

**Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release**

Dr. Sania Nishtar sits on the grounds of QAU to discuss Ehsaas Scholarships



February 26, 2020 – Islamabad: Ehsaas undergraduate scholarships is one of the eight priority programs of Ehsaas. The program was launched by the Prime Minister on November 4, 2019. For the current academic year (2019/20), applications were solicited from students online via Higher Education Commission’s (HEC) portal-HEC being the implementing agency for this Ehsaas program. The scholarships award will soon commence and dates for this will be shortly announced.

In this regard, the Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation made a surprise visit to the Quaid-e-Azam University. She held a dialogue with students in the grounds of QAU. “This was a critical policy consultation, which enabled me to appreciate fully how important financial access to education is for students at an undergraduate level” she said. VC QAU, Muhammad Ali was also present at the consultation.

The consultation with students wasn’t held in a fancy hotel or auditorium; there were no microphones or fancy backdrops. She sat on the floor on the grounds of QAU and interacted with students to get insights on their academic aspirations and key challenges being faced by them. She listened to students and empathized with them to understand their concerns and

constraints. “I strongly believe that we cannot frame policies sitting back in offices; unless we engage with the beneficiaries of programs we run, we cannot ensure that programs are responsive” she said. The students were delighted to interact with her.

During an engaging interaction, large number of undergraduate level boys and girls from diverse regional and social backgrounds shared a wide range of viewpoints with Dr. Nishtar and appreciated the government’s Ehsaas undergraduate scholarships program.

They highly lauded this scholarship program is one of the best opportunities for students who cannot bear their academic expenses and that it not just covers tuition fee but also a living stipend. They informed the Minister that the online application portal introduced under the program gave them a level playing field to apply for the scholarships in a transparent manner. The girl students specifically appreciated that fifty per cent of the scholarships have been allocated for female students, while students with special needs as well as those from remote and disadvantaged are also being encouraged to apply.

Talking to students belonging to different provinces of Pakistan, Dr. Nishtar assured, “The government is fully committed to ensure that scholarship program benefits maximum number of students who are in actual need. This program has fetched a major policy change in educational canvas of Pakistan by emphasizing on the most critical segment, the undergraduate program, which contributes the most to furthering income generation potential.”

Acknowledging the scale of this program, VC Quaid i Azam University said, “Ehsaas scholarship is the largest ever undergraduate scholarship initiative of Pakistan for low-income students enrolled in four and five-year undergraduate programs”.

Later the Steering Committee of Ehsaas Undergraduate scholarships also met for the fourth time to give final touches to the scholarship program for 2019-2020. The steering committee is chaired by SAPM Dr. Nishtar and Chairman HEC, Dr. Tariq Banuri.