# The Ashoka Scholars Programme
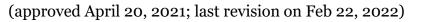
*ASP Guidelines*

(approved April 20, 2021; last revision on Feb 22, 2022)

---

## Table of Contents:

---

---

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AP | Academic Policies |
| ASP | Ashoka Scholars Programme |
| DipASR | Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| ISM | Independent Study Module |
| LMS | Ashoka's Learning Management System |
| OAA | Office of Academic Affairs |
| UG | undergraduate |
| UGC | University Grants Commission |

## Preamble

Ashoka University, in compliance with UGC guidelines, offers a year-long **Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR)** – henceforth, the *Ashoka Scholars Programme* (ASP). The ASP was created to provide students with the opportunity to take a fourth year diploma, so that in conjunction with Ashoka's three year UG degree programmes, Ashoka can offer students a full 4-year liberal arts education, of which the ASP year serves as the crowning year. The following policy sets out the scope and the requirements governing the programme, the many options regarding credentials that students can earn, as well as further regulations.

## I. Scope, Requirements, and Duration of the ASP

1. In line with Ashoka's commitment to providing its students with the opportunity to develop both academic breadth and academic depth, the ASP offers students a defining liberal arts experience that blends academic rigour with a wide range of elective options across a variety of subjects.

2. By completing the ASP, students become eligible to apply for postgraduate programmes in North America and other parts of the world that require 12 years of study at the secondary school level and 4 years of study at the university level. While the ASP is thus strongly recommended for those who wish to pursue further academic education, it is equally valuable for students who wish to broaden their respective horizon and want to reap the full benefit of going through the well-rounded education that makes Ashoka students unique among their peers in India.

3. In order to graduate from the ASP with a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research, ASP students must complete a total of 32 academic credits, though students may complete more credits by taking the maximum courses allowed and summer courses between their graduation in the Spring and the Monsoon semester.

   3.1 While the total credit load of the two ASP semesters must add up to a minimum of 32 credits, the minimum course load for ASP students is 12 academic credits per regular semester.

   3.2 The maximum course load is 26 academic credits per semester. (6 regular courses plus 1 CC, 1 TA-ship, or 1 ISM for 2 credits).

4. The standard duration of the ASP is one year from the beginning of the Monsoon semester. Students may also take courses over the summer preceding the Monsoon semester, provided they register on time. Credits earned from these courses count towards their ASP requirements, credentials students want to earn, or, where applicable, remaining UG requirements.

5. Students who do not complete their ASP requirements within one year can, under certain circumstances, take an extra year to complete it.

   5.1 As per UGC guidelines, the time a student takes to complete both the UG degree and the ASP cannot exceed 6 years, measured from the time of the beginning of the student's UG studies.

   5.2 If in the Monsoon semester of the ASP three or four years have passed since the student has taken up studies towards their UG degree, the student may extend their ASP by maximally one year to complete their requirements.

   5.3 If in the Monsoon semester of the ASP five years have passed since the student has taken up studies towards their UG degree, the student must finish their ASP within one year only. An extension of one year can be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Granting such exceptions is at the discretion of and must be requested in writing from the Vice Chancellor.

## II. Eligibility and Registration

6. Only current or past Ashoka UG students are eligible for admission to the ASP.

7. Among those listed in Art. 6, only the following are eligible for *direct* admission and can enroll via the ASP registration form as soon as it opens (see Art. 9.1):

   7.1 UG students who are graduating in the Spring semester of the year in which the ASP begins;

   7.2 UG students who by the end of the Spring semester of the year in which the ASP begins have no more than 8 credits to complete towards their UG degree.

8. Among those listed in Art. 6, the following must take further steps to be admitted to the ASP:

   8.1 students who have taken a gap of up to and no more than two regular semesters after graduation (see Art. 9.2);

   8.2 students who a) by the end of the Spring semester of the year in which they start the ASP do not yet meet the requirement set out in Art. 7.2, and b) think that they will meet it by the beginning of the Monsoon semester—e.g., because they plan to complete pending incompletes by then or to complete summer courses (see Art. 9.3);

   8.3 For all students listed in Art. 8.1-8.2, at the beginning of the Monsoon semester of the ASP, the beginning of their UG studies at Ashoka must not date back further than 5 years.

9. To apply for the ASP,

9.1 students who as per Art. 7 are eligible for *direct* admission must simply fill the ASP registration form made available on the AMS. The ASP registration form typically opens in April of the Spring semester prior to the beginning of the ASP year and stays open until mid-June. The exact dates are announced annually by the OAA.

9.2 students who as per Art. 8.1 have taken a gap year must send an email indicating their intent to join the ASP to asp.admissions@ashoka.edu.in by the first week of May. The OAA will inform the registrar and the relevant offices to assist the students with rejoining the University, with signing up for their Capstone Theses (if applicable) and with registering for courses.

9.3 students who as per Art 8.2 need to complete credits over the summer to meet the requirement specified in Art. 7.2 must raise an appropriate request through the request feature on AMS. Such students will need to fill the ASP registration form and register for Monsoon courses as UG students. Their ASP accounts will be activated only if <u>on the day before the official beginning of the Monsoon semester</u>, they meet the condition in in Art. 7.2. If they do not meet these requirements, they will continue as UG students to complete their degree and may thus become eligible to join the ASP in the following year.

10. Students interested in joining the ASP are advised to attend the information session on the ASP that is announced and conducted by the OAA.

11. Prospective ASP students are advised to register for the ASP as early as possible, so as to be able to start working on their Capstone Thesis (where applicable, see Art. 25), take summer courses (see Art. 13 below), and register for courses in the Monsoon semester in time (see Art. 44 below).

## III. Course and Degree Options for ASP students

12. ASP students may take co-curricular courses. They may also take Foundation Courses that they have not yet taken previously, provided seats are available. Co-curricular courses and Foundation Courses are mandatory for UG students. During registration, UG students will therefore be given preference. Students who still have to complete a co-curricular course towards the completion of their UG degree must reach out to the OAA via the AMS Request feature before preregistration so as to ensure that their request for a co-curricular course will be treated with the same priority as those of UG students.

13. ASP students may take courses in the summer semester preceding the Monsoon semester in which the ASP starts. Each course may either count towards the completion of their UG degree (where applicable, see Art. 7.2, 8.2 , and 9.3 above) or

towards credentials they seek to pursue during their ASP. Students who wish to join the ASP and wish to take summer courses are advised to register for the ASP before preregistration begins.

14. During their ASP, students may choose to

   14.1 complete an ***Advanced Major*** (see Art. 16 – 20 below);

   14.2 work on a ***Capstone Project*** (see Art. 21 – 28 below);

   14.3 complete one or more ***Minors*** (see Art. 29 – 30 below);

   14.4 complete one or more ***Concentrations*** (see Art. 31 – 32 below);

   14.5 convert a Minor or previously taken elective courses into a ***Second Major Equivalent*** (see Art. 33 - 37), which can also be an Interdisciplinary Major that requires courses the student has already taken during their UG studies;

   14.6 undertake the ***Ashoka Quest***, a year-long social internship programme (see Art. 38 - 41); [currently inactive]

   14.7 take ***any courses*** they wish, in line with the credit requirements, without completing any of the above options.

15. Note that as is the case with UG courses, both such courses as students have already taken during their UG studies and courses taken during the ASP (or in the summer preceding it) can serve to meet requirements of various programmes (e.g., if cross-listed or if counting as electives), but they count only once in terms of credits.

## ADVANCED MAJOR

16. At present, Advanced Majors are only offered in subjects that offer Pure Majors. Completing an Advanced Major is recommended especially (but not exclusively) to students who seek to pursue higher studies in their subject.

17. Specific requirements for completing an Advanced Major are determined by individual programmes and vary across the University. The following articles concerning Advanced Majors thus have the status of guidelines that provide a general framework.

18. In case there is a conflict between the following guidelines and requirements set out by individual departments, then by default, the requirements set out by departments are binding. In case of major conflicts, it is open to students to seek mediation through the OAA.

19. To complete an Advanced Major in a given subject, students must complete between 16 and 24 credits in that subject – this may include a Capstone Thesis or Project (see Art. 21 – 28; the nomenclature differs across departments). More specifically, students must

   19.1 take the seminars required by the department offering the Advanced Major credential in the Monsoon term, one of which may be a Capstone Thesis preparation/Capstone Research course;

   19.2 take the seminars required by the department in the Spring term, one of which may be a Capstone Thesis/Project (see Art. 21 – 28 below);

   19.3 in some departments: complete a Teaching Practicum (Teaching Assistantship);

   19.4 pass all the courses that count towards their Advanced Major, including the Capstone Thesis or Project, with an average grade of C- or better.

20. Departments may require that at the end of the ASP, Advanced Majors present their Capstone Thesis or Project to the department or the University as a whole.

## CAPSTONE THESIS/PROJECT

21. During their ASP, students can complete a Capstone Thesis or Project either as a mandatory part of an Advanced Major (see Art. 19 above) or independently of an Advanced Major. Students cannot complete more than one Capstone Project.

22. Capstone Theses and Projects that are a mandatory part of an Advanced Major can be conducted only in the subject of the Advanced Major, though the second advisor may be from a different department (see Art. 26 below).

23. Capstone Theses and Projects that are carried out independently of an Advanced Major can be completed in any subject offered at the University, provided the student finds an advisor from that subject area who is willing to work with them.

24. To apply for a Capstone Thesis or Project, students must fill the Capstone Registration form available on the LMS. Before doing this, students must register for the ASP (see Art. 9 above) and should have established relations with one or two advisors who are willing to work with them on their Thesis or Project.

25. It is strongly advised that students who are willing to work on a Capstone Thesis or Project contact their potential advisors early on and fill the Capstone Registration form before the end of the Spring semester. This way advisors can provide students with material to read over the summer in advance.

26. A Capstone Thesis or Project will be supervised by a primary supervisor and may be co-supervised by a second advisor. The primary advisor must be an Ashoka faculty member from the department in which the Thesis or Project is conducted and will also serve as the student's Academic Advisor. The secondary advisor may be a faculty member from another academic department or academic institution.

27. Different departments handle Capstone Theses and Projects differently and students are expected to familiarise themselves with the relevant department-specific rules governing them. Such rules will be available on the respective departmental websites and may also be requested from the respective Head of Department.

28. As with Advanced Majors (see Art. 20), departments may require that at the end of the ASP, students who have worked on a Capstone Thesis or Project present their work to the department or the University as a whole.

## COMPLETING MINORS

29. During their ASP, students can expand on their UG studies and complete one or more Minors. Courses taken in the Minor subject during the students' UG studies will count towards the Minor on the ASP transcript.

30. To complete a Minor in a given University-approved subject, students

   30.1 must complete at least 24 credits (typically: 6 courses) with an average grade of C- or better;

   30.2 must ensure that in completing their courses for the Minor, they meet the requirements specific to the Minor in question. These requirements can be found on the website of the respective programme and can also be requested from the relevant Head of Department.

## COMPLETING CONCENTRATIONS

31. During their ASP, students can expand on their UG studies and complete one or more Concentrations. Courses taken in the subject in which the Concentration is pursued during the students' UG studies will count towards the Concentration on the ASP transcript.

32. To complete a Concentration in a given University-approved subject, students

   32.1 must complete at least 16 credits (typically 4 courses) with an average grade of C- or better;

   32.2 must ensure that in completing their courses for the Concentration, they meet the requirements specific to the Concentration in question. These requirements

can be found on the website of the respective programme and can also be requested from the relevant Head of Department.

## COMPLETING A SECOND MAJOR EQUIVALENT

33. During their ASP, students can expand on their UG studies and complete a Second Major Equivalent, which will be listed as Second Major Equivalent on their transcript. Courses taken in the Major subject during the students' UG studies will count towards the Second Major Equivalent on the ASP transcript.

34. To complete a Second Major Equivalent in a given University-approved Major, students need to complete all the courses and credits required by the respective Major with a minimum average grade of C-.

35. During their ASP, students who have completed an Interdisciplinary Major during their UG studies may complete a Major in a subject that is among those contributing to the Interdisciplinary Major in question. Courses taken towards the Interdisciplinary Major during the students' UG studies will count towards the Second Major Equivalent on the ASP transcript.

36. During their ASP, students who have completed a given Minor or Major during their UG studies may complete an Interdisciplinary Major to which the subject in which they have completed their Minor or Major contributes. On their transcripts, this appears as Interdisciplinary Major Equivalent. Courses taken towards the Minor or Major during the students' UG studies will count towards the Interdisciplinary Major Equivalent on the ASP transcript.

37. If the departmental requirements set for the Second Major Equivalent provide this option, students pursuing a Second Major Equivalent may complete a Capstone Thesis or Project in their Second Major Equivalent subject as part of meeting the pertinent Major requirements.

## COMPLETING THE ASHOKA QUEST

38. During their ASP, students can complete a year-long social internship programme called the *Ashoka Quest*, if this programme is active.

39. During the AY 2020/21, the AY2021/22, and the AY2022/23 the Ashoka Quest is not active. [This article will be updated depending on the status of the Ashoka Quest.]

40. The Ashoka Quest partners students with organizations outside of Ashoka University and exposes them to real-life problems faced by Indian communities, ranging from sanitation challenges and gender inequality to lack of digital access and literacy.

41. The Ashoka Quest is divided into three parts:

41.1 Preparation: a semester-long 4-credit course that offers modules on social impact and philanthropy, leadership, fieldwork, and digital engagements with non-urban and non-Anglophone communities designed to prepare students for the challenges of the internship; some ongoing work with local Haryana village communities will be part of the preparation.

41.2 Practice: a three-week internship during the Winter Intermission, living and working with a community outside of Ashoka University. The internship will involve mentored student teams working closely with an organization already familiar with the community.

41.3 Processing: a semester-long 4-credit course that responds to the experience of the internship; the response will entail a series of follow-up assignments with the mentoring organization and a final team project that will be presented at a day-long Quest symposium for students, mentors, and faculty. This project will be either analytic or creative; it can be a formal report, a play, a film, an installation.

## IV. Various Regulations

42. For students who continue with the ASP year directly after completing their UG degree, the Financial Aid status remains unchanged in the ASP.

43. The Financial Aid status of students who have taken a leave of absence of two or more semesters after the completion of their UG degree may need to be re-evaluated.

44. Course registration for ASP students takes place in the summer, along with the course registration of continuing students. In order to avoid issues potentially arising from late registration, prospective ASP students are advised to register for the ASP as early as possible, ideally before the Spring semester ends.

45. The course adjustment rules governing dropping a course, adding a course, auditing a course, converting taking a course for credit to auditing a course, and withdrawing from courses are the same as those for UG students.

46. The rules governing Independent Study Modules (ISM) vary across departments. More specifically:

46.1 some departments may put a cap on how many of the courses counting towards various credentials that students may wish to complete during their ASP may be completed by taking ISMs;

46.2 students interested in pursuing ISMs during their ASP are advised to contact relevant department heads to inquire whether and what kind of cap the

department imposes on the number of credits students can earn towards departmental credentials by taking ISMs.

47. The rules governing Incompletes are the same as those for UG students.

48. The rules governing Leave of Absence, Academic Integrity Violations, Disciplinary Infractions, Grade Appeal, Mid-Semester Feedback, End of Semester Assignments, Re-Taking Courses, Examination Record Keeping, and Academic Standing are the same as those for UG students.

49. Students who, according to Art. 7.2, and 8.2, and 9.3 above, must complete up to 8 academic credits in their first semester of the ASP and fail to do so will automatically revert to UG status in the Spring semester.

50. Students who revert to UG status remain eligible to do an ASP after the Spring only if they have by then in fact completed their UG studies. Exceptions from this rule require specific approval from the OAA.

51. Students who wish to exit the ASP programme without a degree can apply to do so with the OAA at any time. The OAA will then inform the relevant departments. The s students' admission status will then be denoted as 'Withdrawn' or 'Early Exit', as applicable. Whether the student is entitled to any fee reimbursement will be determined by the Registrar and the Finance department in accordance with UGC norms.

**Minor revisions**:

- **Sep 01, 2021**: Art. 3.2: maximum credit count increased to 26 to match regulations in force for students in their 3rd year of UG studies.
- **Jan 31, 2022**: Art. 3 wording revised, old 3.3 removed as obsolete

**Updates based on approval by the Academic Council**

- **Jan 31, 2022**: Art. 7-9, 13, and 49 adjusted since the ASP Committee has been removed as otiose.
- **Feb 22, 2022:** Art. 13, last sentence added; Art. 9.2. month adjusted from June to May