. Adivasi Youth: Adivasi communities of Telangana such as Gond, Koya, Chenchu, and other Primitive Tribal Groups, predominantly residing in remote and forested areas of Telangana, often face geographical isolation, economic hardship, and cultural barriers that limit their access to conventional higher education institutions. Traditional educational models may not resonate with their unique cultural contexts, leading to low enrollment and retention rates in the state.

2. Transgender Individuals: Within Telangana, societal stigma, discrimination, and lack of acceptance often force transgender individuals out of mainstream educational settings. The cultural taboo surrounding their identity creates significant hurdles in pursuing higher education, leading to social and economic marginalization within the state.

3. Divyangjan: While efforts have been made by the Telangana government, Persons with Disabilities, physically challenged individuals still encounter significant difficulties in accessing traditional colleges across the state. Architectural barriers, lack of specialized support, and societal perceptions can impede their pursuit of higher education, despite their intellectual capabilities. The Samatha Support Scheme is specifically designed to address these systemic inequalities and bring higher education to those who have historically been "unreached" solely within the State of Telangana.

III. The BRAOU Samatha Support Scheme:

Core Provisions: The Samatha Support Scheme offers a comprehensive package of support to eligible candidates, effectively removing financial and logistical barriers to higher education:

Free Education: Eligible students will be required to pay a nominal registration fee of ₹500 only. No tuition fees will be charged for their undergraduate studies. Students will be responsible for paying the prescribed examination fees for their semester-end examinations.

Free Course Material: All necessary course materials, including printed study guides, will be provided free of cost to the students.

Free Access to Online Resources: Students will enjoy unlimited and free access to BRAOU's extensive online resources, including the online service portal, course material portal, audio/video lessons portal, and online learning portal.

Weekend Counseling Classes: Students can attend weekend counseling classes at their nearest study center, providing them with essential academic support and guidance.

IV. Eligibility Criteria: The Samatha Support Scheme is applicable only to Telangana Permanent Residents; eligibility for the Scheme will be strictly based on the Government of Telangana's established criteria for the identified communities. Applicants must submit relevant documents as proof issued by the Government of Telangana.

For Adivasi Community: Valid Community Certificate issued by the competent authority of the Government of Telangana, clearly identifying them as belonging to the specified primitive tribal groups listed by the state government.

Income Criterion (as per Telangana Government Policy for STs): While the Samatha Freeship itself waives tuition fees, applicants will generally be assessed against the income limits often stipulated by the Telangana government for various scholarship and welfare schemes for Scheduled Tribes. As of current Telangana government policies, for most educational schemes, the parental annual income limit for ST categories is typically ₹2,00,000 (Rupees Two Lakhs).

BRAOU will adhere to the latest income criteria stipulated by the Telangana government for ST communities for the purpose of verifying eligibility for this specific freeship, unless otherwise exempted by a specific government order for this scheme. For that extend the candidate must submit a latest income certificate from a competent authority.

For Transgender Individuals: Valid Gender Certificate issued by the competent authority of Telangana, as per the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and subsequent rules implemented in Telangana.

Income Criterion (as per Telangana Government Policy for Transgender Individuals): For various economic support and welfare schemes, the Telangana government often specifies income limits for transgender beneficiaries. For urban areas, this can be around ₹2,00,000 (Rupees Two Lakhs) and for rural areas,

₹1,50,000 (Rupees One Lakh Fifty Thousand) annual income, along with possession of a White Ration Card. BRAOU will apply the most current income limits set by the Telangana government for transgender individuals for educational support.

For Divyangjan: Valid Sadharm Certificate (Disability Certificate) issued by the competent medical board within Telangana as per the guidelines of the Government of Telangana. The minimum disability percentage required for eligibility will be 40% or more (benchmark disability), as per the Telangana government's prescribed eligibility for schemes related to Divyangjan.

Income Criterion (as per Telangana Government Policy for Divyangjan): For some educational schemes for Persons with Disabilities, the Telangana government may specify an annual parental income limit. For example, for "Top Class Education For Students With Disabilities" schemes, the income limit can be up to ₹6,00,000 (Rupees Six Lakhs) per annum. BRAOU will refer to the most current income guidelines established by the Telangana government for educational schemes targeting Divyangjan, and income certificate from the competent authority is a must.

V. Applicability:

New Admissions: The Samatha Support Scheme of BRAOU is applicable for undergraduate (UG) candidates across all streams, enrolling from the academic batch of 2025-26 onwards, who are permanent residents of Telangana. All enrolled learners who meet the eligibility criteria and residency requirement for Telangana will receive the freeship in their first year. Continuation of the freeship for the second and third years will be contingent upon the candidate successfully passing all subjects at a time in their respective semester-end examinations of the preceding academic year. This ensures academic commitment and progress.

VI. Expected Outcomes:

The Samatha Support Scheme is projected to yield significant positive outcomes within Telangana State, directly aligning with Dr. Ambedkar's ideology and the constitutional vision of India

Enhanced Access to Higher Education: The scheme will dramatically increase the enrollment of Adivasi youth, transgender individuals, and Divyangjan from Telangana in higher education, thereby reducing the educational disparity faced by these communities within the state.

Promotion of Equitable Society: By removing financial and access barriers, the scheme will foster a more equitable society in Telangana where opportunities for growth and development are available to all, irrespective of their socio-cultural background or physical abilities.

Inclusive Educational Environment: BRAOU will solidify its position as a leading institution for inclusive education in Telangana, creating a welcoming and supportive environment that celebrates diversity and caters to the unique learning needs of marginalized groups.

Empowerment and Self-Reliance: Access to higher education will empower these individuals from Telangana, enabling them to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate actively in the state's development, pursue meaningful careers, and contribute to national progress.

Fulfillment of Constitutional Mandate: The scheme directly contributes to fulfilling the constitutional vision of justice, equality, and fraternity within Telangana, ensuring that no citizen is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge and progress.

VII. Conclusion: A Commitment to "Reach to the Unreached" in Telangana the BRAOU Samatha Support Scheme is more than just a financial aid program; it is a profound declaration of our commitment to social justice and the transformative power of education specifically within the State of Telangana. By actively reaching out to the unreached and providing them with the tools to excel, BRAOU reaffirms its dedication to building a truly equitable and inclusive society in Telangana, as envisioned by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. This initiative marks a new chapter in BRAOU's journey, setting a precedent for other educational institutions in the state to follow in creating a more just and accessible higher education landscape.