

## Graduation and completion targets for vulnerable students

Centurion University, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, was established with the guiding mission “*Shaping Lives and Empowering Communities.*” The University positions higher education as a direct instrument of poverty alleviation, social mobility, and community development. In alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) Centurion University has institutionalized measurable graduation and completion targets for students originating from the bottom 20 percent of household income groups in India. Centurion University adopts an outcome-based framework that monitors the entire student journey—from access to completion and employability—through an integrated system of data analytics, financial inclusion, and academic mentoring.

### Institutional Policy Framework

Two flagship policies underpin this commitment: the Equal Opportunity Policy (2024) and the Poverty Reduction Policy (2024). These frameworks define the University’s responsibility toward socio-economically disadvantaged learners, formally recognizing bottom-quintile households—families earning less than ₹ 1 lakh annually—as a target group for admission, retention, and graduation interventions.

The policies operationalize equity objectives through the following instruments:

- Reservation and Inclusion Mechanism aligned with Government of India mandates (SC 15 %, ST 7.5 %, OBC 27 %), ensuring that nearly half of all enrolments originate from historically marginalized and economically weaker communities.
- Student Progression and Inclusion Dashboard (SPID)—a data-driven platform that integrates financial, academic, and socio-economic indicators to track the progress of low-income students across all campuses.
- Performance-Linked Completion Targets specifying annual goals for graduation, retention, and employability among bottom-quintile students.
- Centurion University thereby transforms constitutional access rights into verifiable completion outcomes, embedding social justice within its academic governance structure.

### Empirical Profile of Low-Income Students

The *Scholarship Information 2024* database reveals the quantitative depth of Centurion University’s engagement with economically disadvantaged learners. Out of the 280 students listed across B.Tech, B.F.Sc., B.Sc. (Agriculture), and Nursing programs, over 78 percent belong to families with annual income below ₹ 1,00,000, and approximately 55 percent report income below ₹ 60,000, placing them squarely within India’s bottom income quintile

## SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION 2024:

Financial assistance exceeding ₹ 12.37 crore was distributed during AY 2024 under multiple schemes—Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS), Technical & Professional Education Scheme, GSSY, KVNY, and GVPY Laptop Scheme—covering tuition, hostel, and digital-access costs. Beneficiaries represent over 30 districts of Odisha with notable concentrations in Gajapati, Rayagada, Koraput, and Bolangir, which feature among India’s most economically distressed regions.

This data demonstrates that Centurion University’s scholarship ecosystem is not symbolic; it systematically captures the lowest income quintile through transparent documentation of family income, category, and regional disadvantage.

Centurion University has adopted specific quantitative targets for student progression drawn from internal audits and IQAC deliberations:

**Table 1: Graduation and Completion Targets**

Indicator	Baseline (2024-25)	Target (2026)
Graduation rate (bottom-20 % students)	87.2 %	≥ 90 %
Retention rate (first-to-final year)	93.4 %	≥ 95 %
Post-graduation employment / entrepreneurship	78.5 %	≥ 85 %

These metrics are reviewed every semester through the Student Progression and Inclusion Dashboard, which integrates examination performance, attendance, and socio-economic indicators. The data are validated by the Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) to ensure reliability and continuous improvement.

By establishing such explicit performance benchmarks, Centurion University distinguishes itself among Indian universities and aligns with best practices observed in global higher-education institutions leading the THE Impact Rankings.

### Mechanisms of Supporting Completion

#### Financial Continuity and Support

Centurion University ensures uninterrupted study for bottom-quintile students through renewable tuition waivers, merit-cum-means scholarships, and emergency financial grants. Integration with external credit instruments—such as the Bihar Student Credit Card Scheme, which offers loans of up to ₹4 lakh—further expands financial resilience and reduces mid-course dropouts.

#### Academic and Pedagogical Support

Bridge programs, remedial tutorials, and peer-assisted learning sessions address the academic gaps often faced by first-generation learners. The *Centre for Academic Excellence* monitors attendance and performance and deploys early-warning systems to support at-risk students before failure or withdrawal.

### **Socio-Emotional and Mentoring Support**

Through the Centre for Student Wellbeing, the University provides psychological counselling, stress-management workshops, and mentoring networks linking low-income students with faculty advisors and alumni mentors.

### **Digital Access and Infrastructure**

Recognizing that digital exclusion perpetuates poverty, Centurion University distributes laptops (GVPY Scheme) and subsidized data plans to SC/ST/OBC students. Over 30 students received laptops valued at ₹ 30,000 each in AY 2024-25, ensuring participation in online and blended learning ecosystems.

### **Career and Employability Integration**

The *School of Employability and Entrepreneurship* delivers skill-embedded courses aligned with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) levels. Centurion University's experiential model connects students with community enterprises, FPOs, and industry partners, enabling bottom-quintile graduates to secure formal employment or start small ventures within a year of graduation.

While Universitas Airlangga and BINUS excel in poverty-related research and outreach, Centurion University's *data-driven focus on student outcomes* offers a complementary and underrepresented model of impact. In the UK, universities such as Manchester and Glasgow report "widening participation" strategies but seldom disaggregate graduation data by income quintile. Consequently, Centurion University's integration of *access + completion + employability* represents an advanced practice aligned with THE's emphasis on measurable community impact.

### **Results and Impact**

The combined effect of these interventions is observable in measurable outcomes:

- **Dropout Reduction:** Overall withdrawal rate among low-income students declined from 14 percent (2019) to 6.2 percent (2024).
- **Female Retention:** 94 percent of female scholarship recipients continued through the final year, reflecting the success of hostel and safety-support programs.
- **Regional Equity:** Approximately 48 percent of enrolled low-income students originate from Gajapati district, one of Odisha's poorest demonstrating spatial inclusivity.

- Graduate Employability: 78.5 percent of bottom-quintile graduates secured employment or self-employment within 12 months of graduation through Centurion University’s placement and incubation ecosystem
- Community Multiplier Effect: Each graduating student from a rural family contributes an estimated ₹ 1.8 lakh annual household income uplift, illustrating education’s direct poverty-reduction impact.

## Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

**Table 2: Centurion University’s structured graduation and completion initiatives advance several SDG targets**

SDG Target	Corresponding CUTM Action
1.4 – Ensure equal rights to economic resources and access to services	Free education, digital access schemes, and financial aid for bottom quintile students.
1.5 – Build resilience of the poor and reduce exposure to vulnerabilities	Emergency financial support and skill-based education reduce economic shocks.
1.b – Create pro-poor policy frameworks	Equal Opportunity and Poverty Reduction Policies institutionalize long-term support.
4.3 – Ensure equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education	CUTM’s scholarship ecosystem and skill integration deliver inclusive technical education.

Through these mechanisms, Centurion University directly contributes to poverty eradication not merely by granting access to higher education but by ensuring that economically marginalized students complete degrees and transition into sustainable livelihoods. The comparative review of international SDG 1 reports reveals that most universities emphasize inputs—such as scholarships, outreach, or community service—while few define or report outcome-based graduation targets for low-income cohorts. Centurion University’s approach fills this global gap by embedding *data-verified completion and employability metrics* into institutional planning.

Key differentiators include:

- The integration of national income data and verified scholarship records for bottom-quintile identification.
- A quantitative monitoring system (SPID) capable of disaggregating results by income, gender, and geography.
- The linkage of education with livelihood outcomes demonstrates poverty reduction as a measurable institutional output.

This model situates Centurion University not only as a regional anchor institution in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh but also as a benchmark university within THE’s Impact Ranking

framework. By moving beyond access to achievement, Centurion University exemplifies how higher education can dismantle inter-generational poverty through structured, evidence-based interventions.