



**Ministry of Education**  
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NCERT



Performance Assessment, Review, and  
Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development

**State School Standard  
Setting Authority (SSSA)**

**GUIDELINES**





शिक्षा मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION

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# State School Standard Setting Authority (SSSA) Guidelines

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Authority (SSSA) Guidelines**

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**Shri Sanjay Kumar**  
Secretary



Department of School  
Education & Literacy,  
**Ministry of Education**  
Government of India



## **MESSAGE**

The National Education Policy 2020 set a clear and ambitious agenda for transforming school education in India. Central to that vision is the establishment of State School Standards Setting Authorities (SSSAs) to operationalize minimal standards, promote transparent self-disclosure, and foster a culture of continuous improvement across all schools. This document provides a rigorous, practicable blueprint for translating those principles into state-level practice.

It articulates a coherent operating model for the SSSA, covering standards development, disclosure architecture, accreditation, data governance, grievance adjudication, randomized student feedback, and a phased roll-out with capacity-building supports. The guidance is deliberately operational: it specifies instruments, validation logic, timelines, and governance safeguards that preserve independence, ensure legal defensibility, and protect learner privacy while enabling meaningful public oversight.

I welcome the emphasis on evidence-based standards developed in collaboration with PARAKH and state stakeholders; the insistence on machine-readable disclosures and EMIS interoperability; and the commitment to risk-based, proportionate oversight that privileges advisory support and School Quality Improvement Plans. Together these measures will reduce administrative burden, strengthen equity-focused resource allocation, and rebuild public trust in school systems.

I commend the teams and partners who contributed to this guidance and urge states to adopt its recommendations with fidelity and contextual adaptation. The Ministry of Education stands ready to support states in implementing these reforms that will advance quality, accountability, and inclusion across our schools.



**Shri Anandrao V Patil**  
Additional Secretary



Department of School  
Education & Literacy,  
**Ministry of Education**  
Government of India



## **MESSAGE**

The National Education Policy 2020 articulates a decisive shift towards standards-based, disclosure-led assurance in school education. The establishment of State School Standards Setting Authorities (SSSAs) is central to this reform, providing states with the institutional capacity to define minimal standards, ensure transparent self-disclosure, and foster continuous school improvement. This guidance document offers a comprehensive and operational blueprint to realize that mandate.

It sets out clear instruments-standards, disclosure schemas, validation logic, accreditation protocols, grievance adjudication procedures, and technology requirements designed to be legally defensible, administratively executable, and pedagogically coherent. I welcome the emphasis on interoperability with state EMIS, the collaboration with PARAKH and state stakeholders in standards development, and the risk-based approach that privileges advisory support and School Quality Improvement Plans. The provisions on randomized student feedback, version-controlled public disclosure, and time-bound grievance resolution strengthen both transparency and procedural fairness.

I urge state governments and education departments to adopt these recommendations with fidelity and contextual adaptation, prioritizing capacity building at district and school levels. The Ministry of Education will continue to support states through technical assistance, knowledge sharing, and facilitation of best practices. Implemented with rigor and integrity, these measures will advance quality, equity, and public trust across our school systems.



**Prof. Dinesh Prasad Saklani**  
Director



**National Council of Educational  
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## **FORWARD**

The National Education Policy 2020 set a transformative agenda for school education, placing standards, transparency, and learner-centred accountability at the heart of system reform. PARAKH's mandate is to support this transition by providing the technical scaffolding that makes minimal standards operational, comparable, and pedagogically sound. This guiding document, prepared in collaboration with state stakeholders and sector experts, translates that mandate into a practicable blueprint for State School Standards Setting Authorities.

The guidance foregrounds four interdependent pillars: rigorous standards development grounded in evidence and classroom realities; a disclosure-first architecture that renders accreditation outcomes and regulatory information public and auditable; robust data governance and analytics that enable objective, risk-based oversight; and a fair, time-bound grievance adjudication system that protects procedural justice. Each element is designed to reduce administrative burden, strengthen equity-focused decision making, and foster a culture of continuous improvement through School Quality Improvement Plans and capacity building.

We present operational instruments- disclosure schemas, validation logic, and implementation protocols intended for immediate piloting and iterative refinement. The document emphasises interoperability with state EMIS, legal defensibility, and safeguards for learner privacy. We encourage states to adapt these recommendations to local contexts while preserving core principles of transparency, proportionality, and pedagogical coherence.

PARAKH, NCERT stands ready to support states in implementing these reforms through technical assistance, capacity building, and knowledge exchange. Together, we can make quality assurance a constructive, evidence-driven force for equitable and sustained school improvement.



**Prof. Indrani Bhaduri**  
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## **PREFACE**

School education in India stands at a decisive inflection point. The National Education Policy 2020 does not merely call for incremental reform; it demands a re-imagining of how we define quality, equity, and accountability in every classroom. Standards are no longer abstract benchmarks, they are instruments of trust, transparency, and justice for every learner.

PARAKH's mandate is to translate this vision into practice. These guidelines for State School Standards Setting Authorities are not a compliance manual, but a blueprint for cultural change. They invite states to see standards as living commitments: evidence-based, publicly disclosed, and continuously improved. They urge systems to embrace data not as surveillance, but as a tool for fairness and proportionality. They place grievance redressal at the heart of procedural justice, ensuring that every voice is heard.

By operationalizing these principles, states can move from fragmented oversight to a coherent architecture of learner-centred accountability. The task is ambitious, but the reward is profound: a school system where transparency builds trust, standards drive equity, and every child's progress is both visible and valued.



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# Overview

This document articulates the SSSA’s policy basis, role, features, establishment pathways, operating model, significance, and safeguards in formal prose. The chapters that follow will detail the legal and institutional design with model clauses; specify the disclosure schema and validation logic; codify grievance adjudication protocols and evidence standards; describe randomized student feedback methodology; and present a phased state roll-out blueprint with capacity-building instruments. The intent is to provide a rigorous, practicable framework that aligns NEP 2020’s minimal-standards, disclosure-first paradigm with the everyday realities of school governance, delivering measurable reductions in regulatory burden, stronger public accountability, and a coherent foundation for continuous improvement.

This introduction provides a brief overview of what to expect in the document. It frames the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) within the reform architecture of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, outlines the Authority’s role and mandate, and explains its institutional features and pathways for establishment at the state level. The emphasis is on clear, paragraph-led exposition, with limited point-wise elements used only where they sharpen understanding without diluting substance.

Readers can expect a progressive deepening from concept to operationalization. The document begins by situating the SSSA in NEP 2020’s quality assurance paradigm, including its minimal standards, disclosure-led oversight, and stakeholder feedback orientation. It then elaborates the Authority’s scope across school stages and management types, followed by the design principles that ensure independence, credibility, usability, and proportionality.

Subsequent sections move from the “why” to the “how.” They set out viable establishment pathways (statutory, executive, and transformational), propose a fit-for-purpose governance architecture, and outline the operating model- standards lifecycle, disclosure workflows, grievance adjudication, and technology enablement. The implementation roadmap is presented in phases to balance ambition with capacity, and is complemented by safeguards to mitigate risks such as perfunctory compliance, burden shift, and data quality issues.

Finally, the document explains the strategic significance of the SSSA for states: strengthening public accountability, reducing regulatory load, enabling data-driven equity, and consolidating institutional coherence. Each thematic strand is introduced here at a high level and is unpacked in detail in the chapters that follow, covering legal design, governance architecture, disclosure schema and validation logic, grievance protocols, student feedback methodology, and a phased roll-out blueprint with capacity-building instruments.

# Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides the normative and structural basis for a transition from inspection-heavy, compliance-centric regulation to a disclosure-led, standards-based assurance system in school education. Within Chapter 8, the policy mandates that States and Union Territories constitute an independent, state-wide authority- the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA), to institute effective self-regulation or accreditation-lite across all stages of education, including pre-school, spanning private, public, and philanthropic institutions. NEP 2020 emphasizes minimal professional and quality standards, stakeholder-informed frameworks anchored by SCERT, and technology-enabled transparency designed to reduce regulatory burden while strengthening accountability.

*“An effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be instituted for all stages of education including pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic - to ensure compliance with essential quality standards. To ensure that all schools follow certain minimal professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, State-wide, body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA). The SSSA will establish a minimal set of standards based on basic parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound processes of governance), which shall be followed by all schools. The framework for these parameters will be created by the SCERT in consultation with various stakeholders, especially teachers and schools. Transparent public self-disclosure of all the basic regulatory information, as laid down by the SSSA, will be used extensively for public oversight and accountability. The dimensions on which information has to be self-disclosed, and the format of disclosure will be decided by the SSSA in accordance with global best practices for standard-setting for schools. This information will have to be made available and kept updated and accurate by all schools, on the aforementioned public website maintained by the SSSA and on the schools’ websites. Any complaints or grievances from stakeholders or others arising out of the information placed in the public domain shall be adjudicated by the SSSA. Feedback from randomly selected students will be solicited online to ensure valuable input at regular intervals. Technology will be employed suitably to ensure efficiency and transparency in all work of the SSSA. This will bring down significantly the heavy load of regulatory mandates currently borne by schools.” - NEP 2020, Chapter 8, Para 8.5(c)*

This provision positions the SSSA as the cornerstone of a modern quality assurance architecture. It defines essential standards, mandates creation of School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF), requires transparent public self-disclosure on a state-wide portal, prescribes adjudication of disclosure-linked grievances, and embeds technology to improve efficiency and reduce the regulatory load borne by schools. In effect, the state’s role is reframed from intensive micro-regulation to

stewardship of minimal standards, public information architecture, and proportionate oversight grounded in disclosure and stakeholder feedback.

The State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) is the independent, state-wide institution envisaged to translate NEP 2020's minimal-standards and disclosure-led approach into operational reality. As the authority responsible for setting baseline standards, managing transparent self-disclosure, accrediting schools, and adjudicating disclosure-linked grievances, the SSSA occupies a central role in reconfiguring state oversight from episodic inspection to continuous, evidence-based public accountability. The following points summarise the SSSA's significance for state education systems and explain how its functions produce measurable benefits for governance, equity, and school improvement.

## **Significance and Systemic Impact of the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA)**

- 1. Institutional coherence and a single authoritative repository:** The SSSA consolidate standard-setting, disclosure governance, accreditation, and grievance adjudication within one independent body. This consolidation reduces fragmentation across multiple agencies, eliminates conflicting mandates, and creates a single authoritative repository of school quality information that administrators, policymakers, and the public can rely on.
- 2. Operationalisation of SQAAF and alignment with national assessment architecture:** One of the SSSA's core mandates is to implement the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) at scale. By converting SQAAF domains into templates, validation rules, and accreditation rubrics, and by collaborating with PARAKH and SCERT, the SSSA ensures that assessment, curriculum, and quality assurance are technically coherent and aligned with national best practice while remaining contextually relevant.
- 3. Transparent public accountability and community empowerment:** Mandatory, uniform self-disclosure published on a state-wide portal (and mirrored on school websites) makes school practices, governance, and accreditation status legible to parents, communities, and civil society. This transparency deters malpractice, enables informed parental choice, and creates a durable public oversight mechanism that complements administrative review.
- 4. Reduction of regulatory burden and administrative duplication:** Digital disclosure systems, standardized templates, and API (Application Programming Interface) integration with existing EMIS (Education Management Information System) reduce duplicate reporting and manual paperwork. By streamlining data flows and minimizing repetitive compliance tasks, the SSSA frees school leaders and teachers to focus on pedagogy and school improvement rather than administrative compliance.
- 5. Data-driven equity and targeted resource allocation:** Standardized, comparable data on infrastructure, teacher deployment, learning signals, and governance enable states to identify underserved schools and regions. This evidence base supports targeted teacher deployment, grant

allocation, remedial programmes, and infrastructure investments, thereby improving equity in access and outcomes.

- 6. Integrity, financial probity, and governance transparency:** Requiring disclosure of governance structures, financial statements, and procurement practices strengthens institutional integrity. The SSSA's adjudication of disclosure-linked grievances and its monitoring of financial probity protect public interest and reduce opportunities for mismanagement across management types.
- 7. Culture of continuous improvement rather than punitive enforcement:** Accreditation combined with periodic monitoring, randomized student feedback, and capacity-building fosters a culture of self-assessment and iterative enhancement. The SSSA's emphasis on advisory support and School Quality Improvement Plans encourages schools to adopt evidence-based improvements rather than merely complying to avoid sanctions.
- 8. Inclusion and learner-centred safeguards:** The SSSA embeds inclusiveness into standards and accreditation criteria, requiring schools to demonstrate accommodations and supports for students with disabilities and learners from marginalized communities. This focus ensures that quality assurance advances equity and does not privilege only well-resourced institutions.
- 9. Risk-based, proportionate oversight:** Automated validation, analytics, and risk scoring enable the SSSA to apply differentiated oversight, focusing intensive reviews on flagged cases while minimizing intrusive checks for compliant schools. This proportionality improves efficiency and fairness in regulatory practice.
- 10. Scalable institutional form and state adaptability:** The SSSA can be constituted as a statutory body, registered society, or Section-8 company depending on state preference and administrative context. This flexibility allows states to adopt an institutional form that preserves independence while fitting local governance arrangements and capacity realities.
- 11. Improved stakeholder trust and system credibility:** Transparent processes, reasoned adjudication, and public reporting of accreditation outcomes build trust among parents, communities, and development partners. Over time, this credibility supports better enrolment, retention, and community engagement in school improvement.
- 12. Facilitation of policy coherence and inter-agency coordination:** By linking standards, disclosure, and accreditation with SCERT, Boards, Samagra Shiksha, and PARAKH, the SSSA becomes the coordinating node that aligns curriculum reform, teacher development, assessment policy, and funding mechanisms, reducing policy silos and improving implementation coherence.

## Role, mandate, and scope

The State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) is conceived as the independent, state-wide authority responsible for defining, operationalizing, and assuring minimal professional and quality standards across all schools- public, private, aided, and philanthropic, irrespective of Board affiliation. Among its mandates, the SSSA guides and monitors the implementation of the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) as the standards-based backbone for quality

assurance. In doing so, the SSSA operates as a transparent self-disclosure body: it specifies uniform disclosure dimensions and formats, maintains a public portal mirrored by school websites, and ensures that information is kept accurate and up to date. This disclosure architecture enables communities to meaningfully understand school practices, initiatives, and developmental progress, and anchors accountability in verifiable public information rather than opaque inspection routines.

In alignment with the National Education Policy's vision, the SSSA shall collaborate with PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) to develop and maintain minimal standards and assurance criteria that reflect global best practices and local relevance. This collaboration supports the Authority's work in defining parameters for infrastructure sufficiency, curriculum coherence, teaching methodologies, assessment practices, financial probity, and sound governance processes. The SSSA's standards and processes are explicitly inclusive: they require schools to demonstrate responsiveness to diverse learner needs, including students with disabilities and learners from marginalized communities, and to embed accommodations and supports within routine teaching-learning and governance.

The Authority's quality assurance function is realized through a balanced model of self-regulation and accreditation. Schools disclose against SSSA's specified dimensions, and accreditation cycles evaluate adherence to minimal standards through transparent, objective reviews. Continuous monitoring safeguards the integrity of accreditation, with proportionate follow-up for deviations and advisory support for corrective action. As part of its mandate to implement SQAAF, the SSSA translates framework elements into usable instruments-templates, validation rules, and guidance, so that schools can systematically evidence quality and prepare School Quality Improvement Plans where necessary.

Accountability under the SSSA is consequential. Complaints or grievances arising from public disclosures are adjudicated by the Authority through time-bound, evidence-based, and procedurally fair mechanisms, with reasoned orders and appropriate remedies. Randomized online feedback from students is solicited at regular intervals and integrated into oversight, ensuring that learner perspectives inform risk signals, accreditation reviews, and standards refinement. Through these functions-standards-setting, disclosure governance, accreditation and monitoring, grievance adjudication, and stakeholder feedback, the SSSA reframes state oversight from inspection-heavy mandates to a disclosure-led, stakeholder-informed assurance system, with SQAAF implementation as a core mandate that operationalizes NEP's minimal-standards paradigm.

## Establishment pathways and representation

Each State or Union Territory can set up the SSSA as a **Statutory Body, Registered Society, or Section 8 company**, depending on what best aligns with its administrative setup and legal framework. Regardless of the pathway chosen, independence, clarity of mandate, operational capability, and transparent processes must be preserved. **To bring in diverse perspectives and ensure coherence across the education ecosystem, the SSSA's composition should include representatives from SCERTs, State Education Boards, and Samagra Shiksha.** These linkages support alignment between curriculum, assessment, school improvement funding, and quality assurance, while maintaining SSSA's independence from line-management functions and Board-specific operational

interests. **SCERT or State Board or an Independent body** can be designated or transformed into the SSSA, provided structural separation, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and a disclosure-first oversight culture are guaranteed.

Designating an existing institution, whether the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), a State Education Board, or an independent entity as the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) can be an expedient and effective approach to operationalising NEP 2020, provided that requisite institutional safeguards are instituted. Utilising SCERT leverages established curricular expertise, teacher-development capacity and practitioner networks, thereby ensuring that standards are pedagogically coherent and implementable. Designation of a State Board brings administrative reach, established data linkages and operational experience in large-scale school systems, facilitating rapid integration with existing registries and reporting channels. Constituting an independent body-by statute, registered society, or Section-8 company offers the strongest guarantees of impartiality and public credibility, particularly for adjudicatory and disclosure functions.

**Irrespective of the chosen pathway, the transition must preserve the SSSA’s independence, clarity of mandate, and operational capability.** This requires explicit legal or administrative instruments that ring-fence SSSA functions, allocate dedicated resources, and separate standard-setting and adjudicatory roles from line-management or examination responsibilities. Conflict-of-interest safeguards, transparent appointment processes, rotating memberships, and an ethics framework are essential to maintain public confidence. Equally important is embedding a disclosure-first oversight culture: standards, disclosure templates, school submissions and reasoned decisions must be published routinely and accessibly. Finally, representation from SCERT, State Boards and Samagra Shiksha within the SSSA’s composition will ensure cross-sectoral coherence, aligning curriculum, assessment, funding and quality assurance, while structural separation and procedural safeguards preserve the Authority’s autonomy and integrity.

## Comparative Model of Three Types of Institutional Frameworks for SSSA

Dimension	Model 1 Statutory Body (On lines of IITs/IIMs)	Model 2 Registered Society (On lines of National Bal Bhavan)	Model 3 Section 8 Company (under Companies Act 2013)
<b>Legal Framework</b>	Established via an Act of Parliament or executive order; autonomous but government-owned	Governed by the Societies Registration Act, operates semi-autonomously	Incorporated under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 as a not-for-profit entity
<b>Ownership and Control</b>	Government owned and funded	Government initiated but allows for external advisory roles	Independent with possibility of both public and private participation

Dimension	Model 1 Statutory Body (On lines of IITs/IIMs)	Model 2 Registered Society (On lines of National Bal Bhavan)	Model 3 Section 8 Company (under Companies Act 2013)
<b>Governance Structure</b>	Chaired by government-appointed heads, Governing body includes secretaries, academicians, and nominated experts	Governing body includes external experts, educationists, and ministry representatives	Managed by a Board of Directors, including private and public members; more corporate governance
<b>Autonomy</b>	High autonomy in academics, but recruitment, collaborations and funding are regulated	Limited financial autonomy; strong influence from governing body	Private Ownership offers high operational and financial autonomy with flexible governance
<b>Funding Model</b>	100% Government-funded (plan and non-plan) and long-term sustainability assured  Limited Flexibility in raising private capital as financial operations is guided by a statute.	Primarily government grants along with some scope for donor funding.  Not allowed contribution based financial model.	Diversified funding which includes CSR, grants, donor support, service-based models.  Allowed. Can issue new equity shares at higher value.
<b>Recruitment &amp; Staffing</b>	Faculty and staff recruited under central service rules or institutional norms	Contractual appointments, fellowships and experts can be invited as consultants	Full flexibility in market-aligned hiring, including academic collaborators and start-up mentors
<b>Partnership Opportunities</b>	Collaborate nationally and internationally and MoUs often routed via ministries	Limited international collaboration and mostly MoE-tied events and networks	Flexible collaboration with academia, industry, NGOs, start-ups, ed-tech firms
<b>Innovation &amp; IP Creation</b>	Government retains IP and slow tech transfer processes	Limited focus on innovation or IP	Encourages IP generation, incubation, and start-up collaboration, also can license products/services
<b>Accountability Mechanisms</b>	Statutory audits, parliamentary reporting, performance appraisals	Annual reports to the ministry; weak outcome-based KPIs	Mandatory disclosures, impact audits, compliance reporting under Companies Act and CSR rules
<b>Scalability</b>	Scalable but bureaucratically slow which requires government approvals	Can open regional centres, but dependent on state coordination	Scalable nationwide and internationally; regional incubators and partnerships are feasible

Dimension	Model 1 Statutory Body (On lines of IITs/IIMs)	Model 2 Registered Society (On lines of National Bal Bhavan)	Model 3 Section 8 Company (under Companies Act 2013)
<b>Suitability for Gifted Education</b>	Excellent for long-term national flagship institution (like NID/NISER) with strong R&D base	Suitable for experiential, enrichment-based programs focused on arts, innovation	Best suited for a blended model of education, R&D, incubation, and talent pipeline creation with public-private innovation

## Operating model and implementation roadmap

A phased, capability-focused roll-out reduces disruption and builds legitimacy. In the foundational phase, the states can formally constitute the authority, notify its mandate and governance structures, and finalize parameter for School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework. The SSSA shall convert these parameters into disclosure dimensions and formats, publish compliance calendars, and build the technology baseline: standardized templates, validation rules, APIs to interface with existing EMIS, and public-facing school pages with version history and timestamps. The pilot phase engages a diverse cohort of schools across geographies and management types to calibrate usability. Templates, guidance notes, and validation logic are iterated based on real-world submission behaviour, while district-level support desks and helplines address onboarding friction.

State-wide roll-out is sequenced by risk and readiness. Risk-based assurance focuses scrutiny on flagged cases, coupled with advisory notices and corrective action plans. Grievance adjudication operates with time-bound protocols and evidence standards, and public reporting presents aggregate metrics-submission completeness, timeliness, anomaly resolution on a regular cadence. Continuous improvement is embedded through annual light-touch updates to standards and formats, with deeper revisions every two to three years. Randomized, anonymized student feedback is integrated into risk signals and informs capacity-building priorities. Analytics reveal systemic gaps such as subject-wise teacher distribution or infrastructure shortfalls- guiding coordination with line departments for targeted interventions. Ecosystem integration reduces duplication and reporting burden by aligning with Board data, grants, inspection reforms, and EMIS to enable single-source submissions and coherent policy action.

- 1. Technology enablement:** Digital intake, automated validation, analytics dashboards, and public presentation are integral to efficiency and transparency.
- 2. Capacity building:** Guidance notes, webinars, district support cells, and helpdesks convert compliance into improvement and sustain data quality.
- 3. Public communication:** Clear portals, update cadence, and reasoned orders reinforce credibility and stakeholder trust.

The SSSA's operating orientation balances rigorous standards with proportional, improvement-focused oversight. Quality regulation and accreditation are anchored in benchmarks developed in collaboration with PARAKH and informed by SQAAF, ensuring comprehensiveness, inclusiveness, and contextual relevance. Accreditation, conducted transparently and objectively, evaluates adherence to minimal standards, including adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, sound governance, and ethical financial practices. Continuous monitoring of accredited schools safeguards the integrity of the system, combining regular reviews with responsive corrective action where deviations arise. Schools are encouraged to undertake regular self-assessment and prepare School Quality Improvement Plans where required, embedding a culture of reflective practice and continuous enhancement.

Transparency is foundational. The SSSA ensures timely, accurate, and accessible public disclosure of accreditation status and regulatory information through its own platform or state platforms such as the Vidya Samiksha Kendra portal and school websites. Public disclosure enables informed decision-making for parents and communities and strengthens accountability. Robust data management underpins this transparency: comprehensive, up-to-date school records, covering operational aspects such as student performance signals, staffing distributions, and infrastructure maintenance- support objective, evidence-based regulatory processes. Data analytics help identify trends, diagnose performance variation, and target capacity-building support where it is most needed.

- **Quality regulation and accreditation:** Develops and applies minimal standards with PARAKH collaboration; conducts transparent, objective accreditation; embeds continuous monitoring and corrective action.
- **Development of standards:** Partners with stakeholders to create evidence-based parameters across curriculum, teaching, assessment, and infrastructure; supports School Quality Improvement Plans as needed.
- **Transparent public disclosure:** Publishes accreditation status and regulatory information on public platforms, reinforcing trust and enabling meaningful stakeholder oversight.
- **Data management and accountability:** Maintains comprehensive records and leverages analytics for objective decision-making and targeted improvement.
- **Grievance redressal:** Operates an accessible, efficient mechanism for complaints from students, parents, and staff through email, RTI, and formal channels; issues reasoned, time-bound decisions.

## 1. Quality Regulation and Accreditation

Quality regulation and accreditation are central mandates of the State School Standards Setting Authority. They establish a public baseline for school performance, reorient oversight from episodic inspection to continuous assurance, and create the conditions for targeted resource allocation, community oversight, and system improvement. This chapter sets out, in formal and actionable terms, why accreditation matters in the current education landscape and how the SSSA can implement a practicable, auditable accreditation regime that is technically robust, administratively feasible, and pedagogically meaningful.

## **Importance in the Education Landscape**

Accreditation under the SSSA provides three interlocking public goods. First, it creates comparability: standardized domains and rubrics enable parents, policymakers, and funders to compare schools on common, verifiable criteria. Second, it fosters accountability: public disclosure of accreditation outcomes and reasoned adjudications makes governance and financial probity observable and contestable. Third, it drives improvement: by linking self-assessment, School Quality Improvement Plans, and capacity building, accreditation becomes a mechanism for sustained school development rather than a one-off compliance exercise. Together these effects reduce regulatory duplication, strengthen trust in the system, and enable data-driven equity interventions.

## **Operationalising Accreditation with PARAKH and SQAAF**

The SSSA will operationalise the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) in collaboration with PARAKH and SCERT. This requires translating SQAAF domains into state-level instruments that are machine-readable and legally defensible. The core deliverable is a State SQAAF Implementation Pack comprising domain rubrics, disclosure templates, validation rules, and a standard SQIP template. Each rubric will specify the indicator, required evidence, scoring bands, and a corrective threshold. Instruments must be mapped to authoritative EMIS fields to enable automated reconciliation and to preserve a single source of truth.

## **Accreditation Process and Decision Protocols**

The accreditation process will follow a predictable, auditable cycle:

- **Disclosure:** Schools submit standardized disclosures annually, with interim quarterly updates for key operational fields.
- **Automated Validation:** Submissions undergo syntactic and semantic checks, cross-field consistency tests, and EMIS reconciliation.
- **Risk Triage:** A composite risk score, derived from validation failures, randomized student feedback, and historical compliance, triages schools into routine monitoring, advisory review, or targeted review. Operational thresholds will be published.
- **Panel Review:** For targeted reviews, an accreditation panel evaluates evidence within 30 days and issues a reasoned order within 14 days of decision. Panels may include PARAKH technical experts, state representatives, and independent educators.
- **Public Disclosure:** Accreditation outcomes and summary rationales are published on the SSSA portal and mirrored on school websites within 7 days of decision.

Accreditation outcomes will be categorical and time-bound: Compliant (three-year validity), Provisional (12 months), Needs Improvement (6-18 months with SQIP), and Suspended (conditional).

## **Continuous Monitoring and Corrective Regime**

Monitoring is risk-based and closed-loop. Schools identified for improvement receive a formal SQIP that contains a gap statement, root-cause analysis, actions, responsible officers, resources, milestones, and verification evidence. District support cells assign a mentor within 14 days of SQIP issuance. High-risk schools receive a mid-term verification visit within 90 days. Progress is tracked through

quarterly submissions; closure requires validated compliance for two consecutive quarters. The SSSA will publish aggregate metrics annually- submission completeness, SQIP closure rates to demonstrate system performance.

### **Grievance Adjudication and Transparency**

Grievances arising from disclosures are handled through a time-bound, evidence-based protocol. Intake and admissibility checks occur within 7 days; investigations and school responses are completed within 30 days; final reasoned orders are issued within 45 days. A single internal appeal is permitted within 30 days. All adjudicatory documents, version histories, and audit trails are published to ensure procedural fairness and public scrutiny.

### **Capacity, Technology and Governance**

Successful accreditation requires three enablers. First, capacity building: modular training for school heads, data officers, and district mentors delivered in the first year. Second, technology: a secure portal with API integration to EMIS, a validation engine, analytics dashboards, and version-controlled public pages. Third, governance: accreditation panels constituted with technical and independent representation and an annual public report that includes biennial rubric revision informed by stakeholder consultation.

## **2. Development of Standards**

The mandate of the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) to develop standards is one of its most consequential functions. It ensures that the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) are translated into clear, evidence-based parameters that schools can implement and communities can trust. This chapter outlines how the SSSA partners with stakeholders to create robust standards across curriculum, teaching, assessment, and infrastructure, and how these standards directly support the preparation and execution of School Quality Improvement Plans (SQIPs).

### **Partnering with Stakeholders**

The credibility of standards depends on the breadth and depth of consultation. The SSSA must convene representatives from SCERT, Boards, Samagra Shiksha, teacher unions, school leaders, parents, and civil society organizations. Each stakeholder brings unique insights: curriculum experts ensure pedagogical coherence, teachers highlight classroom realities, administrators provide operational feasibility, and parents articulate community expectations. Structured consultations—through workshops, surveys, and focus groups—allow the Authority to balance global best practices with local relevance. This participatory approach not only strengthens the legitimacy of standards but also builds ownership among those responsible for implementation.

### **Evidence-Based Parameters**

Standards must be grounded in verifiable evidence rather than aspirational statements. For curriculum, parameters may include alignment with grade-level competencies, integration of experiential learning, and inclusion of local knowledge. Teaching standards should specify pupil-teacher ratios, subject-wise

deployment, and professional development requirements. Assessment parameters must cover frequency, format, and feedback mechanisms, ensuring they support learning rather than rote compliance. Infrastructure standards should define minimum thresholds for safety, sanitation, digital access, and inclusive facilities. Each parameter must be measurable, with clear indicators, required evidence, and scoring bands. For example, a teaching deployment standard could require disclosure of sanctioned posts versus filled posts, with thresholds set at  $\geq 95\%$  filled for full compliance.

### **Supporting School Quality Improvement Plans**

Standards are not ends in themselves; they are tools for improvement. Schools that fall short of thresholds must prepare SQIPs that identify gaps, analyze root causes, and set out time-bound corrective actions. The SSSA supports this process by providing templates, guidance notes, and mentoring through district support cells. SQIPs become the bridge between standards and practice, enabling schools to move from compliance to continuous enhancement. For instance, a school with inadequate infrastructure may develop an SQIP that prioritizes sanitation facilities, sets milestones for completion, and identifies funding sources. The SSSA monitors progress through quarterly submissions and validates closure when milestones are met.

### **Operationalization and Accountability**

To ensure standards are consistently applied, the SSSA must embed them into disclosure templates and accreditation rubrics. Automated validation rules check submissions against thresholds, while analytics dashboards highlight systemic gaps. Public disclosure of compliance status reinforces accountability and empowers communities to demand improvement. Periodic revision of standards, informed by feedback and emerging evidence, ensures they remain relevant and responsive.

## **3. Transparent Public Disclosure**

Transparent public disclosure is a cornerstone of the State School Standards Setting Authority's (SSSA) mandate. It ensures that accreditation outcomes, compliance records, and regulatory information are not confined to administrative files but are made accessible to all stakeholders—parents, teachers, communities, policymakers, and civil society. By publishing accreditation status and regulatory information on public platforms, the SSSA reinforces trust in the education system and enables meaningful oversight that drives accountability and improvement.

### **Importance in the Education Landscape**

Public disclosure transforms accreditation from a closed regulatory process into a participatory accountability mechanism. When accreditation results are visible, parents can make informed choices, communities can demand corrective action, and policymakers can allocate resources based on evidence. Transparency also deters malpractice by ensuring that governance, financial probity, and compliance records are subject to public scrutiny. In this way, disclosure strengthens the credibility of the SSSA and builds confidence in the fairness and objectivity of its processes.

### **Scope of Disclosure**

The SSSA must define the scope of information to be disclosed. At a minimum, this includes:

- Accreditation status: Compliant, Provisional, Needs Improvement, or Suspended, along with validity periods.
- Summary rationale: A concise explanation of the accreditation decision, highlighting key strengths and areas for improvement.
- Regulatory information: Compliance with infrastructure, teacher deployment, governance, and inclusion standards.
- Corrective actions: Details of School Quality Improvement Plans (SQIPs) where applicable, including timelines and milestones.
- Grievance records: Outcomes of adjudicated complaints, ensuring procedural fairness is visible.

### **Platforms and Mechanisms**

Disclosure must be multi-channel to maximize accessibility:

- SSSA Portal: A centralized, searchable platform with version-controlled records, accreditation outcomes, and SQIP progress updates.
- School Websites: Each school must publish its accreditation status and summary rationale prominently.
- Community Dashboards: District-level dashboards that aggregate compliance data, highlight systemic gaps, and track progress.
- Annual Reports: State-level publications summarizing accreditation outcomes, grievance resolutions, and systemic trends.

Accessibility features- multilingual support, mobile compatibility, and user-friendly interfaces—are essential to ensure inclusiveness.

### **Operational Protocols**

To ensure disclosure is reliable and defensible, the SSSA must establish clear protocols:

- **Timeliness:** Accreditation outcomes published within seven days of decision.
- **Version Control:** Every update logged with date, author, and rationale to maintain audit trails.
- **Privacy Safeguards:** Sensitive student data redacted; only aggregate or anonymized feedback published.
- **Legal Compliance:** Disclosure aligned with RTI provisions, data protection laws, and state regulations.
- **Monitoring:** Automated checks to ensure schools update their websites and dashboards regularly.

### **Accountability and Oversight**

Transparent disclosure empowers stakeholders to hold schools and authorities accountable. Parents can question delays in SQIP implementation; communities can demand equitable resource allocation; policymakers can identify systemic gaps. The SSSA's role is to facilitate this oversight by ensuring disclosures are accurate, timely, and comprehensible. Grievance mechanisms must be linked to disclosure platforms so that stakeholders can contest inaccuracies or omissions.

## **4. Data Management and Accountability**

Effective data management and accountability are foundational to the credibility of the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA). By maintaining comprehensive records and leveraging analytics, the SSSA ensures that decisions are objective, evidence-based, and targeted toward systemic improvement. This chapter outlines how data governance, validation, and analytics can be operationalized to strengthen school regulation and accreditation.

### **Comprehensive Records**

The SSSA must establish a unified data architecture that integrates school disclosures, accreditation outcomes, SQIP progress, and grievance records into a single repository. This repository should be interoperable with the state's Education Management Information System (EMIS) to avoid duplication and ensure consistency. Each record must be version-controlled, time-stamped, and linked to source evidence, creating an auditable trail that supports transparency and legal defensibility.

### **Validation and Quality Assurance**

Data integrity is critical. Automated validation rules must check for completeness, consistency, and reconciliation with authoritative records. For example, teacher deployment disclosures should be cross-checked against sanctioned posts in EMIS. Validation engines must flag anomalies such as duplicate entries or implausible ratios within 48 hours of submission. Schools should receive advisory notices when discrepancies are detected, ensuring corrective action is initiated promptly.

### **Analytics for Decision-Making**

Beyond record-keeping, the SSSA must employ analytics to generate actionable insights. Risk scoring models can combine validation failures, feedback anomalies, and historical compliance to identify schools requiring targeted oversight. Dashboards should visualize trends in infrastructure sufficiency, teacher distribution, and learning outcomes, enabling policymakers to allocate resources strategically. Predictive analytics can highlight emerging risks, such as declining compliance in specific districts, allowing preventive interventions.

### **Accountability Mechanisms**

Accountability is reinforced through public reporting. The SSSA should publish annual compliance reports summarizing accreditation outcomes, SQIP closure rates, and grievance resolutions. Internal dashboards must track service-level adherence, such as validation turnaround times and grievance resolution periods. These metrics create performance contracts for the Authority itself, ensuring that regulatory processes remain efficient and responsive.

## **Continuous Improvement**

Data management is not static. Standards, validation rules, and risk models must be revised periodically based on feedback and emerging evidence. Stakeholder consultations and pilot studies should inform these revisions, ensuring that data systems remain relevant and adaptive. Training modules for school heads and district mentors must emphasize the importance of accurate disclosures and data integrity.

## **5. Grievance Redressal**

Grievance redressal is a critical mandate of the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA). It ensures that students, parents, and staff have accessible channels to contest inaccuracies, raise concerns, and demand accountability. By operating an efficient mechanism that issues reasoned, time-bound decisions, the SSSA strengthens trust in the education system and reinforces procedural fairness.

### **Accessible Channels**

The grievance system must be multi-channel to maximize accessibility. Complaints can be submitted through the SSSA portal, email, Right to Information (RTI) applications, or formal written submissions. Each channel must feed into a centralized case management system that assigns a unique identifier to every grievance. This ensures that complaints are tracked, monitored, and resolved without duplication or loss.

### **Efficient Processes**

Timeliness is essential. The SSSA must establish service-level agreements (SLAs) for each stage of grievance handling: admissibility checks within seven days, investigation and school response within thirty days, and final decision within forty-five days. These timelines must be published and monitored through internal dashboards. Automated notifications should update complainants at each stage, reinforcing transparency and trust.

### **Investigation Protocols**

Investigations must be evidence-based. Case officers should collect disclosures, validate records against EMIS, and seek responses from schools. Where necessary, site visits or interviews may be conducted. All evidence must be documented and linked to the grievance record, creating a defensible trail. Confidentiality must be maintained, with sensitive student data redacted in public disclosures.

### **Reasoned, Time-Bound Decisions**

Decisions must be reasoned, citing evidence, applicable standards, and corrective actions. Remedies may include advisory notices, SQIP requirements, or escalation to accreditation panels. Each decision should specify timelines for compliance and consequences for non-adherence. Decisions must be published on the SSSA portal, ensuring procedural fairness is visible to all stakeholders.

### **Appeals and Oversight**

A single internal appeal mechanism should be available within thirty days of decision. Appeals must be adjudicated by a separate panel to preserve impartiality. Beyond internal appeals, complainants retain

the right to seek judicial review under state law. Annual grievance reports should summarize case volumes, resolution rates, and systemic lessons learned.

### **Building Trust**

Grievance redressal is not merely administrative; it is a democratic safeguard. By providing accessible channels, efficient processes, and reasoned decisions, the SSSA empowers stakeholders to hold schools and authorities accountable. This builds confidence in the fairness of accreditation and reinforces the legitimacy of the regulatory system.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **State School Standards Authority (SSSA)**

#### **i. Title and Establishment**

This document sets out the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the **State School Standards Authority (SSSA)**. The SSSA is constituted by the Government of the State/Union Territory (hereafter “the State”) with technical guidance from PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), Ministry of Education, Government of India. The SSSA shall be established in a legal form determined by the State (statutory body, registered society, or Section 8 company) consistent with applicable law and administrative practice.

#### **ii. Purpose and Mandate**

The SSSA shall act as the independent, single-point authority for the formulation, oversight and assurance of minimum school education standards across the State. Its mandate includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Standards and compliance:** Define, notify and maintain minimum standards for school infrastructure, safety and security, teacher qualifications and deployment, learning environment, inclusive practices and basic governance and financial probity.
- **Transparency and accountability:** Promote transparent disclosure of regulatory information by schools and ensure public accessibility of such information.
- **Quality assurance:** Guide, monitor and support the implementation of the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) and related quality improvement processes.
- **Support and capacity building:** Provide guidance, tools and capacity-building support to schools and district authorities to meet prescribed standards.
- **Grievance redressal and enforcement:** Operate an accessible grievance redressal mechanism and take proportionate regulatory action, including recommendations for corrective measures, penalties or derecognition where warranted.

The SSSA’s functions shall be exercised without prejudice to the statutory academic and examination responsibilities of affiliating boards.

### iii. Jurisdiction and Scope

The SSSA's jurisdiction shall extend to all schools operating within the State, irrespective of their board of affiliation (State Board, CBSE, ICSE, national or recognised international boards, or other recognised authorities). The SSSA's remit is limited to standards, disclosure, accreditation and related regulatory functions; it shall not assume the academic or examination functions vested in affiliating boards.

### iv. Functions and Powers

The SSSA shall perform the following core functions and shall be vested with such powers as are necessary for their effective discharge:

- **Standards formulation:** Develop and notify minimum operational and quality standards, aligned with national guidance and local priorities.
- **Disclosure regime:** Specify disclosure dimensions and formats; maintain a publicly accessible registry and portal for school disclosures and accreditation status.
- **Assessment and accreditation:** Design and implement accreditation and self-regulation processes, including validation protocols and accreditation rubrics.
- **Inspection and audit:** Conduct periodic inspections, audits and validation exercises, including risk-based and random reviews.
- **Grievance adjudication:** Receive, investigate and adjudicate complaints arising from disclosures or other matters within SSSA's remit, following time-bound, evidence-based procedures.
- **Coordination:** Coordinate with SCERT, affiliating boards, Samagra Shiksha, PARAKH and other relevant agencies to ensure policy coherence and data interoperability.
- **Reporting and publication:** Publish periodic reports on school quality, compliance status, regulatory actions and systemic trends.
- **Enforcement recommendations:** Recommend corrective actions, sanctions or derecognition to the competent authority in accordance with law and established procedures.

The SSSA shall exercise these functions in accordance with principles of natural justice, transparency and proportionality.

### v. Governance and Composition

The SSSA shall be governed by a Governing Body and supported by a full-time Secretariat.

- **Governing Body:** The Governing Body shall include a Chairperson (appointed by the State Government), a Member Secretary (full-time executive head), and representatives from the Department of School Education, SCERT, State Board of School Education, Samagra Shiksha and, where appropriate, a consultative representative of CBSE. The Governing Body shall also include independent experts in pedagogy, child rights, inclusive education, finance and law; and may include civil society or parent representatives.
- **Meetings and quorum:** The Governing Body shall meet at least quarterly; procedures for meetings, quorum, decision-making and conflict-of-interest management shall be prescribed in the SSSA's rules of procedure.

- **Secretariat:** A dedicated Secretariat shall provide operational, technical, legal and administrative support and shall be staffed with requisite expertise in standards, data systems, inspection, grievance handling and capacity building.

#### **vi. Autonomy, Accountability and Financial Arrangements**

The SSSA shall operate with administrative and financial autonomy subject to oversight by the State Government. Key provisions include:

- **Independence:** The SSSA shall function independently of affiliating boards and line management structures in matters of standards, disclosure and adjudication.
- **Reporting:** The SSSA shall submit annual performance and audited financial reports to the State Government and shall publish an annual public report on its activities.
- **Audit and review:** The SSSA shall be subject to external audit and periodic independent review of its performance and processes.
- **Funding:** The SSSA's recurring and capital requirements shall be met from State budgetary allocations; initial seed funding and technical assistance may be provided by PARAKH subject to a formal proposal submitted by the State and agreed terms.

#### **vii. Coordination with Boards and Agencies**

The SSSA shall maintain formal coordination mechanisms with affiliating boards (including CBSE), SCERT, Samagra Shiksha and PARAKH to ensure harmonisation of standards, data exchange, and joint initiatives. Any board representation on SSSA governance structures shall be consultative and shall not compromise the SSSA's regulatory independence.

#### **viii. Grievance Redressal and Appeals**

The SSSA shall establish accessible, time-bound grievance procedures for students, parents, staff and other stakeholders. Decisions of the SSSA shall be reasoned and published; an internal appeals mechanism shall be specified, and further recourse shall be available as provided by law.

#### **ix. Data Governance and Technology**

The SSSA shall adopt secure, interoperable digital systems for intake, validation, analytics, publication and grievance management. Data sharing with EMIS and other authorised systems shall be governed by formal protocols, ensuring confidentiality, integrity and compliance with applicable data-protection norms.

#### **x. Review and Amendment**

These Terms of Reference may be reviewed and amended by the State Government in consultation with PARAKH to reflect evolving policy, operational experience and stakeholder feedback. Any amendment shall be notified in writing and published.

**Effective date:** These Terms of Reference shall come into force on the date of notification by the State Government and shall remain in effect until amended or superseded.

## Funding, technology, and implementation notes

Initial funding support to establish the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) can, where necessary, be provided by PARAKH. Such seed financing would expedite the authority's foundational activities- legal constitution, secretariat staffing, stakeholder consultations, and the initial development of digital infrastructure aligned with the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF). PARAKH's technical assistance in the early stages can also help standardise approaches across States while preserving the federal principle that each State or Union Territory is responsible for building and managing its own SSSA system. To access this support, States or Union Territories shall submit a formal proposal to PARAKH detailing the intended institutional form, governance arrangements, budgetary requirements, and a phased implementation plan; PARAKH's role is therefore catalytic and conditional on a state-led request rather than a centrally imposed solution.

Technology enablement is integral to the SSSA's mandate and must be treated as a core component of institutional design rather than an ancillary convenience. Digital systems underpin every stage of the disclosure-first model: intake of school submissions, automated validation of reported data, analytics for risk-based oversight, public publication of disclosures and accreditation outcomes, and the management and adjudication of grievances. Well-designed portals reduce administrative friction by providing intuitive user journeys for schools, district administrators, and the public. Standardised templates ensure comparability across institutions and jurisdictions; automated checks flag inconsistencies and reduce manual verification effort; and version-controlled public pages preserve audit trails and demonstrate transparency in decision-making.

Interoperability with existing state Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) is essential to avoid duplication and to maintain data integrity. Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) that enable secure, authenticated exchange of baseline records such as school identifiers, sanctioned posts, and historical enrolment allow the SSSA portal to pre-populate fields and to reconcile submissions against authoritative sources. Conversely, the SSSA should be able to write back accreditation statuses and grievance resolutions to EMIS to maintain a single source of truth for policy and planning. Robust authentication, encryption, and role-based access controls must be embedded from the outset to protect sensitive information and to comply with applicable data-protection norms.

The implementation strategy must be phased and capacity-sensitive. An initial foundational phase should establish governance instruments, draft disclosure templates, and develop a minimum viable portal. A pilot calibration phase, engaging a representative sample of schools across urban, rural, and resource-constrained contexts will surface usability issues and validation edge cases. State-wide rollout should follow a sequenced approach, prioritising high-risk districts and ensuring district-level support cells are in place to assist schools. Continuous improvement mechanisms, including periodic template refinement, analytics-driven policy adjustments, and stakeholder feedback loops, will sustain system responsiveness.

Capacity building is indispensable to realise the benefits of digital enablement. Training modules for school administrators, district officials, and SSSA staff should cover data definitions, submission protocols, validation exceptions, and grievance handling procedures. Helpdesk services, contextualised guidance notes, and on-site support during the rollout phase will reduce errors and build confidence. Transparent publication of standards, disclosure formats, and adjudication outcomes will reinforce public trust and ensure that the technological architecture serves the broader objectives of accountability, equity, and continuous school improvement.

# CONCLUSION

The establishment of the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) represents a decisive institutional response to the quality, equity, and accountability imperatives articulated in the National Education Policy 2020. As an independent, state-level authority charged with defining minimal standards, operationalising the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF), managing transparent self-disclosure, accrediting schools, and adjudicating disclosure-linked grievances, the SSSA reorients oversight from episodic inspection to continuous, evidence-based public accountability. This reorientation is not merely administrative; it is structural and cultural. By consolidating standard-setting, disclosure governance, accreditation, and grievance redress within a single authoritative body, states can reduce fragmentation, eliminate conflicting mandates, and create a single, verifiable repository of school quality information that supports informed decision-making by parents, communities, and policymakers.

Technology and data architecture are central to the SSSA's effectiveness. Well-designed digital portals, standardised templates, automated validation checks, version-controlled public pages, and secure interoperability with existing Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) will reduce reporting friction, improve data quality, and enable risk-based oversight. The SSSA's capacity to translate SQAAF domains into usable instruments-templates, validation logic, accreditation rubrics, and guidance for School Quality Improvement Plans, depends on robust digital workflows and analytics that support targeted interventions and continuous improvement. PARAKH's catalytic support for initial funding and technical assistance can accelerate this foundational work, but the responsibility for building, operating, and sustaining state systems rests with the States and Union Territories; access to PARAKH support will be conditional on state-led proposals that demonstrate governance readiness and implementation plans.

Institutional design choices, whether statutory body, registered society, or Section-8 company must preserve independence, clarity of mandate, and operational capability. Where existing agencies such as SCERT or State Boards are designated or transformed into the SSSA or an independent body is created, structural separation, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and a disclosure-first oversight culture are non-negotiable prerequisites. Representation from SCERT, State Boards, and Samagra Shiksha within the SSSA's composition will ensure cross-sectoral coherence while procedural safeguards preserve autonomy and impartiality. Equally important are capacity-building investments at district and school levels, phased roll-out strategies, and accessible grievance mechanisms that are time-bound and evidence-based.

Ultimately, the SSSA is a strategic instrument for translating NEP 2020's vision into measurable improvements in schooling outcomes. When implemented with legal clarity, technological rigour, and a commitment to transparency and inclusion, the SSSA will strengthen public trust, enable data-driven equity, reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on schools, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

# ANNEXURE 1

## Model Notification Template for Constituting the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA)

Government Notification Constituting the State School Standards Setting Authority

No. \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_/EDN/\_\_\_\_\_/20\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

### NOTIFICATION

In pursuance of the vision and recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly paragraph 8.5(c) concerning the establishment of a State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) to ensure the setting of minimal professional and quality standards for all schools and to foster transparency and accountability in the school education system, the Governor is pleased to designate the [Name of Designated Agency] as the State School Standards Setting Authority (SSSA) for the State/Union Territory.

The [Name of Designated Agency], acting as the SSSA, shall be responsible for defining and ensuring minimal standards for all schools within the State/Union Territory, including public, private, aided and philanthropic institutions, on core parameters such as safety and security, basic infrastructure, teacher strength across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound governance processes. The SSSA shall operationalise the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF), prescribe disclosure formats, and ensure technology-enabled transparency and public accessibility of regulatory information.

To facilitate the immediate functioning of the SSSA and to advise and assist the designated agency in the discharge of its functions, the Governor is further pleased to constitute an Advisory Committee with the following composition:

### Constitution of the Advisory Committee

1. **Chairperson:** Secretary, Department of School Education - Chairperson
2. **Member:** Director of School Education - Member
3. **Member:** State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha - Member
4. **Member Secretary:** Secretary/Head, [Name of Designated Agency] - Member Secretary
5. **Member:** Planning Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha - Member
6. **Member:** Representative of SCERT - Member (optional)
7. **Member:** Representative of an affiliating board (consultative) - Member (optional)

The Advisory Committee shall perform such functions as may be specified by the SSSA, including but not limited to: advising on standards formulation, assisting with stakeholder consultations, guiding the development of disclosure templates and validation logic, and supporting the initial roll-out and capacity-building activities. The Committee shall meet as required and shall submit recommendations to the SSSA for consideration.

The SSSA shall exercise its functions in accordance with the provisions of NEP 2020 and applicable State/Union Territory laws and rules. The academic and examination responsibilities of affiliating boards shall remain unaffected by this notification; however, all schools shall comply with the standards, disclosure requirements and grievance redressal mechanisms established by the SSSA.

**By order**

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[Name]

Secretary (Education) to the Government

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**Endst. No. :** \_\_\_\_\_/EDN/\_\_\_\_/20\_\_

**Copy forwarded for information and necessary action to:**

1. The Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister / Administrator
2. The Minister / Minister of State for Education
3. Director of School Education
4. State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha
5. Secretary / Head, [Name of Designated Agency]
6. Guard File

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[Name]

Joint Secretary (Education) to the Government

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**Notes for completion:**

- Replace bracketed placeholders (e.g., [Name of Designated Agency]) with the appropriate agency or institutional name.
- Specify additional committee members or consultative representatives as required by local context.
- Where the State prefers to constitute the SSSA as a statutory body, registered society, or Section 8 company, include a separate clause or annexure detailing the legal instrument and effective date of constitution.

# Glossary for SSSA Guidelines

S. No.	Term	Meaning
1.	Accreditation-lite	– A streamlined accreditation approach emphasizing compliance with minimal standards and public disclosure rather than intensive inspection.
2.	Accreditation cycle	– A recurring, time-bound process of evaluation, reporting, and renewal that determines a school’s accreditation status.
3.	Baseline standards	– The minimal professional and quality parameters (safety, infrastructure, teacher deployment, governance, financial probity) that all schools must meet.
4.	Capacity building	– Structured activities such as training, guidance notes, and support services to strengthen schools’ ability to meet standards and maintain data quality.
5.	Disclosure-first oversight	– A regulatory model that prioritizes public self-disclosure by schools as the primary mechanism for accountability and risk detection.
6.	Disclosure templates	– Standardized forms and fields used by schools to submit required information in a comparable, machine-readable format.
7.	EMIS (Education Management Information System)	– The authoritative state data system with which the SSSA interoperates to pre-populate and reconcile baseline records.
8.	Evidence standards	– Defined criteria and documentary requirements used to validate disclosures and adjudicate grievances.
9.	Governance architecture	– The institutional design, roles, and procedures that determine how the SSSA is constituted, governed, and held accountable.
10.	Grievance adjudication	– A time-bound, procedurally fair mechanism for receiving, investigating, and issuing reasoned decisions on complaints arising from public disclosures.
11.	Inclusion safeguards	– Standards and accommodations embedded in accreditation criteria to ensure equitable access and support for learners with disabilities and marginalized groups.
12.	PARAKH	– Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development; the national technical partner for assessment and standards alignment.
13.	Public self-disclosure	– Mandatory publication by schools of specified information on the SSSA portal and their own websites to enable public oversight.
14.	Risk-based oversight	– A differentiated supervision model that allocates intensive scrutiny to high-risk cases identified through analytics and lighter touch to compliant schools.
15.	SQAAF (School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework)	– The national framework of domains, indicators, and rubrics that the SSSA operationalizes to assess and assure school quality.

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