

The Kerala State Higher Education Council

Thiruvananthapuram- Established 2007



The Kerala State Higher Education Council

Initiatives

A Summary Outline

2017-2026

The Kerala State Higher Education Council

Thiruvananthapuram - 2026

KERALA STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
COUNCIL

INITIATIVES



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The Kerala State Higher Education Council

Vikas Bhavan · Thiruvananthapuram · Kerala

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Prologue

I am writing this prologue with the experience of one who has had the privilege of serving the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) for almost a decade, a period of remarkable transformation. I am aware that the higher education institutions (HEIs) are shaped by historical circumstances and being reshaped by the present circumstances.

I present this volume narrating KSHEC's efforts and achievements over the past decade, with the sobering recognition that the Council was legislated way back by the Act of 2007 and has since been widely acknowledged for its nationally emulative structure, composition, and functions. Conscious of the dedication required to preserve this tradition, we have continuously engaged with the evolving needs of higher education institutions, both professional and general as well as research institutions across the state. In doing so, we have sought to optimise the use of the provisions of the Act, further strengthened by the amendments of 2016.

Focus

Our focus has been on strengthening the avowed goals of access, equity and excellence by evolving up-to-date quality frameworks, nationally mandated curriculum structure, outcome-based education (OBE), digital enablement, techno-pedagogy, issue-based research eco-system, and globally benchmarked standards for internationalisation. We have been creatively responding and critically adapting the national as well as global reforms of Higher Education demanding a total transformation at the level of concept, design, operation, function, and role of teachers in the wake of the fast-changing digital technologies as the prime mover.

Knowledge Economy Perspective

I had argued that the COVID-19 disruption would accelerate the emergence of huge corporate research establishments engaged in new knowledge production as a late capitalist turn, in the process of which Universities and public funded research institutions would lose their primacy in the sector of intangible assets creation. This knowledge producing, consuming and exchanging economy would subordinate higher education, as increasingly standardised to be its service provider repositioned as delivery nodes rather than autonomous

producers of knowledge. This transformation, I anticipated would convert education into a marketable commodity prioritising efficiency, scalability, and cost over intellectual depth, contextual relevance, and critical engagement.

I am particularly concerned about the consequences of this shift for academic autonomy and social purpose. As faculty roles narrow to facilitation and evaluation, the space for original thinking, locally grounded knowledge, and dialogic pedagogy diminishes. At the same time, the corporate model promotes uniformity over diversity, flattening the contextual and cultural specificities that meaningful higher education requires. Rather than democratising access, this system risks deepening inequalities by creating a divide between global knowledge producers and dependent institutional consumers, especially in the Global South. In essence, I was afraid that unless critically resisted, higher education might be absorbed into a market-driven knowledge regime that could undermine its foundational role as a public, critical, and socially embedded enterprise.

Schemes

A comprehensive making of the Curriculum Framework for the Four-Year Under-Graduate Programme (FYUGP) and its implementation has been the one of the primary schemes of the Council for achieving the above foci. We have implemented FYUGP in a relatively successful way as an important step in opening up multiple pathways to learners for escaping the disciplinary silos, acquiring multidisciplinary adaptability and interdisciplinary perception. We brought in place the system of Academic Bank of Credits as part of the FYUGP that represents a significant aspect of the higher education reform in strengthening the freedom of students regarding accumulation and exchange of academic credits, multiple entry and exit besides, mobility from institution to institution across the country. Further, we had the task of arranging for the mandatory Internship as part of the FYUGP, which we managed to do through KELTRON who designed an App providing students access to a large number of industries free, some with stipend, and a few with payment. In general student friendly and economic.

In continuation, we prepared the One-year PG Programme with similar pathways for developing aptitude to research for production of new knowledge or deepening knowledge in the field of specialisation or strengthening employability through vocational skills. However, all this remains only an initial step. While these developments mark a significant beginning, they represent only the initial phase of a much larger transformation. The broader implications of a lifelong learning paradigm for institutional architecture, financing

frameworks, faculty roles, and the evolving relationship between education and employment, are still unfolding and require careful, forward-looking policy design.

What emerges is a more flexible and diversified educational ecosystem characterised by shorter, stackable credentials, micro-credentials, nanodegrees, and programmes that seamlessly integrate work with learning. Education is increasingly being reimagined as a continuous, lifelong process, supported by innovative mechanisms such as lifelong learning accounts, which enable individuals to access and utilise educational entitlements across different stages of their lives and careers.

Understanding that switching over to digital technologies was not just going Online for HEIs. It was a complex process of digital enablement of Universities and Colleges, to be digitally equipped for teaching, learning and administration. As a comprehensive package it meant at the level of teaching and learning the introduction of a Learning Management System (LMS) based on an Open-Source Software Solution and a flexible platform called Moodle. LMS should be operational to facilitate all teaching-learning activities Online, Offline and the Blended mode. It should serve as a reliable record of teaching/learning and evidence provider of the user's creative abilities and achievement. At the level of administration, the whole process should be operating on enterprise resource planning (ERP) enabling to improve quality of service, increase transparency, and enhance efficiency through the life cycle management of students and teachers from entry to exit.

In collaboration with the Digital University, the Council launched the DIGICOL project to digitally enable colleges across the state. Building on this initiative, the Kerala Resource Enhancement and Advancement Programme (K-REAP) is now underway to further this objective. As radical change through a purely top-down approach is difficult, and bottom-up processes necessarily take time, certain challenges are unavoidable. However, we are not disheartened, for this is an inevitable phase that must be traversed in the journey toward our destination.

Gen.Alpha Turn

The question of how we design higher education for Generation Alpha, those born after 2010 demands urgent attention. The first cohort of this generation will soon enter Universities, confronting institutions that were never designed with them in mind. This is a ponderous paradox that Baby Boomers of older generations who draw blank about the Gen Alpha's cognitive domain and learning habits, reshape the higher education.

Gen.Alpha has grown up entirely within the Screen Age. Raised on LCD monitors, smartphones, tablets, and algorithm-driven platforms, their sensibilities have been shaped long before they encounter formal higher education. Learning for them has never been linear, slow, or exclusively textual. Universities have yet to seriously investigate Gen. Alpha's learning styles, perceptions, and expectations influenced by multiple sources, Gen.Alpha are accustomed to web-based learning by using a variety of apps, tools. and open-source platforms. The emergence of artificial intelligence marks a decisive rupture in this already fragile system. Generative AI powered interactive tools are empowering them to learn unprecedented faster and wider. This situation demands teachers to be scholarly professors, critical, creative and maverick. They have to be competent to start their teaching focussed on the mistakes, contradictions, and gaps in the responses of the interactive tools.

AI-driven adaptive learning platforms offer the possibility of genuinely personalised education, enabling self-paced, self-directed learning with demonstrably better outcomes. This shift compels Universities to rethink their academic enterprises at a speed and scale never before experienced. Institutions that fail to adapt will not merely stagnate; they will be displaced by alternative, hyper-connected models better aligned with Gen.Alpha's expectations.

The Council is effectively building international connections through Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with Universities like the Michigan, which have opened AI powered tools free of charge to students instead of vainly attempting policing efforts to prevent their access. They have become already well developed in AI-powered pedagogical practices integrating VR/AR/MR facilities. The Council's collaboration with them is with the distinct understanding that Professors competent to use AI can transcend current limitations. AI will become a collaborator in the pursuit of knowledge, rather than a substitute. Competing with AI's speed is impossible but scholarly teachers can enable learners to raise questions that AI cannot answer. This is the need of the hour.

The University as a Contradiction Sustained

The university is, and must remain, a site of productive contradictions. It is at once practical and impractical, pragmatic and imaginative, convergent and divergent. This plurality of purposes sustains its intellectual vitality. However, an institution defined mainly by statutory routines of affiliation and centralised examinations risks becoming administratively rigid and academically diminished. Universities must be freed from its redundant status as the secretariat of affiliated colleges and centralised examinations.

To remain relevant, Universities must draw closer to society and be an active space of engagement. They should evolve into an institutional ensemble of advanced centres of learning and research, which promote convergence across disciplines and promote translational and participatory inquiry. Such a shift would deepen the relationship between knowledge production and societal needs.

At the same time, Universities must preserve space for intellectual openness, including serendipity, critical dissent, and forms of inquiry that do not seek immediate practical outcomes. A balance between structured purpose and creative uncertainty is essential. Only by sustaining this tension can Universities continue to act as a generative institution, capable of responding to present challenges while also shaping unforeseen futures.

Beyond Disciplinary Silos

Understanding knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries has been guiding KSHEC's work from the beginning. When we designed the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, we did not discriminate between liberal education and professional training. Instead of treating disciplines as mutually exclusive, KSHEC insisted on their convergence, recognising that a meaningful higher education must cultivate both critical thinking and practical competence around knowledge, rather than disciplines. We insisted on both. When we established the Kerala Institute of Advanced Studies alongside the Kerala Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation. Neither did we rank the humanities and social sciences below the sciences nor privilege any of them. We affirmed that the seamless convergence of all is essential to carry forward advanced research totally distanced from the question of social, environmental and epistemic justice.

We optimised the activities of the Centres within the Council with a special emphasis on the programmes of the Centre for faculty development because it had to conduct many hands-on workshops throughout Kerala in order to empower faculty members in outcome-based teaching. Several in-station workshops aiming enhancement of multidisciplinary adaptability and advanced research methodology and several other in different out-station zones for enabling teaching knowledge systems. Rather, KSHEC affirmed that the seamless convergence of all knowledge domains is indispensable for advancing research that remains attentive to questions of social, environmental, and epistemic justice. In this vision, excellence is not detached from responsibility but is deeply intertwined with it. Through these coordinated efforts, KSHEC

sought not only to upgrade instructional practices but also to foster a more dynamic, inclusive, and research-oriented academic culture across the state.

When we created SAAC's assessment framework, we did not treat social inclusiveness, research excellence, scientific temper and secularism as competing priorities. We integrated them with the nationally mandated set of criteria, requiring institutions to demonstrate commitment to all these. Likewise, we ensured social justice through SLAC to overcome rigid disciplinary segregation in Universities and the dreary repetition of the misnomer, 'equivalency' as part of special rules in Government Departments. The term is declared redundant and nationally substituted with the alternative expression 'related fields.' The Council has prepared a Handbook to prevent the contradictory situation doing injustice to students.

New Challenges

Recent challenges of KSHEC have been demanding mobilisation of Government Agencies to offer facilities for Internships, a mandatory component of FYUGP. We were provided with a free software solution by KELTRON enabling students to identify multiple public industries offering chances of Internships. Similarly, ASAAP, a Government Company, undertook to implement K-REAP.

KSHEC was conceived on the premise that it should neither be located wholly within the governmental apparatus nor positioned entirely outside it. Rather, it occupies an intermediate institutional space between the state and the universities, and between the universities and national regulatory bodies. This positioning reflects a considered recognition that universities require a degree of autonomy and insulation from excessive bureaucratic control, even as the state retains a legitimate and necessary role in ensuring accountability, quality, and the advancement of social justice.

In this sense, KSHEC performs a critical mediating function, one that has acquired renewed significance in the contemporary context. Universities today are subject to intensifying pressures to demonstrate immediate utility, to align with short term political and economic imperatives, and to privilege instrumental outcomes over long range intellectual commitments. The Council's role, therefore, is not merely administrative but normative as well in order to sustain a balance between autonomy and accountability; to safeguard the conditions for reflective and critical inquiry, and to ensure that higher education remains responsive to society without being reduced to the demands of the present alone.

Publication

We inherited the journal, Higher Education for the Future, and carried forward as the Council’s disseminator source of academic insights new multidisciplinary pedagogic knowledge generated through genuine research. By prioritising original research, the journal seeks to publish such outputs putting forth emerging trends in teaching and learning in the domain of higher education. The journal’s prime focus has been results of curiosity-driven inquiries and theoretical or philosophical interpretations of the findings that become publishable knowledge.

The journal functions as a bridge between theory and practice. It brings together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to engage with pressing issues such as curriculum reform, digital transformations, equity and access, and the changing role of universities in a knowledge-driven economy. In doing so, Higher Education for the Future not only contributes to higher level academic discussion of issues relating to the changing scenario of higher education. As a corollary to it we publish a periodical, Higher Education Matters, taking the contemporary teaching learning scene to the clientele.

Internationalisation

The “Study in Kerala” initiative (2024), led by Kerala State Higher Education Council, aims to position Kerala as a global higher education hub through a phased strategy that begins with short-term programmes and expands to full-time courses. It aligns with national efforts via collaboration with EdCIL (India) Limited and strengthens international engagement through institutional partnerships (such as with University of Michigan-Flint), participation in global education fairs, and faculty capacity building. The initiative also promotes digital collaboration (COIL), diaspora engagement through the “Scholar Connect” platform, and high-level policy dialogues like international conclaves. Overall, it integrates global networks, innovation, and outreach to attract international students and build a knowledge-driven economy.

Scholar Connect is a key initiative strengthening the internationalisation of Kerala’s higher education by creating a structured link between global academia and local institutions. It has onboarded around 100 diaspora scholars from 19 countries and facilitated engagements with academics from leading universities in the UK, USA, Australia, and Japan, giving stakeholders exposure to global standards. The programme stands out for its inclusivity, extending international opportunities to institutions with limited global exposure and supporting equitable access. It also enhances institutional capacity and promotes regional

collaboration, notably through South-South engagement with Sri Lanka. Overall, Scholar Connect combines scale, inclusiveness, and strategic impact, making it a replicable model for State's higher education internationalisation.

Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M.

Vice-Chairman

Kerala State Higher Education Council

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2026

PART ONE



Foundations and Governance

CHAPTER 1

The Mandate and Vision for a Knowledge Economy

Legislative Origins and the Strategic Mission of KSHEC

The Foundations of a New Era in Kerala's Higher Education

Kerala has long occupied a singular place in the unfolding story of Indian education. From the social reform movements of the nineteenth century through the sweeping educational investments of the twentieth, the state built an enviable foundation of near universal literacy, broad access to schooling, and a deep public faith in the transformative power of learning. Yet by the early years of the new millennium, it was becoming evident that this foundation, however impressive, was insufficient to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of a globalising, knowledge driven world. The institutions that had served the state so admirably in expanding access were not always equipped to serve the deeper imperatives of quality, research, and relevance that a new century demanded. A fresh architecture was required, one that could hold ambition and accountability together and translate the state's democratic values into a genuinely worldclass higher education ecosystem.

The creation of the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) was not merely an administrative reorganisation but a philosophical reorientation, a recognition that higher education in the twenty-first century demands a specialised and dedicated agency capable of providing sustained academic input, coordinating diverse stakeholders, and charting a long-term perspective for institutional development. As the Preamble to the KSHEC Act articulates, the Council was conceived as a collective of the Government, universities, academics, experts, teachers, students, and people's representatives, brought together to forge a synergic relationship among them. It was designed to occupy an operational space between the Government and the universities, and between the universities and apex level regulatory bodies. This formulation, dense with institutional meaning, captures the animating logic of the entire enterprise.

In January 2007, the State of Kerala embarked upon a transformative journey that would fundamentally reshape its higher education landscape. The enactment of the Kerala State Higher Education Council Act (Act No. 22 of 2007) marked a watershed moment in the state's academic history, establishing an institution designed to navigate the complex interplay between governmental

oversight and academic autonomy, and between regulatory compliance and intellectual freedom. Established at the Science and Technology Museum Campus, Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram, the Council was conceived as the principal architect of the state’s ambitious vision to transition into a knowledge economy.

This positioning, neither entirely within the governmental apparatus nor fully outside it, was a deliberate and sophisticated constitutional choice. It acknowledged that universities require a degree of protection from excessive bureaucratic interference whilst simultaneously affirming the state’s legitimate interest in ensuring accountability, quality, and the promotion of social justice in higher education. The Council was thus designed as a mediating institution, a space where policy could be crafted through consultation rather than imposition, where dialogue could flourish between those who govern and those who teach, learn, and create knowledge.

It is important to situate KSHEC’s founding within a broader critical horizon. From the beginning, the Council’s architects were alert to the dangers of a purely market driven conception of higher education. The emergence of a knowledge economy, far from being an unambiguous good, carries within it the risk that universities and publicly funded research institutions will be repositioned as delivery nodes of standardised knowledge rather than as autonomous producers of new understanding. KSHEC was conceived precisely as a bulwark against this reduction: an institution designed to ensure that higher education in Kerala retains its character as a public, critical, and socially embedded enterprise.

KEY MILESTONES IN KSHEC’S HISTORY

Table 1.1 Key Milestones in KSHEC History (2007-2026)

Year	Milestone
2007	Kerala State Higher Education Council Act (No. 22 of 2007) enacted. KSHEC established at Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram.
2009	Higher Education Scholarship Scheme launched. 1,000 meritorious students in nonprofessional disciplines awarded annually.
2017	One member Commission report submitted (13 January). Amendment Ordinance promulgated. Third Council constituted.
2017–18	Kairali Research Awards introduced. Four award categories recognise outstanding research across all disciplines.
2018	Kerala State Higher Education Council (Amendment) Act No. 19 of 2018 enacted (3 July). State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC) formally established.
2023	Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF) launched in May, the first state level institutional ranking initiative in India.

Year	Milestone
2024–25	Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) implemented across all higher education institutions in Kerala.
Jan 2025	International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education held at CUSAT, Kochi (14–15 January). Nobel Laureate Ada E. Yonath among distinguished speakers.
2025–26	Centres of Excellence & K Reap established
Oct 2025	Internship Portal (internshipkerala.org) inaugurated. Mandatory internship for the Four-year Undergraduate Programme operationalised.
Feb 2026	Kerala R&D Vision 2031 released at National Research Conference. Scholar Connect launched onboarding approximately 100 diaspora scholars from 19 countries.

Understanding the KSHEC Act of 2007: Stating the Objects

Every great institution finds its compass in its founding document, and for KSHEC that compass is the Act’s Preamble. The legislation identifies three fundamental objects that continue to guide the Council’s work nearly two decades after its inception. Together, they constitute a vision of higher education that is simultaneously principled and pragmatic, protective of intellectual freedom and insistent on purposeful accountability.

The first object places autonomy and accountability together, not as rival principles but as necessary partners. Autonomy without accountability can degenerate into institutional irresponsibility, whilst accountability without autonomy becomes authoritarian control that stifles creative inquiry and suppresses the spirit of intellectual adventure. The Council was mandated to protect both, creating conditions in which institutions could exercise genuine academic freedom whilst remaining responsive to their constitutional and societal obligations.

The second object, linking excellence with social justice, reflects a degree of moral clarity that is rare in such instruments. True excellence cannot exist in an enclave isolated from questions of access and equity, and genuine social justice demands the highest quality of education for precisely those communities historically denied it. The pairing of excellence with justice forms the moral core of KSHEC’s mandate. The Council was never intended to privilege quality for a few at the expense of the many, nor to dilute standards in the name of inclusion.

Table 1.2 The Three Founding Objects of KSHEC

Autonomy and Accountability	Excellence and Social Justice	Socio Economic Alignment
Ensuring the autonomy and accountability of all institutions of higher education in the State, balancing academic freedom with responsibility.	Promoting academic excellence and social justice by providing academic input to the State Government for policy formulation and perspective planning.	Guiding the growth of higher education in accordance with the socioeconomic requirements of the State, aligning education with development.

The third object directs the Council to guide the growth of higher education in accordance with the socioeconomic requirements of the State. This provision anchors higher education firmly to the developmental aspirations of Kerala, ensuring that academic programmes, research priorities, and institutional expansion remain aligned with the state’s evolving economic and social needs. It prevents the system from drifting into academic self referentiality or the isolated pursuit of globally fashionable but locally irrelevant agendas.

The Amendment Act of 2018: Deepening the Democratic Character

The KSHEC Act of 2007 was, from the outset, intended as a living framework rather than a static text. As experience accumulated and the higher education landscape evolved both nationally and globally, the need for legislative refinement became evident. Prior to the constitution of the third Council, the Government of Kerala engaged Professor Rajan Gurukkal, the distinguished historian and former Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, as a One Member Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of KSHEC’s performance and to recommend amendments to the parent Act. The One Member Commission submitted its report to the Government on 13 January 2017.

Acting upon this report, the Government promulgated the Kerala State Higher Education Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017, subsequently replaced by the Kerala State Higher Education Council (Amendment) Act, 2018 (Act No. 19 of 2018), enacted on 3 July 2018 and deemed to have come into force on 5 July 2017.

Most notably, the Amendment Act expanded the description of KSHEC’s collective character in the Preamble itself. Where the original Act described the Council as a collective of the Government, universities, academics, and experts, the Amendment substituted the words ‘experts, teachers, students’ for the word ‘experts’ alone, thereby formally incorporating teachers and students as named constituents of the Council’s democratic base. This seemingly modest textual change carries considerable symbolic and practical weight. It reflects an evolution in the understanding of governance, from a top down advisory model

towards a genuinely participatory one in which those who teach and those who learn are recognised as coauthors of educational policy rather than merely its recipients.

The Amendment also rationalised the nomenclature of the three governing bodies, replacing older terms with clearer designations: Advisory Body, Governing Body, and Executive Body. More substantively, it provided for the dissolution of the existing Governing Council upon commencement and established revised membership norms for the reconstituted bodies.

The Council's Operational Mandate

Beyond the broad objects, the Act enumerates specific empowerments that give operational meaning to the Council's mission. It authorises KSHEC to review and coordinate the implementation of policies in all higher education institutions in the State, including universities, research institutions, and colleges. This coordination function is particularly significant in Kerala's context, where higher education encompasses multiple universities spanning several disciplines, hundreds of affiliated colleges of varying character, and a complex web of regulatory frameworks that must be navigated with skill and sensitivity.

Three-Tier Governance Structure of KSHEC

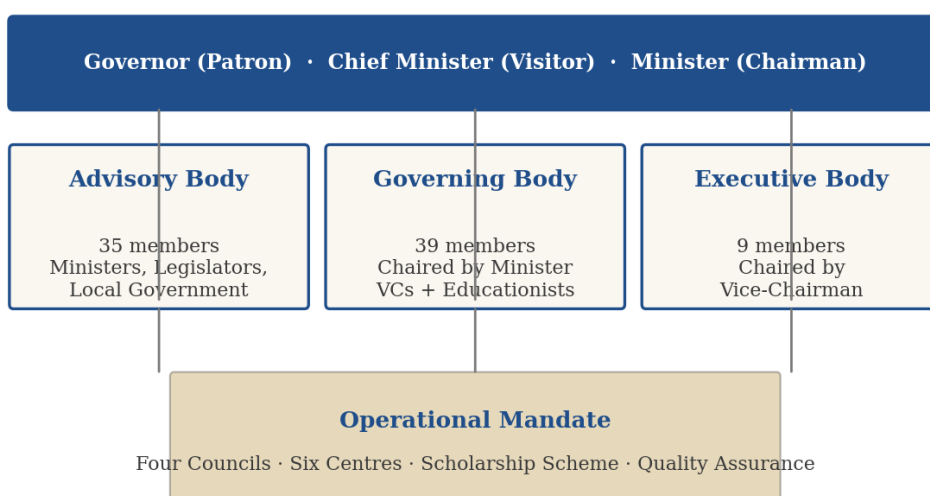


Figure 1.1 Three Tier Governance Structure

Body	Composition / Role
PATRON	The Governor of Kerala
VISITOR	The Chief Minister
CHAIRPERSON	Minister for Higher Education
VICECHAIRMAN	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M.
MEMBER SECRETARY	Dr Rajan Varughese
ADVISORY BODY	35 Members
GOVERNING BODY	39 Members
EXECUTIVE BODY	9 Members

The Act further empowers the Council to network various programmes in higher education undertaken and promoted by the Central and State Governments and by national level regulatory bodies, including the University Grants Commission, the All-India Council for Technical Education, the National Council for Teacher Education, the Medical Council of India, and the Bar Council of India. KSHEC was designed to be the state level node in this national network, translating central policies to local contexts and articulating Kerala’s distinct needs and experiences to national regulatory bodies.

Importantly, the Act mandates the Council to undertake independent work for the generation and dissemination of new ideas in higher education. The Council was therefore empowered not only to implement but to imagine, not only to execute but to create. This is a rare and precious mandate in an era when the pace of change in higher education is accelerating rapidly on account of digital technologies, generative artificial intelligence, and the evolving demands of a globalised economy.

Institutional Structure: Governance and Leadership

The Act establishes a multitiered governance structure that ensures representation from diverse stakeholders whilst maintaining clarity of authority and operational effectiveness. The Governor of Kerala serves as the Patron; the Chief Minister as the Visitor; and the Minister in charge of Higher Education as the Chairman of the Council. Currently, Professor Rajan Gurukkal P.M. leads the Council as Vice-Chairman and Dr Rajan Varughese serves as Member Secretary.

The Advisory Body is a thirty-five-member body of notable breadth and inclusiveness. It comprises the Chief Minister, the Ministers for Education, Health, Law, and Agriculture, the Leader of the Opposition, representatives of

Members of Parliament, members of the State Legislature, and representatives of the three-tier panchayat system, municipalities, and corporations.

The Governing Body is a thirty-nine-member high powered committee chaired by the Minister for Education. It includes all Vice-chancellors of the State universities, distinguished educationists with mandatory representation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, as well as elected representatives from the Academic Councils of the State universities. The Executive Body, a more compact nine-member team chaired by the Vice-Chairman, provides the administrative efficiency necessary for the effective day-to-day functioning of the Council's many initiatives and programmes.

Responsibilities and Functions: The Operational Framework

Section 4 of the KSHEC Act represents the most detailed and consequential exposition of the Council's responsibilities, listing twenty-five specific functions that together constitute a comprehensive framework for higher education governance. These functions can be grouped thematically to reveal the architecture of the Council's operational mandate.

Policy Advice and Perspective Planning

At the heart of KSHEC's mission is its role as the state government's primary adviser on higher education policy. The Act mandates the Council to provide academic input to the Government and to universities, research institutions, and other centres of higher education for the formulation and implementation of policies on higher education, and to evolve a perspective plan for the development of higher education. This planning function ensures that policy development benefits from sustained academic expertise rather than ad hoc, reactive decision making driven by short term compulsions.

The Council also advises on the starting of new courses, colleges, and other higher education institutions; reviews the Statutes, Ordinances, and Regulations of the universities; and evolves general guidelines for the release of grants. It additionally advises on the establishment, recognition, and disaffiliation of colleges. By providing rigorous academic input to these decisions, KSHEC helps guard against the lowering of standards that can accompany rapid and poorly regulated expansion.

Quality Enhancement and Curriculum Development

Quality improvement permeates the Act's provisions with characteristic insistence. The Council is mandated to suggest improvements in curriculum and

syllabi in accordance with changing societal and academic requirements, and to facilitate the development and publication of appropriate teaching material, including textbooks, educational software, and eLearning facilities.

In line with this mandate, KSHEC has promoted Outcome Based Education across the system, aligning teaching, assessment, and curriculum with clearly stated learning outcomes. The Council has also driven the implementation of the Four-year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) across all higher education institutions in Kerala from the academic year 2024-25. The Programme enables students to pursue majors and minors across disciplines, provides multiple entry and exit points, and creates pathways for interdisciplinary learning and enhanced employability.

Social Justice and Inclusivity

The Act’s commitment to social justice finds concrete operational expression in several specific provisions. The Council is directed to evolve schemes for providing equitable opportunities for higher education, and scholarships, freeships, and financial assistance to needy students, and to coordinate the implementation of welfare programmes for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Eligible Backward Classes.

In 2009, acting on this mandate, the Council introduced the Higher Education Scholarship Scheme, a merit based and renewable award for first year undergraduates in nonprofessional disciplines. Each year, one thousand students entering government or aided colleges and universities are selected for this award. The programme is coordinated by Ms . Tinchu P James, Research Officer

Higher Education Scholarship Scheme: Award Progression

Perhaps most distinctively, the Act requires the Council to evolve schemes to sensitise students to environmental and gender issues, preparing students not

Table 1.3 Higher Education Scholarship Scheme – Award Progression

Programme	Year	Award Amount (₹)
Undergraduate (Nonprofessional)	Year 1	12,000
	Year 2	18,000 (Continuation on merit)
	Year 3	24,000 (Continuation on merit)
Postgraduate	Year 1	40,000
	Year 2	60,000 (Continuation on merit)

Higher Education Scholarship Scheme — Award Progression

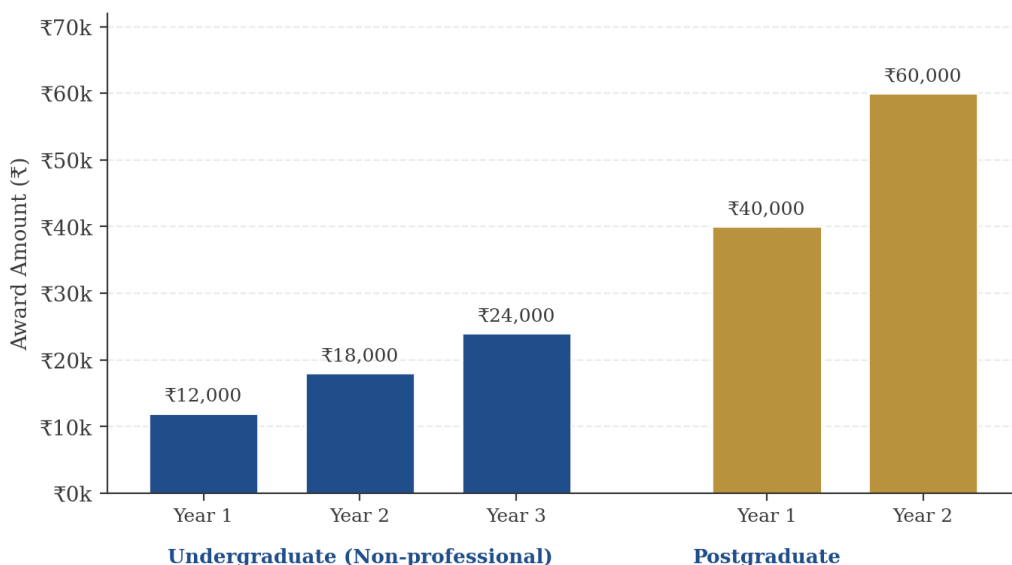


Figure 1.2 Higher Education Scholarship Scheme — Award Progression

merely for careers but for engaged, responsible citizenship in a complex and rapidly changing world.

The Six Centres: Institutional Infrastructure for Excellence

Table 1.4 Six Centres Mandated by the KSHEC Act

Centre	Purpose
Centre for Research on Policies in Higher Education	Generate research-based policy guidance, ensuring the Council’s advisory role is continuously informed by rigorous empirical inquiry.
Curriculum Development Centre	Leads academic renewal across disciplines, translating emerging knowledge and pedagogical insight into revised syllabi and frameworks.
Centre for Capacity Building	Develops faculty and administrative leadership through hands on workshops in outcome-based teaching and research methodology.
State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC)	Established formally in 2018. Evaluates institutional quality against transparent standards underpinned by Scientific Temper, Secular Outlook, and Social Inclusivity.
Examination Reforms Cell	Modernises assessment practices to align with contemporary understandings of learning outcomes and competency development.
HR Development, Employment and Global Skills Cell	Connects education to employment, ensuring graduates’ knowledge and skills serve the labour market without reducing higher education to vocational preparation alone.

The Act specifically mandates the establishment of six institutional centres to provide common facilities and specialised capacity across the state's higher education system. Together, these centres constitute the organisational backbone through which the Council's broad mandate is translated into operational reality.

The Vision for a Knowledge Economy: Conceptualising the Knowledge Economy in Kerala's Context

The term 'knowledge economy' circulates widely in contemporary policy discourse, but its meaning for Kerala requires careful and specific elaboration. For this state, long distinguished by its high human development indicators, its tradition of public education, and its culture of intellectual engagement, transitioning to a knowledge economy implies moving beyond development paradigms based on agriculture, industry, or remittance driven consumption. It implies an economic model in which knowledge creation, dissemination, and application become the primary drivers of growth and social wellbeing. However, this aspiration must be held in creative tension with an equally important caution. If the knowledge economy comes to mean the subordination of higher education to corporate knowledge production, with universities reduced to service providers for a market driven knowledge regime rather than remaining autonomous producers of socially and critically engaged knowledge, then the transformation will have come at too high a price.

KSHEC's conception of the knowledge economy is therefore a deliberately critical and principled one. The Council has consistently affirmed that knowledge production should not be a profit seeking venture for a privileged few but a tool for social justice and a public good available to all. This is operationalised through the Council's insistence on social inclusivity in all its programmes, through its support for research that addresses Kerala's specific social and environmental challenges, and through its resistance to the tendency to rank disciplines in terms of their market utility.

Kerala brings distinctive assets to this aspiration. Its Gross Enrolment Ratio of 41.3 per cent in higher education is significantly higher than the national average, and the state has achieved near gender parity in enrolment, with women constituting 49 per cent of all higher education students. The All-Kerala Higher Education Survey, which KSHEC is empowered to conduct, provides the comprehensive empirical foundation on which evidence-based policy depends.

Four Councils, One Mission

The history of KSHEC since its founding in 2007 is a story of institutional continuity and progressive deepening, as each Council built upon the achievements of its predecessor with growing sophistication and a deepening awareness of the challenges that lie ahead.

Table 1.5 Four Councils, One Continuing Mission

Council	Key Leadership and Period
FIRST COUNCIL	Vice Chairman Prof. K.N. Panikkar; Member Secretary Prof. Thomas Joseph; Period 2007–12. Key Achievements: Foundational architecture; Higher Education Scholarship Scheme; early curriculum reform initiatives launched.
SECOND COUNCIL	Vice Chairman Sri T.P. Sreenivasan; Member Secretary Dr P. Anwar; Period 2012–17. Key Achievements: Deepened research and advisory functions; engaged critical governance and quality questions.
THIRD COUNCIL and FOURTH COUNCIL	Vice Chairman Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M.; Member Secretary Dr Rajan Varughese; Period 2017–present. Key Achievements: FYUGP, KIRF, SAAC, Scholar Connect, Erudite Programme, CUSAT Conclave, National Research Conference.

Research and Development Vision 2031

In February 2026, the state government released the Kerala Research and Development Vision for Higher Education: Towards 2031 and Beyond, a comprehensive policy roadmap presented at the National Research Conference in Thiruvananthapuram. This vision document outlines a transformative agenda for reorienting Kerala’s higher education system from its historically teaching centric character towards a research-oriented ecosystem. It is the most explicit and detailed expression to date of the knowledge economy aspiration that has animated KSHEC since its founding.

The document proposes a fundamental shift from a teaching centric model to a research-oriented ecosystem, acknowledging that whilst teaching remains foundational, universities must also become primary sites of knowledge production, addressing both fundamental scientific questions and the concrete challenges of Kerala’s society, environment, and economy. The vision places particular emphasis on impact-oriented translation: research that moves beyond academic publication to address specific problems in agriculture, public health, environmental protection, and coastal management.

The philosophical foundation of the Vision document was articulated with directness: knowledge production should not be a profit seeking venture for a privileged few, but a tool for social justice and a public good available to all.

Establishing Centres of Excellence: The Institutional Architecture of Research

A key strategic element of the Vision 2031 framework is the establishment of a network of specialised research institutions to complement the existing university system and provide the concentrated expertise necessary for worldclass scientific and scholarly output. Their design reflects the Department of Higher Education and KHSEC’s settled conviction that disciplinary boundaries must be transcended rather than reinforced, and that social, environmental, and epistemic justice must remain central rather than peripheral concerns of any genuine research enterprise.

Table 1.6 Proposed Centres of Excellence – Kerala R & D Vision 2031

Sl. No.	Centres of Excellence	Agency/ Location
1	Centre of Excellence for Teaching, Learning and Training	Kerala State Higher Education Council, Thiruvananthapuram
2	Kerala Institute for Science, Technology, and Innovation (KISTI)	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
3	Kerala Institute of Advanced Studies (KIAS)	Munnar Engineering College campus of the Centre for Continuing Education Kerala (CCEK)
4	Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE) Sub Centres	Main Centre, Kerala State Higher Education Council, Thiruvananthapuram
a)	Central Instrumentation Laboratory, TVPM (South)	Government Women’s College, Thiruvananthapuram
b)	Central Instrumentation Laboratory – Kannur (North)	Kannur University, Kannur
c)	Central Research Laboratory (CRL)	Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur
5	Centre for Indigenous People’s Education (CIPE); Institute for Tribal Studies and Research (ITSR) at Chethalayam to be transformed as Centre for Indigenous People	University of Calicut, Kozhikode
6	The Kerala Institute for Gender Equality (KIGE)	Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady
7	Kerala Language Network; Sub Centre – a. Translation Centre, Ponnani; b. Language Technology Mission, Kannur	Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University
8	Kerala Knowledge Consortium Centres	KSHEC
9	Kerala Centre for Analytical Services (KCAS)	CUSAT
10	Kerala Institute of Policy Studies (KIPS)	KSHEC

The Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education

Alongside specialised research institutions, the Vision 2031 document proposes the scaling up of the Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE) as a statewide shared network of research facilities, instruments, and support services. With initial centres already functioning at the Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kannur University’s Payyannur campus, the Network aims to provide end-to-end research support, including seed money schemes for new investigators, patent filing assistance, and maintenance support for sophisticated scientific instruments that smaller institutions cannot independently sustain.

This network approach is particularly significant for a state such as Kerala, where research infrastructure has historically been concentrated in a small number of well-resourced institutions. By creating shared facilities accessible to researchers across the system, the Network democratises access to research resources. It is an expression, in institutional form, of the Council’s abiding commitment to equity, and it demonstrates that the pursuit of research excellence and the promotion of social justice are not competing objectives but deeply complementary ones.

From Policy to Practice: Quality Assurance and Institutional Ranking

The State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC), established in 2018, conducts transparent assessments of higher education institutions based on quality benchmarks, educational goals, and Kerala specific criteria. Its core values of Scientific Temper, Secular Outlook, and Social Inclusivity reflect the distinctive priorities of Kerala’s higher education philosophy, embedding commitments that go beyond technical quality measures to address the character and ethos of institutions themselves.

The Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF), launched in May 2023 and with its 2025 rankings released in March 2026, constitutes the country’s first state level institutional ranking initiative. Modelled on the National Institutional Ranking Framework but customised for Kerala’s specific context and values, it evaluates institutions across five metrics.

Table 1.7 Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework – Five Metrics

No.	Parameter
1	Teaching, Learning and Resources
2	Research Excellence
3	Graduation Outcomes
4	Outreach and Inclusivity
5	Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook

This spatial strategy recognises a fundamental insight: that knowledge economy development benefits from geographic concentration, the creation of clusters where scholars, students, and entrepreneurs can interact, where ideas can crosspollinate across disciplines, and where the critical mass necessary for global visibility and impact can be achieved. Kerala’s vision is to create its own cluster geography, anchored in its four major urban centres and connected by the digital and physical infrastructure of a modern knowledge economy.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite the achievements recorded since 2007, and the ambitious vision articulated for the coming years, translating the knowledge economy aspiration into sustained reality faces substantial challenges. No honest account of KSHEC’s story can omit these difficulties, for it is in acknowledging them with candour that institutions demonstrate the integrity that earns public trust and creates the conditions for genuine improvement.

Resource constraints, faculty shortages, and infrastructural limitations in many institutions continue to impede progress. The gap between better resourced and less resourced institutions, between autonomous colleges in urban centres and affiliated colleges in rural and tribal areas, threatens to widen if it is not actively and systematically addressed. Financial commitment from the state government must keep pace with the ambition of the policy agenda if the vision is to be realised rather than merely proclaimed.

The transition from a teaching centric to a research-oriented model requires social and cultural change as much as structural reform. Research culture cannot be mandated into existence; it must be cultivated over years through sustained investment, appropriate incentives, institutional leadership, and the patient accumulation of scholarly community. What is needed is a genuine methodological revolution in the state’s laboratories, classrooms, and seminar rooms: a shift from the production of routine academic output to rigorous,

curiosity driven inquiry that seeks to make original contributions to human knowledge and to address Kerala's most pressing practical challenges.

The aspiration to attract large numbers of international and out of state students will require improvements in campus infrastructure, residential facilities, international student support services, and academic quality that can compete on genuinely global terms. It will also require that Kerala's higher education institutions develop the capacity to engage with Generation Alpha, the cohort born after 2010, on their own terms, taking seriously the ways in which this generation's cognitive habits and expectations have been shaped by growing up entirely within the screen age and by the emergence of generative artificial intelligence as a pervasive feature of their intellectual environment.

The Council must also navigate the complex federal structure of Indian higher education, coordinating with national regulatory bodies including the UGC and AICTE whilst advocating effectively for Kerala's distinct needs, priorities, and innovative approaches. KSHEC performs a critical mediating function that has acquired renewed significance in the contemporary context: sustaining a balance between autonomy and accountability, safeguarding the conditions for reflective and critical inquiry, and ensuring that higher education remains responsive to society without being reduced to the demands of the present alone.

The Unfolding Vision

The Kerala State Higher Education Council, born of legislative vision in January 2007, enriched and renewed through the Amendment Act of 2018, and led through successive Councils of growing ambition and accomplishment, stands at a pivotal moment in its history. It has evolved from a newly established statutory body into a multifaceted institution at the centre of Kerala's higher education renewal. Its mandate remains as urgent and relevant today as when the Act was first framed.

The vision of transforming Kerala into a knowledge economy connects the Council's diverse initiatives into a coherent narrative of purposeful transformation: quality assurance through the State Assessment and Accreditation Centre, institutional benchmarking through the Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework, research incentivisation through the Kairali Awards, and international engagement through Scholar Connect, the Erudite Programme, and the landmark International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education at CUSAT. Together, these threads weave a story of an institution that takes its mandate seriously and pursues it with growing confidence and sophistication.

The Amendment Act of 2018 is more than a legal refinement. It is a statement of faith: faith that institutions can learn from their experience, that governance can be made simultaneously more democratic and more effective, and that the inclusion of teachers and students as named participants in the educational enterprise is not a gesture but a genuine commitment.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the legislative origins of KSHEC provide the foundational framework, but the mission's realisation depends on sustained commitment, adaptive and responsive implementation, and the collective effort of all stakeholders: government, universities, faculty, students, employers, and the broader civil society of Kerala. The journey from mandate to mission, from legislative text to transformed institutional reality, continues to unfold with growing confidence and purpose. The chapters that follow explore the specific programmes, initiatives, and outcomes through which that transformation is being pursued and progressively achieved.

CHAPTER 2

Quality Assurance: The State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC)

Forging a Distinctive Path in Higher Education Assessment

The preceding chapter traced the legislative vision that animated the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) from its founding in 2007, a conviction that higher education must serve excellence and social justice together and that these dual-purpose demands institutions capable of sustained, expert, and principled oversight. Nowhere is that conviction more concretely expressed than in the Council's decision to bring the State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC) into operational existence in 2018. SAAC represents the quality assurance pillar of KSHEC's broader architecture, the mechanism through which values articulated in statute are translated into measurable and accountable institutional practice.

When one surveys Kerala's higher education landscape today, the need for systematic quality assurance becomes immediately apparent. The state's remarkable achievement in expanding access has created a complex ecosystem. Government colleges with century old legacies operate alongside newly established self-financing institutions. Public funded institutions rooted in community traditions share examination boards with autonomous institutions pursuing curricular innovation. This diversity, while representing the democratic promise of Kerala's educational enterprise, poses profound challenges for quality assurance. Enrolment figures, however impressive, tell us only that students have entered the system, not that they are being transformed by it. As noted in Chapter One, Kerala's Gross Enrolment Ratio of 41.3 per cent reflects admirable breadth, but breadth without depth is insufficient. The central question SAAC was established to answer is whether the educational experience offered across this wide and varied landscape reorganized in the accreditation process.

The question of quality is particularly pressing for first generation learners, those young men and women who are the first in their families to pursue higher education. Their presence in Kerala's classrooms is, in one sense, a triumph of decades of social investment in education. In another sense, it is a challenge that quality assurance frameworks must be specifically designed to address the inclusive nature of Higher Education in the state.

The Legislative Foundation and the Road to 2018

The idea of a state level accreditation body was not an improvisation born of administrative convenience. Section 4(2)(n)(iv) of the KSHEC Act, 2007, had explicitly provided for a ‘State Council for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions’ as one of the six specialised centres the Council was mandated to establish. The provision was present from the beginning; what took over a decade was the convergence of institutional readiness, national regulatory pressure, and policy will to bring it into operational reality. The UGC’s Mandatory Assessment and Accreditation Regulations of 2012 had placed accreditation on every institution’s agenda across the country. The stark reality in Kerala, however, was that by 2018 only a fraction of the state’s higher education institutions had successfully completed NAAC accreditation. Many smaller colleges, particularly those in remote areas serving first-generation learners from marginalised communities, found the national framework daunting. They lacked the administrative infrastructure, data management systems, and quality assurance culture that NAAC assessment demanded. The UGC’s Recognition and Monitoring of Assessment and Accreditation Agencies Regulations of 2018 explicitly acknowledged this capacity gap and opened a formal pathway for state level agencies to bridge it. Kerala, with its relatively developed network of institutions and its long tradition of policy innovation in education, was well positioned to act.

The Executive Body of KSHEC met on 25 September 2018 and the Governing Body on 3 October 2018, each formally resolving to establish SAAC as an integral centre under the Council. SAAC thus became the institutional embodiment of the longstanding legislative mandate. The initiative entered the state’s plan proposal for 2019–20 and was formally endorsed when the Governor addressed the State Legislative Assembly on 25 January 2019.

Table 2.1 SAAC – Timeline of Key Developments

Date	Development
2007	Section 4(2)(n)(iv) of the KSHEC Act explicitly provided for a ‘State Council for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions’ as one of six mandated specialised centres.
2012	UGC Mandatory Assessment and Accreditation Regulations placed accreditation on every institution’s agenda nationally. Kerala institutions begin NAAC preparation in earnest.
2018	UGC Recognition and Monitoring of Assessment and Accreditation Agencies Regulations formally opened a pathway for state level quality agencies.
Sep 2018	KSHEC Executive Body (25 September) formally resolved to establish SAAC. Governing Body (3 October) confirmed the decision.

2019	SAAC included in the state plan proposal for 2019–20. Governor endorsed SAAC in address to the State Legislative Assembly (25 January).
Aug–Sep 2019	District level orientation programmes are held across Kerala. Over 560 HEIs including vice-chancellor’s, principals, and IQAC coordinators.
2023	Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF) formally launched in May 2023, the first state level institutional ranking initiative in India.
Mar 2026	KIRF 2025 Rankings released on 2 March 2026 by Hon. Minister Dr R. Bindu, live streamed on KSHEC’s official YouTube channel.

Shaping SAAC Through Consultation

What followed the institutional decision of October 2018 was a period of academic deliberation unusual in its depth and reach. Between May and July 2019, KSHEC convened a series of state level consultations drawing together vice chancellors, principals, IQAC coordinators, faculty members, and policy experts. These were genuine forums for debate about what a state level framework should prioritise, how it should differ from the national template, and what it would mean for institutions at very different stages of development. Participants brought diverse perspectives rooted in institutional experience. Vice-chancellors understood the regulatory environment and the pressure to demonstrate accountability to government funding. Principals from government colleges brought insights into managing institutions with limited autonomy and ageing infrastructure. Representatives from public funded higher education institutions, highlighted the responsibilities they carried towards communities that had invested their hopes and resources in educational mobility. IQAC coordinators provided crucial practical intelligence about the various aspects of national accreditation framework.

The vision that crystallised from this consultative process is stated with deliberate precision. SAAC seeks to stimulate and promote the horizontal and sustainable development of all higher education institutions of Kerala by employing transparent and methodical means of measurement having global, national, state level, regional, and local bearing, with prime focus on quality, excellence, competency, adaptability, inclusiveness, and social and development linkage. The word ‘horizontal’ in this formulation carries specific weight. SAAC’s ambition is not to identify the best and celebrate them while the rest are left to manage as best they will.

Bridging the Gap for First Generation Learners

To understand the significance of SAAC, one must understand the specific challenge that first-generation learners present to any quality assurance system. Kerala’s success in expanding access to higher education is real and admirable.

The Higher Education Scholarship Scheme introduced by KSHEC in 2009 provides 1,000 meritorious first-year undergraduates annually with financial support throughout their undergraduate and postgraduate years: INR 12,000, 18,000, and 24,000 in successive undergraduate years, and INR 40,000 and 60,000 in postgraduate years. Each year, more than 25,000 students apply, with only about four per cent succeeding. Financial support, however necessary, is only one dimension of what first-generation learners need. A student who is the first in her family to enter a college faces challenges that aggregate enrolment statistics do not capture. Financial pressures may compel her to work while studying, limiting engagement with cocurricular activities that enrich the educational experience.

Institutions that serve large proportions of first-generation learners require particular kinds of support structures: mentoring programmes that connect students with faculty and peers who understand their specific challenges; financial aid systems that address the hidden costs of higher education beyond tuition; career guidance that helps students understand professional opportunities they may never have encountered at home; and academic support that addresses preparation gaps those who need assistance. The question SAAC’s framework puts to every institution is whether it has these structures in place and whether they work.

The Mandate: Five Interlocking Functions

SAAC’s mandate, as set out in the SAAC Manual, comprises five functions that together constitute a coherent and mutually reinforcing approach to quality assurance. Read in sequence, they describe a complete cycle from assessment to improvement, from national readiness to sustained development.

Table 2.2 SAAC Five Interlocking Functions

No.	Function	Description
1	Assessment, Accreditation and Grading	Comprehensive assessment of all institution types: universities, government, aided, autonomous, and self-financing colleges. Multilevel benchmarking against global, national, and state specific parameters simultaneously.
2	Ranking via KIRF	Comparative assessment through the Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework across five parameters, including the unique Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook criterion not found in any other state level ranking in India.
3	NAAC Readiness	Strategic preparation of institutions for national accreditation. Data systems developed for SAAC transfer directly to NAAC. The SAAC Portal explicitly states: ‘Help HEIs align with NAAC standards through state led guidance.’
4	Training and Guidance	Workshops, mentoring, and IQAC capacity building. Training for coordinators, administrators, and faculty in data collection, analysis, and pedagogical innovation.

No.	Function	Description
5	International Sensitisation	Keeping Kerala’s campuses in productive dialogue with global developments in pedagogy, research, and governance, ensuring institutions do not treat quality as a static destination already achieved.

The Assessment Architecture: Ten Criteria, Forty-Six Indicators

SAAC’s full assessment framework comprises ten criteria that together provide a comprehensive evaluation of institutional performance. The first seven align with NAAC’s established framework, ensuring that institutions assessed by SAAC are evaluated against nationally recognised standards. The final three criteria, Social Inclusiveness, Equity and Excellence, and Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook, reflect the state specific dimension that gives SAAC its distinctive character. For affiliated and constituent colleges, the ten criteria are elaborated through forty-six key indicators. Quantitative metrics account for approximately seventy per cent of the total weightage, providing objective benchmarks that can be verified and compared across institutions. Qualitative metrics account for thirty per cent, allowing institutions to demonstrate distinctive practices and contextual achievements that numbers alone cannot capture.

Curricular aspects assessment pays particular attention to programmes’ connection with state development priorities, including skill development initiatives addressing local employment challenges, environmental studies engaging with Kerala’s ecological vulnerabilities, and social science curricula helping students understand the state’s distinctive social history. Infrastructure and learning resources assessment includes attention to physical accessibility for differently abled students, technology infrastructure supporting digital learning initiatives, and library resources reflecting the state’s multilingual character.

Table 2.3 SAAC Assessment Framework – Ten Criteria

No.	Criterion	What is Measured
	CRITERIA 1–7: ALIGNED WITH NAAC NATIONAL FRAMEWORK	
1	Curricular Aspects	Programme alignment with state development priorities; skill development, environmental studies, social science curricula.
2	Teaching, Learning and Evaluation	Pedagogical effectiveness; student-centred approaches; support for learning gaps amongst first-generation learners.
3	Research, Innovations, and Extension	Knowledge production appropriate to institutional level; action research for undergraduate colleges; fundamental research for universities.

No.	Criterion	What is Measured
4	Infrastructure and Learning Resources	Physical accessibility for differently abled students; digital learning infrastructure; multilingual library resources.
5	Student Support and Progression	Support for vulnerable populations; career guidance; tracking of graduate outcomes.
6	Governance, Leadership, and Management	Transparency; democratic governance; institutional planning and leadership quality.
7	Institutional Values and Best Practices	Environmental stewardship; community engagement; best practices documented and sustained.
CRITERIA 8–10: KERALASPECIFIC — UNIQUE TO SAAC		
8	Social Inclusiveness	Social diversity, minority representation, gender distribution, differently abled students, first-generation learners, gender sensitisation programmes. Max 20 points each.
9	Equity and Excellence	Staff qualifications, adversity/deprivation factors, democratic practices, outcome-based education, cost of education. Addresses structural inequality.
10	Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook	Prabudhata community scheme, science popularisation, rational enquiry, constitutional values, secular institutional functioning.

The Three State Specific Core Values: From Principle to Metric

SAAC’s framework incorporates the five core values proposed by NAAC—promoting excellence, pursuing quality enhancement, prioritising institutional values, nurturing innovation, and ensuring accountability—while adding three criteria specific to Kerala’s educational and social context. The significance of this addition deserves emphasis. In most accreditation frameworks, values are stated in preambles and then quietly set aside when actual scoring begins. SAAC’s three additional values are different. They are operationalised into criteria, broken down into key indicators, assigned specific weightages, and assessed by peer teams on site. They carry real consequences for institutional grades. This is the difference between aspiration and accountability.

Social Inclusiveness (Criterion 8)

The eighth criterion examines six key indicators: social diversity, minority and nonminority representation, gender distribution, representation of the differently abled, first-generation learners, and gender sensitisation programmes. Each is accompanied by specific metrics enabling both quantitative and qualitative assessment. The inclusion of first-generation learners as a distinct indicator is amongst the most meaningful features of SAAC’s framework. By requiring institutions to document not merely the

number of first-generation learners they serve but also the concrete support systems they have established, SAAC obliges institutions to treat first-generation participation not as a demographic statistic but as a pedagogical responsibility.

The weightage structure reflects SAAC's commitment to comprehensive inclusiveness. Social diversity, representation of the differently abled, first-generation learners, and gender sensitisation programmes each receive the maximum twenty points. The signal is deliberate: institutions are expected to perform across multiple dimensions of inclusiveness. Gender sensitisation programmes receive specific attention, examining not just formal policies but actual practice, the functioning of complaints committees, the representation of women in governance bodies, and the campus climate for women's full participation.

Equity and Excellence (Criterion 9)

The SAAC initiative articulates the philosophy behind this criterion with unusual clarity: equity in education is reflective of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in higher education, and the success of the education system is determined by providing an environment where the social background and financial status of a student shall not interfere with his or her potential for academic success. This is not a modest claim. It demands that institutions actively overcome the socioeconomic disadvantages students bring into the classroom.

The adversity factors indicator reflects a methodological sophistication too often absent in quality frameworks. Institutions located in remote areas face infrastructure constraints that urban colleges do not encounter irregular internet connectivity, difficulties of transportation, and limited availability of qualified faculty willing to work in isolated locations. SAAC's framework provides for deprivation points that enable fair assessment relative to institutional context, without relaxing substantive standards.

The democratic practices indicator is also notable within Kerala's political culture. SAAC's assessment examines student union formation, staff union activities, and student representation in decision making bodies. Rather than treating student politics as a necessary inconvenience to be minimised, the framework recognises democratic participation as an educational value in its own right, a form of learning that prepares students for citizenship in a democratic society.

Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook (Criterion 10)

The SAAC Manual defines scientific temper as encompassing the spirit of enquiry, the attitude of rationality, the quest for experimentation, and critical thinking, dispositions to be cultivated across all learning, not confined to science faculties. Secular outlook is defined as an open and neutral approach grounded in constitutional morality, with precedence of scientific reason over belief in matters of institutional policy and public conduct. These are not philosophical positions imported from outside the Indian tradition; they are commitments rooted in the fundamental principles of the Republic, embedded in Article 51A(h) of the Constitution itself.

Within this criterion, the Prabudhata community education scheme features as a specific metric. Prabudhata represents one of KSHEC's most innovative programmes, requiring higher education institutions to collaborate with local self-government bodies in extending educational resources and scientific knowledge to the broader community. Through Prabudhata, colleges and universities establish reading rooms in villages, conduct science popularisation programmes, provide technical assistance to local entrepreneurs, and support evidence-based approaches to community development.

Ranking Through KIRF: India's First State Level Institutional Ranking Framework

The Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF), launched in May 2023 and with its 2025 rankings released by Hon. Minister Dr R. Bindu on 2 March 2026, provides a complementary lens to SAAC accreditation. Where accreditation renders an absolute verdict on whether an institution meets quality thresholds, KIRF provides comparative intelligence about relative performance within categories. Together, they give students, parents, and policymakers a fuller picture than either instrument alone can offer. The detailed architecture of KIRF is examined in Chapter Three.

The Assessment Process: Five Carefully Designed Stages

The SAAC assessment process unfolds in five carefully designed stages, each serving both evaluative and developmental purposes. The sequence reflects SAAC's understanding that assessment should strengthen institutions rather than merely judge them.

Table 2.6 Five Stages of SAAC Assessment

Stage	Name	Key Activity
1	Institutional Self Study	Complete AKHES survey (prerequisite). Pay registration fee. Prepare Self Study Report (SSR) across all 46 indicators. Internal stakeholder engagement. Data collection systems established.
2	Data Validation and Student Survey	SAAC validates quantitative claims against supporting documentation. Penalty for selective or optimistic reporting: fees forfeited, assessment suspended. Student satisfaction survey: minimum 10% of student body or 100 students.
3	Peer Team Visit	Two-to-three-day onsite visit. Team of three to four assessors from outside state or university area. Faculty focus groups, student focus groups, facility inspections. Assessors drawn from Academic Volunteer Bank and Scholar Connect pool.
4	Accreditation Decision	KSHEC Academic Advisory Committee reviews peer team recommendations. Ensures consistency across assessments. Authority to adjust recommendations in documented exceptional circumstances. Final grade computed and published.
5	Continuous Quality Improvement Plan	Accredited institutions submit a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan within six months. Addresses identified weaknesses, sets measurable targets, provides realistic timelines. SAAC consultants assist from the Academic Volunteer Bank. Periodic midcycle reviews follow.

The requirement to complete the All-Kerala Higher Education Survey (AKHES) before applying for SAAC accreditation is not an administrative hurdle but a substantive condition. It ensures that the data foundation for evidence-based quality assessment is in place before the accreditation process begins. Many institutions, particularly smaller colleges in remote areas, have never systematically collected data about their own performance. The discipline of preparing a Self-Study Report requires them to establish data collection systems, examine practices that may never have been critically reviewed, and articulate achievements alongside honest identification of weaknesses.

For affiliated and constituent colleges, student satisfaction survey responses are required from at least ten per cent of the student population or one hundred students, whichever is the lesser. The survey covers learning experiences, teaching quality, resource availability, campus environment, and institutional support services. Results carry direct weight in the final grade calculation, ensuring that student perspectives influence assessment in measurable ways.

The Grading Scale: Demanding but Developmental

Final institutional grades are calculated from three weighted components: quantitative metrics (approximately seventy per cent), qualitative metrics from the peer team visit (approximately twenty per cent), and the student satisfaction survey (approximately ten per cent). With a maximum possible score of four, institutions are placed on a seven-point scale from C through to A++. The grading scale is demanding, in that the difference between grades represents genuine distinctions in institutional performance, but it is designed to encourage

aspiration rather than to cement existing inequalities. Institutions that do not meet the threshold receive detailed, structured feedback identifying their specific weaknesses and guidance for addressing them. They become eligible to reapply after six months. The message is one of remediation rather than exclusion.

Table 2.7 SAAC Seven Point Grading Scale

Grade	Score Range	Descriptor
A++	3.51 – 4.00	Exemplary. Worldclass standards across all dimensions.
A+	3.26 – 3.50	Outstanding. Consistently high performance.
A	3.01 – 3.25	Excellent. Meets high quality standards.
B++	2.76 – 3.00	Very Good. Strong foundations with scope for improvement.
B+	2.51 – 2.75	Good. Demonstrates quality commitment.
B	2.01 – 2.50	Satisfactory. Baseline quality; structured improvement required.
C	1.51 – 2.00	Adequate. Significant improvements needed; mentor support provided.
Not Accredited	≤ 1.50	Below threshold. Eligible to reapply after six months with documented remediation plan.

Listening Before Assessing: The District Level Orientation Programmes

Any quality assurance framework succeeds or fails according to its reception by the institutional community it serves. SAAC’s leadership understood from the outset that credibility required genuine engagement with institutional stakeholders and honest acknowledgement of their concerns. In August and September 2019, even before the formal accreditation process began, KSHEC conducted a comprehensive series of six district level orientation programmes across the state. The venues traced a careful geographic arc, representing a carefully balanced mix of government, aided, and autonomous colleges, distributed across Kerala’s geographic and cultural diversity. The venue selection signalled that SAAC’s concern extended equally to all institutional types and all regions.

Dr Ranganath H Annagowda former director, NAAC, Bangalore acted as the Chairperson of the SAAC committee in the State. SAAC is successfully coordinated by Dr Uthara Soman, Research Officer.

Early Outcomes: Four Institutions, Four Contexts

SAAC’s initial cohort of accredited institutions provides compelling evidence about what the framework can identify and reward across Kerala’s institutional

diversity. The four early results offer geographically and institutionally varied data points that illuminate both SAAC’s methodological effectiveness and the distribution of quality across different institutional contexts.

Table 2.9 SAAC First Cohort – Accredited Institutions

Institution	Location	Grade
Farook Training College (CGPA: 3.39)	Kozhikode	A+
Christ College (Autonomous) (CGPA: 3.45)	Irinjalakuda, Thrissur	A+
Sir Syed College (CGPA: 3.30)	Taliparamba, Kannur	A+
Bishop Moore College (CGPA: 3.21)	Mavelikkara	A

These four institutions, different in location, funding model, institutional heritage, and the communities they serve, together establish that SAAC’s framework can identify genuine quality across diverse contexts. They represent not the most prominent names in Kerala’s higher education landscape but solid, community serving institutions that have invested seriously in the practices and values that SAAC rewards. Taken together, they make a compelling case that educational excellence in Kerala is distributed across the system’s full range, not monopolised by its elite.

The first cohort also demonstrates the practical value of SAAC’s state specific criteria. Institutions such as Farook Training College and Sir Syed College, which serve predominantly marginalised communities in regions historically less well resourced, achieved high grades precisely because the framework rewarded social inclusiveness and equity alongside academic performance. A purely input based or research-oriented ranking would have undervalued their distinctive contributions to access and social mobility.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

SAAC’s pilot phase has produced compelling evidence of what systematic quality assurance can achieve when frameworks are well designed and implementation is careful. However, translating this early success into systemwide improvement across hundreds of institutions will require sustained attention to several challenges.

The most immediate scaling challenge involves developing sufficient assessor capacity to handle the volume of institutions seeking accreditation. Credible assessment depends on peer teams that combine disciplinary expertise with assessment methodology, contextual sensitivity with analytical rigour, and institutional empathy with critical independence. As SAAC’s operations expand, ensuring consistency in how criteria are applied across different institutional

contexts, while remaining sensitive to the adversity factors that distinguish institutions in Wayanad from those in Thiruvananthapuram, will be a continuing challenge.

The relationship between SAAC and NAAC accreditation requires active coordination rather than passive assumption of compatibility. The current arrangement will remain sustainable only if institutions experience SAAC as genuinely preparatory rather than duplicative. This requires not only internal design consistency but active engagement with the UGC and NAAC to explore mutual recognition arrangements. Ideally, strong SAAC performance should count towards NAAC accreditation requirements, and SAAC assessment should build institutional capacity that transfers directly to national frameworks.

Building the follow through capacity that makes continuous improvement real rather than ceremonial, the infrastructure of ongoing support, monitoring, and mentoring that sustains quality enhancement between accreditation cycles, represents SAAC's most demanding institutional development challenge. Success requires investment in consultant training, monitoring systems, and the cultivation of long-term relationships with institutions that have been identified that need significant support.

A Distinctive Contribution to Educational Justice

SAAC's ultimate measure of success extends beyond the number of institutions accredited or the distribution of grades awarded. The fundamental question is whether, over successive assessment cycles, more students across Kerala receive educational experiences worthy of their potential, in institutions that are genuinely inclusive, demonstrably equitable, and committed to the scientific temper and secular outlook that a democratic society requires.

What SAAC has already demonstrated is that comprehensive quality frameworks can be designed to honour both rigorous standards and contextual sensitivity. The framework is methodologically coherent, the assessment process is credible, and the institutional response, as evidenced by the enthusiastic attendance at district orientation programmes and the strong performance of diverse institutions in the initial cohort, suggests genuine engagement rather than superficial compliance.

KIRF's addition of the STSO parameter to the ranking framework sends a companion message at the comparative level: that institutional excellence in Kerala is not defined by research output and placement statistics alone, but by the extent to which institutions embody the constitutional values of a plural, rational, and democratic society. Together, SAAC and KIRF constitute the most

sophisticated state level quality assurance framework in India, one that measures what truly matters in a society that has staked its future on the belief that education is the most powerful instrument of social transformation available to it.

CHAPTER 3

The Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF)

India's First State Level Ranking Initiative and Its Evolving Impact

Rankings as a Statement of Values

Rankings in higher education are never neutral instruments. They carry embedded assumptions about what institutions are for, what counts as excellence, and whose achievements deserve recognition. The decision to rank, and more profoundly the decision about how to rank, is always also a decision about values. It was with full awareness of this that the Kerala State Higher Education Council set out to design the Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework, not merely as an administrative exercise in measurement but as a deliberate statement about the kind of higher education system Kerala wished to build.

KIRF is India's first state level institutional ranking framework. This distinction reflects both Kerala's capacity for educational innovation and its longstanding willingness to chart its own course within the national policy landscape. Implemented by the Kerala State Higher Education Council and conducted annually, KIRF invites institutions to register on the dedicated portal at kirf.kshec.org and submit data through an online facility. KSHEC, together with suitably identified partner agencies, undertakes authentication of data wherever necessary, extracts relevant information through software, computes the various metrics, and ranks institutions based on their verified data.

By its second edition, whose results were released on 2 March 2026 by Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu at a press conference in Thrissur, the framework had demonstrated its capacity to evolve. It expanded its participation base by fifteen per cent to 519 institutions, refined its methodology with a new parameter for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, introduced institutional awards to recognise excellence, and firmly established itself as a credible annual fixture in the planning cycles of institutions across Kerala.

The Problem Rankings Were Designed to Solve

To understand KIRF, one must first understand the dissatisfaction from which it arose. The National Institutional Ranking Framework, launched by the Ministry of Education in 2015, represented a genuine advance in the transparency of higher education assessment in India. Its five broad parameters provided a common vocabulary for comparing institutions across a country of extraordinary diversity. Yet as NIRF matured, certain structural limitations became increasingly apparent to institutions and policymakers in states such as Kerala.

The most frequently discussed was the perception parameter, carrying a weightage of ten per cent, which depended on surveys of employers, academics, and professionals. However carefully designed, such surveys are inevitably shaped by existing reputations and networks. Institutions in metropolitan centres and those with longer histories fared predictably better than newer institutions doing genuinely excellent work in less visible regions. It is observed that, peer perception often reflects preexisting reputations rather than actual performance, thereby disadvantaging institutions working in socially inclusive and state specific contexts.

Beyond the perception problem lay a deeper structural one. A national framework, by design, cannot capture what is distinctive and important about educational achievement within a particular state. An institution in Kerala that excelled in serving first generation learners, that had built genuine democratic governance, that extended its knowledge into local communities through Prabudhata, or that had cultivated scientific temper and secular outlook amongst its students, might be doing work of profound significance for Kerala's development without any of it appearing in NIRF's parameters. KIRF was conceived as a response to all three limitations simultaneously. It replaced perception with verifiable data, incorporated Kerala's specific educational priorities, and provided a state level benchmark accessible to all institutions regardless of their national ranking ambitions.

KIRF in a Nutshell

A set of metrics for ranking higher education institutions in Kerala, based on parameters approved by KSHEC, implemented annually, and open to all institutions registered on the KIRF portal ([\[kirf.kshec.org\]](http://kirf.kshec.org) (<https://kirf.kshec.org>)). Data is submitted online, authenticated by KSHEC and partner agencies, and processed through software to compute scores out of 100 across five broad parameter heads.

The architecture of KIRF reflects a careful, consultative design process. Through extended discussions with academics, institutional leaders, and policy experts, KSHEC developed a framework of five broad parameter heads, each carrying a defined weightage, each elaborated through specific sub-metrics, and each contributing to a total score out of one hundred. The Governing Body Meeting of KSHEC held on 21 January 2020 resolved to establish KIRF under the Higher Education Empowerment Implementation Plan. The framework was developed without altering the core qualities of NIRF, whilst deliberately incorporating state specific parameters that NIRF does not measure.

Table 3.1 NIRF vs KIRF – Key Distinctions

NIRF (National Framework)	KIRF (Kerala State Framework)
X Includes a 10% Perception parameter (employer/peer surveys)	✓ No perception parameter — every metric is verifiable from documented evidence
X National norms; cannot capture state specific educational priorities	✓ State specific criteria: First Generation Learners, Scientific Temper, Secular Outlook, Green Technology
X Less accessible for smaller or regionally embedded institutions	✓ Tiered rank bands recognise strong performers at all levels, not only the summit
X Research validation by institutional self-report	✓ Bibliometric data validated by CSIRNISCPR; patents verified via Indian Patent Advanced Search System
X Five parameters including Perception	✓ Five parameters — STSO and Innovation & Entrepreneurship replace Perception
X Does not measure Innovation & Entrepreneurship as a discrete parameter	✓ Dedicated IE sub-metric from KIRF 2025: startups, IEDCs, incubation, funding

Design and Methodology: Five Parameters, One Coherent Vision

Eligibility requires institutions to be registered in the All-Kerala Higher Education Survey (AKHES), the same prerequisite that governs SAAC accreditation, thereby creating a coherent data ecosystem in which participation in one KSHEC process reinforces readiness for another. Rankings are considered only for institutions that have graduated at least three batches of students in fulltime undergraduate or postgraduate programmes. Quantitative metrics account for eighty per cent of the assessment and qualitative metrics for twenty per cent. Data submitted on quantitative metrics is subject to validation; qualitative data is reviewed and verified by the implementing agency.

The five parameters and their sub-metrics are set out in full detail below, encompassing all twenty-one sub-parameters across the two editions of KIRF.

Table 3.2 KIRF Five Parameters – Ranking Weightage

Parameter	Weight
Teaching, Learning & Resources (TLR) – Student Strength, Faculty–Student Ratio, Qualifications, Online Education, eJournals, Finance	30%
Knowledge Dissemination & Research Excellence (KDRE) – Research Productivity, Research Impact, IPR, Consultancy / Startups	30%
Graduation Outcomes (GO) – University Exams, Competitive Entrance Exams, Placement & Higher Studies	20%
Outreach & Inclusivity (OI) – Region Diversity, First Generation Learners, Differently Abled, Social Inclusiveness	10%
Scientific Temper, Secular Outlook & IE (STSO & IE) ★ STATESPECIFIC: STSO, Green Technology, Accreditation, Innovation & Entrepreneurship	10%
80% quantitative metrics · 20% qualitative metrics · Data validated by KSHEC and partner agencies	

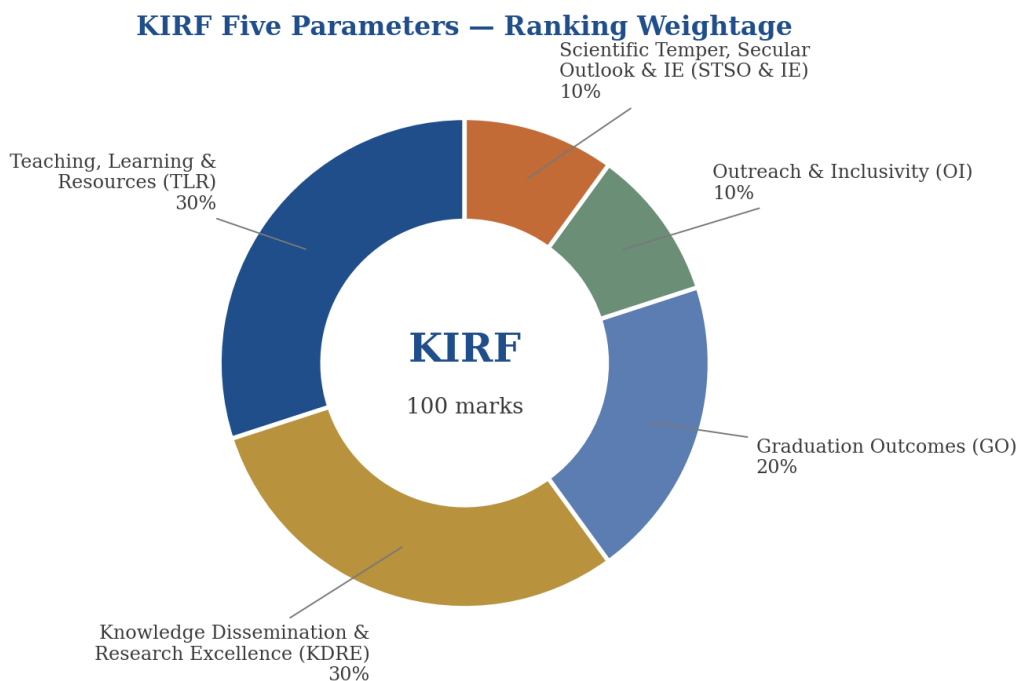


Figure 3.1 KIRF Five Parameters – Ranking Weightage

Table 3.3 KIRF Sub-Parameter Detail (All Five Parameters)

Code	Sub-Parameter	Marks
TLR 1.1	Student Strength (SS)	20
TLR 1.2	Faculty–Student Ratio (FSR)	30
TLR 1.3	Faculty Qualifications & Experience (FQE)	20
TLR 1.4	Online Education (OE)	10
TLR 1.5	eJournal Subscriptions (SEJ)	5
TLR 1.6	Financial Resources Utilisation (FRU)	15
KDRE 2.1	Research Productivity (RP)	35
KDRE 2.2	Research Impact (RI)	35
KDRE 2.3	Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	15
KDRE 2.4	Research Footprints / Consultancy / Startups (RFCS)	15
GO 3.1	University Examinations (GUE)	35
GO 3.2	Competitive Entrance Examinations (GEE)	35
GO 3.3	Placement & Higher Studies (PH)	30
OI 4.1	Region Diversity (RD)	20
OI 4.2	First-Generation Learners (FGL)	10
OI 4.3	Facilities for Differently Able (FDA)	10
OI 4.4	Social Inclusiveness (SI)	60
STSO 5.1	Scientific Temper & Secular Outlook (STSO QI)	30
STSO 5.2	Green Technology Adoption (GT QI)	15
STSO 5.3	Accreditation & Rankings (AR)	35
IE 5.4	Innovation & Entrepreneurship (IE)	20

Teaching, Learning and Resources (TLR) — 30%

Carrying a joint highest weightage of thirty per cent, Teaching, Learning and Resources assesses the core academic environment that institutions provide. The heavy weighting of the faculty–student ratio, which alone carries thirty of the available marks within this parameter, signals a conviction that runs throughout KSHEC’s approach to quality: that institutional excellence is ultimately a human achievement, dependent above all on the availability and qualification of the people who teach. Infrastructure matters and technology matters, but neither can substitute for the teacher who is present, qualified, and genuinely engaged with the intellectual development of students.

For first generation learners, who often enter higher education without the academic preparation and social networks that help more advantaged students direct their own learning, the quality and availability of faculty is the single most

important variable in whether higher education becomes a genuine opportunity or a formal credential without transformative content.

Knowledge Dissemination and Research Excellence (KDRE) — 30%

Also carrying thirty per cent weightage, Knowledge Dissemination and Research Excellence evaluate research culture and output. Research productivity is assessed through publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science over a three-year period; research impact through citation counts; intellectual property through patents filed and secured; and research footprints through consultancy projects, startups, spinoff companies, and collaborations with industry. Bibliometric data are sourced from third party databases rather than from institutional self-reporting. All research related metrics are validated by CSIRNIScPR through manual verification and bibliometric analysis, providing independent scientific credibility that institutional self-governance alone cannot offer.

By according equal weight to teaching and research, KIRF makes a statement that many Indian institutional ranking systems have been reluctant to make that both are essential to institutional excellence, and that the teaching only institution, however effective in the classroom, is operating below its full potential as a site of knowledge creation. This position aligns with KSHEC's Vision 2031, which calls for the transformation of Kerala's higher education system from a teaching centric to a research-oriented ecosystem.

Graduation Outcomes (GO) — 20%

With twenty per cent weightage, Graduation Outcomes measures success in producing capable and competitive graduates. University examination performance, competitive entrance examinations, and placement and higher studies trajectories together shift the focus of quality assessment from inputs towards outputs. An institution might have excellent faculty and modern infrastructure, but the Graduation Outcomes parameter asks whether those advantages translate into demonstrable student achievement.

Outreach and Inclusivity (OI) — 10%

Outreach and Inclusivity, carrying ten per cent of the overall weight, focuses on equity, diversity, and social engagement. The explicit inclusion of first-generation learners as a named sub-metric is a feature of considerable social

significance. Approximately forty-three per cent of Kerala's college students are the first in their families to pursue higher education. KIRF's framework ensures that this presence is not merely noted but rewarded: institutions which serve higher proportions of first-generation learners receive credit for doing so. The dominance of social inclusiveness within this parameter, sixty of the hundred available marks, reflects KIRF's refusal to treat equity as a marginal concern.

Scientific Temper, Secular Outlook and Innovation & Entrepreneurship — 10%

Carrying ten per cent of the total weight, this combined parameter is KIRF's most philosophically distinctive contribution to ranking methodology in India. The KIRF 2025 edition added a fourth sub-metric to this parameter head, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IE), reflecting the state's ambitious knowledge economy agenda and recognising that universities and colleges are not merely sites of knowledge transmission or production, but potential incubators of the entrepreneurial energy that translates knowledge into economic and social value.

The scientific temper and secular outlook sub-metric examine institutional efforts to cultivate scientific reasoning and secular values through outreach and extension activities, including the Prabudhata community education scheme. The adoption of green technology sub-metric serves as evidence of institutional commitment to evidence-based environmental practice. The accreditation metric creates a productive linkage between KIRF ranking and SAAC accreditation: institutions that invest in comprehensive quality assurance through SAAC are rewarded in their KIRF scores.

Kerala's startup ecosystem context gives the IE parameter particular significance. Kerala Startup Mission has supported over 6,400 startups, operates 63 incubators, and has facilitated approximately \$665 million in funding, creating 65,000 jobs and engaging more than 100,000 students annually. Over 530 IEDCs operate across higher education institutions in the state, making it the largest student innovation network in India. By measuring IE within the ranking framework, KIRF creates formal incentives for institutions to develop this infrastructure and to embed entrepreneurial thinking into the curriculum rather than treating it as an extracurricular afterthought.

The inclusion of secular outlook and scientific temper as ranking criteria is a progressive adaptation of ranking systems to regional socio-educational needs. Many ranking frameworks treat the cognitive content of education as the primary measure of quality: what students know, what they can do, how their

credentials fare in the labour market. KIRF insists that what kind of thinkers and creators, students become is equally a dimension of institutional quality.

Table 3.4 Innovation & Entrepreneurship – New KIRF 2025 Sub-Parameter

Sub - Parameter	Details
IE 5.4.1 Student & Alumni Startups	5 marks. Measures the number of officially registered startups launched by students and alumni within the last five years, as well as the percentage of students actively participating in startup initiatives. Reflects the direct entrepreneurial output of the institution's educational environment.
IE 5.4.2 Incubation & Startup Support	5 marks. Assesses the presence and effectiveness of Innovation & Entrepreneurship Development Centres (IEDCs) or incubation facilities within the campus, the survival rate of incubated startups, and funding success.
IE 5.4.3 Faculty Involvement in Industry	5 Marks. Examines the extent to which academic faculty are engaged with startups, consultancy projects, or serve on company boards. This highlights the strength of faculty–industry linkages and the translation of academic expertise into practice.
IE 5.4.4 Student Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	5 Marks. Evaluates the vibrancy of student driven entrepreneurship platforms such as IEDCs, ECells, and business clubs. The number of active forums and their activities reflect the entrepreneurial culture on campus.

Excellence Awards: Recognising Achievement

The second edition of KIRF introduced monetary awards that transformed the framework from a measuring exercise into a recognition programme. The Chief Minister's Award of five lakh rupees for the top ranked university and the Higher Education Minister's Awards of two lakh rupees for first ranked institutions in other categories are modest in financial terms but significant in symbolic and motivational ones. They associate institutional excellence with governmental celebration and create an additional incentive structure that operates alongside the reputational incentives of ranking itself.

The awards signal to the broader academic community, to faculty, to students, and to future applicants, that excellence is publicly recognised and governmentally celebrated, a message that reinforces the quality culture KSHEC has been systematically building.

Table 3.5 KIRF Excellence Awards – Introduced in Edition 2 (2025)

Award	Details
Chief Minister's Award	₹5,00,000. Awarded to the top ranked institution in the University category. KIRF 2025 Recipient: Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) Score: 87.346 / 100.
Higher Education Minister's Awards	₹2,00,000 each. Awarded to first ranked institutions in all other ranking categories: Colleges: Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Ernakulam; Engineering: College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (CET); Management: Rajagiri Business School, Ernakulam; Pharmacy: Nirmala College of Pharmacy, Muvattupuzha; Nursing: MIMS College of Nursing, Malappuram; Teacher Education: Farook Training College, Kozhikode; Agriculture: College of Agriculture, Vellayani.

Data Integrity and the Rejection of Perception Based Scoring

A ranking framework is only as credible as its data. KIRF has invested substantially in the mechanisms of data quality, recognising that the temptation to present favourable figures is powerful when rankings carry reputational and, increasingly, financial consequences. Institutions submit data through the dedicated KIRF portal, with designated nodal officers certifying accuracy. Each institution is required to make its raw data publicly available on its own website, creating an additional layer of accountability: any discrepancy between what an institution reports to KIRF and what it publishes for public scrutiny becomes visible and contestable.

Bibliometric data on publications, citations, and hindex are sourced from Scopus and Web of Science rather than from institutional submissions. Research metrics are validated by CSIRNIScPR. Patent records are verified through the Indian Patent Advanced Search System. The oversight structure in the second edition, with rankings reviewed by a committee chaired by former CSIR Senior Scientist Prof. Gangan Prathap, a bibliometrics expert of national standing, lent the process independent scientific credibility.

Figure 3.6 KIRF Assessment Process – Three Stages

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
STAGE 1 Register & Submit	STAGE 2 Validate & Compute	STAGE 3 Rank & Recognise
Institutions register on the KIRF portal ([kirf.kshec.org] (https://kirf.kshec.org)) through the KSHEC website. Data is uploaded in the prescribed format with supporting Excel documents. The nodal officer certifies accuracy. Raw data must also be published on the institution’s own website.	KSHEC and partner agencies authenticate submitted data. Bibliometrics (publications, citations, hindex) validated by CSIRNIScPR. Patents verified via Indian Patent Advanced Search System. Software computes scores for each sub-parameter and category. Anomalies trigger requests for documentary evidence.	System generated final scores drive rankings by category. Top performers individually ranked; institutions beyond the threshold placed in rank bands. Results released publicly and livestreamed. Excellence Awards presented. Rankings published on the KIRF portal and institutions’ own websites.

One methodological choice deserves particular emphasis: the deliberate exclusion of any perception-based parameter. Where NIRF allocates ten per cent of its score to surveys of employers, academics, and professionals, KIRF relies exclusively on verifiable data. Experts publicly expressed concerns NIRF’s reliance on subjective peer perception. This was precisely the concern that had motivated KIRF’s design from the outset. Kerala had identified the problem and designed around its years before it became the subject of national discussion.

The Tiered Structure: Encouraging Without Demoralising

KIRF adopts a tiered approach to ranking that reflects a considered philosophy about what ranking systems should do. In most categories, the top performers

are individually ranked. Institutions beyond a defined threshold are grouped into rank bands that acknowledge participation and recognise performance without publicly ordering every institution from first to last. In the College category, institutions ranked one to one hundred are individually listed, whilst those between ranks 101 and 150 fall under Rank Band I, and the second edition extended to Band II for institutions ranked beyond that threshold.

This approach ensures that institutions performing creditably but not at the summit receive recognition rather than a discouraging ordinal number. As Vice Chairman Prof. Rajan Gurukkal has observed, the framework aims to promote collaborative peer pressure rather than unhealthy competition, encouraging institutions to identify their weaknesses and build upon their strengths rather than becoming demoralised by a position that, without context, tells them only where they stand rather than what they might become.

Table 3.7 KIRF University Rankings: 2024 vs 2025 Comparison

University	KIRF 2024	KIRF 2025
Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT)	1st · 83.892	1st · 87.346
Mahatma Gandhi University	3rd · 69.628	2nd · 82.288
University of Calicut	5th · 61.065	3rd · 72.858
Kannur University	6th · 60.231	Ranked
Kerala Agricultural University	7th · 58.765	Ranked
Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies	8th · 54.369	Ranked
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit	9th · 47.465	Ranked
National University of Advanced Legal Studies	10th · 38.834	Ranked
University of Kerala	2nd · 76.852	

Growth and Evolution: The Second Edition (KIRF 2025)

The second edition of KIRF, whose results were released on 2 March 2026, demonstrated the framework’s capacity for growth and self-correction in equal measures. All eleven participating universities qualified for ranking, an improvement in breadth over the first edition.

Table 3.8 KIRF 2025 – First ranked Institution in Each Category

Category	Institution	Details
Universities	Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), Kochi	Score: 87.346/100 ★ Chief Minister’s Award (₹5 lakh)

Category	Institution	Details
Arts & Science Colleges	Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Ernakulam	Score: 65.152/100 ★ Minister's Award (₹2 lakh)
Engineering	College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (CET)	Score: 67.884/100 ★ Minister's Award (₹2 lakh)
Management	Rajagiri Business School, Ernakulam	★ Minister's Award · First individual ranking for category
Pharmacy	Nirmala College of Pharmacy, Muvattupuzha	★ Minister's Award · First individual ranking for category
Nursing	MIMS College of Nursing, Malappuram	★ Minister's Award
Teacher Education	Farook Training College, Kozhikode	★ Minister's Award · Consistent with A+ SAAC accreditation
Agriculture & Allied Sectors	College of Agriculture, Vellayani, Thiruvananthapuram	★ Minister's Award

CUSAT retained its position at the top of the university rankings, improving its score to 87.346, an increase of nearly four points, suggesting genuine institutional development rather than mere consistency. Mahatma Gandhi University climbed to second place with 82.288, a significant advance from third in the first edition.

Colleges, Engineering, and Professional Categories

The Arts and Science college category expanded to 275 participants in the second edition, the largest of any category. Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Ernakulam, which had ranked second in the first edition, moved to first place with 65.152 points. St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, followed in second place, and Vimala College, Thrissur, placed third. The movement at the top of the rankings, with institutions jostling within a narrow performance band, indicates genuine annual competition rather than entrenched hierarchy.

In Engineering, 93 institutions participated, with College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (CET) leading with 67.884 points, followed by TKM College of Engineering, Kollam, and Rajagiri School of Engineering and Technology, Ernakulam. The second edition saw Management and Pharmacy achieve sufficient participation for individual rankings for the first time: Rajagiri Business School, Ernakulam, led Management, and Nirmala College of Pharmacy, Muvattupuzha, topped Pharmacy. The gradual expansion of ranked categories between editions is a sign of growing institutional trust in the framework's credibility and utility.

Patterns and Implications: What Two Editions Reveal

Beyond specific rankings, the two editions of KIRF have generated a body of evidence about Kerala’s higher education system that was simply unavailable before the framework existed. Several patterns deserve sustained attention from policymakers, institutional leaders, and researchers.

The participation trajectory, from 449 institutions in 2024 to 519 in 2025, a fifteen per cent increase, suggests that institutional trust in the framework is growing. The willingness of diverse institutions to submit their data to public scrutiny is itself a measure of the quality culture that KSHEC has been working to build.

KIRF and SAAC: Two Lenses on One System

The relationship between KIRF and SAAC is worth examining carefully as a relationship rather than as a set of independent instruments. SAAC asks whether an institution meets defined threshold standards across a comprehensive set of criteria and provides a grade that certifies this. KIRF asks how institutions compare with one another across a set of performance parameters and provides a ranked position that locates each institution within Kerala’s higher education landscape. These are genuinely different and genuinely complementary questions.

Table 3. 9 SAAC and KIRF – Two Lenses on One System

SAAC	KIRF
Absolute verdict: does an institution meet quality thresholds?	Comparative verdict: how does an institution perform relative to peers?
Ten criteria including 3 Kerala specific (Social Inclusiveness, Equity, STSO)	Five parameters; STSO & IE unique to Kerala state level ranking in India
Grade based (A++ to C, or not accredited)	Score based (out of 100); tiered rank bands beyond individual top positions
Peer team site visit; student satisfaction survey; data validation	Online data submission; CSIRNIScPR bibliometric validation; annual cycle
Provides the floor: no institution falls below minimum standards	Provides the gradient: rewards and incentivises improvement above the floor
Identifies weaknesses; requires Continuous Quality Improvement Plan	Creates year on year competition and measurable progress indicators

An institution can hold SAAC accreditation, demonstrating that it meets minimum quality thresholds, whilst ranking modestly in KIRF because its peers are performing better on specific parameters. The Council’s decision to build both frameworks on state specific values, namely social inclusiveness, scientific

temper, secular outlook, equity, and first-generation learner participation, rather than simply adapting national templates, reflects a conviction running through all KSHEC's work: that quality cannot be separated from purpose. An institution that produces excellent graduates but serves only the already privileged has achieved something, but not enough. KIRF and SAAC, in their different ways, insist on both simultaneously.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite its achievements across two editions, KIRF faces challenges that are both methodological and institutional, and addressing them honestly is the precondition for continued credibility.

The qualitative assessment of Scientific Temper and Secular Outlook remains the most difficult component of the framework to assess with rigour. The points allocated on the basis of outreach programmes and student engagement activities are necessarily less precise than citation counts or placement rates. Developing more granular, verifiable indicators for this sub-metric, without losing the genuine qualitative dimension that gives it its distinctive value, is an ongoing methodological task. Similarly, the four subdimensions of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship parameter will require careful calibration as KIRF gathers data across editions. The temptation for institutions to register nominal IEDCs without genuinely embedding innovation into campus culture must be guarded against through robust evidence requirements.

A Model Worth Replicating

KIRF's methodology, relying entirely on verifiable data, incorporating state specific values, and adopting a tiered structure that encourages improvement across the system rather than only at the top, offers a template that other states can adapt rather than having to design from first principles.

Several states have already begun enquiries about KIRF's design. The interest reflects a growing recognition that national frameworks, however well-designed, cannot do the full work of quality assurance in a higher education system as large and federally organised as India's. State level frameworks are not competitors to national ones but complements: they address the local context, the local values, and the local developmental needs that national frameworks necessarily abstract away. In designing and refining KIRF, and in extending its Innovation and Entrepreneurship parameter to connect campus culture with Kerala's thriving startup ecosystem, Kerala has demonstrated what that complementarity can look like in practice.

Academic analysis has characterised KIRF as revolutionising higher education rankings at state level, focusing on quality and inclusivity, incorporating both quantitative metrics and qualitative evaluations for comprehensive assessments, ensuring data accuracy through collaboration between KSHEC and partner agencies, and offering a model for nationwide adoption that promotes transparency and continuous improvement. KIRF activities are effectively coordinated by Higher Education Empowerment Implementation project team led by Dr Deepika Lakshman, Documentation officer; Dr Chitra, Project Assistant; Ms Radhika, Technical Assistant Ms Jeenu.K.S , Technical Assistant; Mr Prashobh P Prakash, Technical Assistant; and Mr Arun S S, Research Assistant.

Benchmarking as a Form of Educational Justice

In the chapters that follow, we examine the other instruments through which KSHEC has pursued its vision of a higher education system that is simultaneously excellent, inclusive, and oriented towards Kerala's broader social and economic development. Taken together, SAAC, KIRF, and the research, scholarship, and international engagement initiatives described in subsequent chapters constitute an institutional architecture that is, in its coherence and ambition, amongst the most significant contributions to Indian higher education governance of the past two decades.

The behavioural changes, the adjustments that ranking frameworks produce in institutional planning and decision making, are, in the end, the most important measure of KIRF's impact. Rankings matter not because the numbers are intrinsically significant, but because the behaviour they shape is. When that behaviour is oriented towards genuinely improving teaching quality, expanding research culture, widening access for first-generation learners, cultivating scientific temper and secular outlook, and building the entrepreneurial energy that transforms knowledge into economic and social value, KIRF is not merely measuring institutional excellence but actively producing it.

PART TWO



Research, Recognition, and Digital Infrastructure

CHAPTER 4

Advancing Scientific Inquiry: Awards, Fellowships, and International Engagement

The Kairali Research Awards, the Chancellor's Award, the CMNPF, and the International Conclave at CUSAT

In Recognition of Excellence

Why Research Recognition Matters

The great universities of the world share a common understanding: teaching and research are not separate undertakings but two wings of the same enterprise. One without the other leaves an institution grounded, capable of transmitting knowledge but not creating it, of reproducing what is already known but not advancing what can be known. For a state with Kerala's aspirations to become a knowledge economy, this understanding is not abstract philosophy but practical urgency. The question is not whether research matters, but how a state with finite resources can cultivate a culture of inquiry, recognise and reward excellence systematically, and invest in the intellectual capital that alone can sustain long-term development.

It was in response to this question that the Government of Kerala, through the Kerala State Higher Education Council, instituted the Kairali Research Awards (2017–18), and subsequently the Chief Minister's NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowships (2021–22). These programmes represent Kerala's most direct investment in the people who do research. They identify excellence where it exists, provide resources to sustain it, and signal clearly that knowledge creation is valued, that inquiry matters, and that those who devote their lives to understanding deserve both honour and support. The International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education, held at Cochin University of Science and Technology in January 2025, added a further dimension to this research ecosystem by bringing global thought to Kerala and projecting the state's ambitions onto the international stage.

This chapter tells about these initiatives: the Chancellor's Award for best performing universities; the Kairali Research Awards, with their architecture of recognition across career stages and disciplinary domains; the CMNPF, with its unique mission of harnessing early career research energy in direct service of Kerala's developmental priorities; and the Conclave that signalled Kerala's

determination to become an international hub of higher learning. It also explores how research recognition connects to the state's growing startup and innovation ecosystem and situates all four programmes within the broader research infrastructure that KSHEC has cultivated.

Translational research aligned with the Rebuild Kerala initiative carries a particular weight and history. The Rebuild Kerala initiative was launched in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods of 2018, which caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of families and damage estimated in the tens of thousands of crores. By designating research aligned with this theme as a priority area for the CMNPF, the Government of Kerala made an explicit statement: academic research is not a luxury separable from the urgent work of reconstruction and recovery, but an integral part of it. A postdoctoral fellow studying coastal erosion dynamic, land use patterns in flood prone districts, or the epidemiology of waterborne disease after inundation is engaged not in abstract inquiry but in work with direct consequences for the lives of Kerala's citizens.

The Chancellor's Award: Driving Excellence Among Universities

The oldest and most financially substantial of KSHEC's recognition, the Chancellor's Award was instituted by the Honourable Governor of Kerala, Shri Justice (Retd) P. Sathasivam, to nurture healthy competition among the state's universities and to encourage them to become vibrant centres of learning. The decisive moment came at the Vice Chancellors' Conference at CUSAT on 27 October 2014, which resolved to institute the award. The Government of Kerala subsequently authorised KSHEC to conduct the selection process, formalised through letter No. B2/171/2018/H.EDN dated 3 August 2018.

The award carried a prize of five crore rupees for the best performing multidisciplinary university and one crore rupees for the best emerging or specialised university, accompanied by a gold-plated trophy and citation. The prize money, designated exclusively for capital expenditure on any major institutional project, can fund a new research facility, a digitisation initiative, or a major infrastructure upgrade that transforms institutional capacity for years.

The Selection Committee was chaired by Bharat Ratna Prof. C.N.R. Rao FRS of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCAR), Bengaluru. The selection was based on five broad components: Knowledge Generation, Knowledge Dissemination, Student Profile and Achievements, Academic Governance, and Social Impact. The first Chancellor's Award was won by the University of Kerala in 2015, and by Mahatma Gandhi University,

Kottayam, in 2016. CUSAT and Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University won the awards for 2019 in the multidisciplinary and specialised categories respectively, and MGU and CUSAT were joint winners in the multidisciplinary category for 2020 while Kerala Agricultural University secured the specialised category award.

Table 4.1 KSHEC Research Recognition – Key Milestones

Period	Milestone
2017–18	Kairali Research Awards instituted by the Government of Kerala (G.O. (Rt) No. 253/2018/H.Edn dated 8 February 2018).
Apr 2018	G.O. (Rt) No. 820/2018/H.Edn designates KSHEC as official secretariat for the Kairali Awards. Selection Committee chaired by Dr P. Balaram, former Director of IISc.
2021–22	CMNPF announced in Kerala State Budget 2021–22. Governed by G.O.(Ms) No. 594/2022/H.Edn (3 December 2022).
Aug 2023	CMNPF award ceremony at Mascot Hotel, Thiruvananthapuram. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan addresses brain drain as the major issue facing the state.
Oct 2024	2022–23 Kairali Research Awards announced. Thirteen individuals recognised across all four categories.
Jan 2025	International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education held at CUSAT, Kochi (14–15 January). Nobel Laureate Ada E. Yonath among distinguished speakers.
Mar 2025	Kairali Award ceremony presided over by Hon. Chief Minister. CM pointed out India’s meagre 0.6 per cent of GDP research investment and affirms state’s commitment.
9–11 Feb 2026	National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo 2026 held at Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram. Hon. HE Minister distributes CMNPF completion certificates. Draft Vision Document on Research and Innovation in Kerala deliberated.

The Chancellor’s Award occupied a different position within KSHEC’s research ecosystem from the Kairali Awards. Where the Kairali awards honour individual scholars, the Chancellor’s Award recognises institutional achievements at the highest level, rewarding the cultures, systems, and leadership that make an entire university a productive and impactful place of learning. The two instruments are genuinely complementary: one measures and rewards the ecosystem, the other the scholars who flourish within it.

The Kairali Research Awards: Genesis and Governing Purpose

The idea of state level research awards was rooted in a recognition that Kerala’s higher education system, despite its many achievements in access and equity, lacked a systematic mechanism for identifying and honouring outstanding research contributions. National awards such as the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize inevitably favour researchers from metropolitan institutions with greater visibility, larger research teams, and more established networks. State level researchers, particularly those in colleges and smaller universities working with

limited infrastructure and heavy teaching loads, often remained invisible to these national selection processes. Their achievements, however significant, went unremarked beyond their immediate institutional circles.

The Government of Kerala moved to address this gap with Government Order (Rt) No. 253/2018/H.Edn, dated 8 February 2018, formally instituting the Kairali Research Awards. The order articulated a clear objective: to recognise and encourage distinguished research scholars and educators in the state, providing both financial grants and public honour for exceptional contributions across academic disciplines. A subsequent order, G.O. (Rt) No. 820/2018/H.Edn dated 24 April 2018, designated KSHEC as the official secretariat for the awards. Applications for the current cycle are invited through [kshec.org/kairaliaward] (<https://kshec.org/kairaliaward>), with the Notification for 2025–26 already published on the KSHEC website.

The Architecture of Recognition: Four Categories, One Continuum

The Kairali Research Awards are not a single honour but a family of recognitions, each designed for a different stage and type of research contribution. This tiered architecture ensures that the awards can honour both lifetime achievement and promising beginnings, covering the full arc of a research career.

Table 4.2 The Kairali Research Awards – Four Categories

Award	Eligible Recipients	Cash Award
Kairali Global Lifetime Achievement Prize	Kerala origin scholars worldwide	₹5,00,000 + citation
Kairali Lifetime Achievement Prize for Researchers	Eminent scholars serving in Kerala institutions	₹2,50,000 + citation
Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram	Faculty of universities or colleges in Kerala	Up to ₹25,00,000 (research project grant)
Kairali Gaveshaka Puraskaram	PhD holders at postdoctoral stage from Kerala universities	₹5,00,000 + travel grant

The Kairali Global Lifetime Achievement Prize

At the apex of the awards stands the Kairali Global Lifetime Achievement Prize, awarded to scholars of Kerala origin working either within India or abroad who have made lifelong contributions to research in their respective fields. The prize carries a cash award of five lakh rupees and a citation. The word ‘Global’ in the title is deliberate and meaningful. It acknowledges that Kerala’s intellectual diaspora comprises scholars who have left the state but carried its educational

heritage with them to institutions around the world. This recognition creates a living relationship between Kerala's higher education system and its most accomplished alumni abroad, a relationship that the Scholar Connect platform, launched in February 2026, seeks to deepen into active mentorship, research collaboration, and intellectual exchange.

The Kairali Lifetime Achievement Prize for Researchers

Alongside the Global Prize stands the Lifetime Achievement Prize for Researchers, awarded to eminent scholars currently serving in institutions within Kerala, with a cash award of two and a half lakh rupees. Where the Global Prize reaches outward to the diaspora, the Lifetime Achievement Prize reaches inward to those who have chosen to build their scholarly lives within the state, contributing to its institutions, mentoring its students, shaping its intellectual culture, and demonstrating through their careers that worldclass research can be conducted without leaving.

The Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram

For researchers at an active midcareer stage, the Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram provides financial support of up to twenty-five lakh rupees for a specific research project. For a faculty member in a college with no dedicated research budget, no institutional research fund, and a teaching load that leaves limited time for inquiry, twenty-five lakh rupees can be genuinely transformative, funding equipment, research assistance, fieldwork, conference attendance, and the other essential components of a substantial project. When research findings lend themselves to commercialisation or patent filing, the patent assistance services provided through the Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE) offer an additional pathway from funded research to startup potential, connecting individual scholarly achievement to Kerala's broader innovation ecosystem.

The Kairali Gaveshaka Puraskaram

At the entry point to an independent research career stands the Kairali Gaveshaka Puraskaram, awarded to PhD holders from recognised universities in Kerala who are continuing innovative research at the postdoctoral stage. The award carries financial support of up to five lakh rupees together with a travel grant. The distinction between the Gaveshana and Gaveshaka categories is subtle but important: the Gaveshana recognises established faculty undertaking research from within a secure institutional position, whilst the Gaveshaka supports postdoctoral researchers at a genuinely precarious juncture, the transition from supervised doctoral work to independent inquiry, when the next

position, the next grant, and the trajectory of an entire career can depend on decisions made within a narrow window of time.

The Selection Process: Rigour in Service of Credibility

An awards programme is only as credible as its selection process. The architects of the Kairali Research Awards designed a process structured to command the confidence of Kerala's academic community. For the 2022–23 cycle, the selection committee was chaired by Prof. P. Balaram, former Director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and included Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, former professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, JNU; Prof. E.D. Jemmis, Professor of Theoretical Chemistry at IISc; and Prof. Satchidanandan, noted writer.

For the Gaveshana and Gaveshaka Puraskarams, evaluation considers both prior research achievements and a research proposal submitted as part of the application. This dual focus ensures that awards recognise both past accomplishment and future potential. For the Lifetime Achievement categories, the evaluation focuses on the sustained impact of a career: publication record, citation impact, mentorship of younger scholars, and the broader influence of the nominee's work on scholarship and on society. KSHEC plays the essential coordinating role throughout, providing the continuity and stability that a periodic awards programme requires.

The Chief Minister's NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowships

If the Kairali Research Awards recognise what has already been achieved, the Chief Minister's NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowships (CMNPF) invest in what is yet to be done, specifically in early career researchers whose work addresses Kerala's pressing developmental challenges. The CMNPF was announced in the Kerala State Budget 2021–22 with a distinctive and purposeful framing: to meet the innovation and development needs of the state through promoting quality research across diverse domains, and to address one of the most consequential problems Kerala faces, namely the loss of talented young researchers to institutions elsewhere in India and abroad.

Chief Minister Sri Pinarayi Vijayan, addressing a CMNPF award ceremony at Mascot Hotel, Thiruvananthapuram, on 21 August 2023, put it plainly: brain drain is the major issue faced by the state; the failure to retain the best minds, to provide research environments and infrastructure comparable to those of developed nations, exacts a heavy cost. The CMNPF, he said, is an attempt to tap brain drain, to demonstrate that Kerala can offer meaningful research

opportunities, adequate financial support, and the intellectual environment that early career researchers require to build independent careers. It is, at once, a fellowship programme and a retention strategy.

Fellowship Structure and Financial Terms

The fellowship is governed by G.O.(Ms) No. 594/2022/H.Edn, dated 3 December 2022. The financial terms are deliberately designed to be competitive, recognising that the value of a researcher to their work grows over the course of a fellowship. A fellow receives a monthly grant of fifty thousand rupees in the first year and one lakh rupees in the second year. Science fellows receive an annual contingency grant of two lakh rupees, and those in the arts and humanities receive fifty thousand rupees. The duration is two years, with extension for a third year possible in exceptional cases subject to an expert committee presentation. Fellows carry out their research in recognised Kerala institutions under the guidance of a qualified mentor.

State government employees and permanent school, college, or university teachers are eligible for deputation if selected, continuing to draw their salary from their parent institution whilst KSHEC pays the honorarium of their substitute. Half yearly progress seminars ensure that research proceeds on track, and a mandatory three-day residential workshop for all selected fellows reinforces the programme’s collective character, building not merely individual researchers but a community of scholars engaged in Kerala’s development. The fellowship has to date supported 176 postdoctoral researchers across Kerala’s institutions.

Table 4.3 Chief Minister’s NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowship – Financial Terms

₹ 50,000 Monthly Fellowship Grant – Year One	₹ 1,00,000 Monthly Fellowship Grant – Year Two	₹ 2,00,000 Annual Contingency for Science and ₹50,000 for Arts & Humanities
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Ten Disciplines and the Rebuild Kerala Theme

The CMNPF is distinctive amongst postdoctoral fellowship programmes in India for the specificity and social purposiveness of its priority research areas. Research supported under the programme spans ten identified disciplines, each corresponding to a dimension of Kerala’s development agenda: Agriculture and Ecological Science; Chemical Science; Climate Change and Geological Studies; Digital Technology and Engineering; Life Science; Medical Science; Commerce and Management Studies; Economic Studies; Political Science, Historical Studies, Humanities and Liberal Arts; and Material Science. Translational research aligned with the Rebuild Kerala Initiative features prominently, an

explicit acknowledgment that academic inquiry is not separate from the urgent work of reconstruction and recovery.

Eligibility, Selection, and Inclusive Design

The CMNPF is open to scholars who are Keralite in origin and hold a PhD in the relevant area, as well as to scholars who are not Keralite by origin but are working on Kerala related research in institutions within the state. MD holders in medicine are also eligible. Scholars working in India and abroad on topics related to Kerala are explicitly included, a provision that treats Kerala's intellectual diaspora as a resource to be engaged rather than a loss to be mourned.

The upper age limit is 45 years, with a five-year relaxation for women and candidates from SC, ST, OBC, and physically challenged categories. For permanent employees or teachers, the upper age limit is 35 years, with the same relaxation. This age differentiated eligibility structure recognises that the research career trajectories of women and candidates from marginalised communities are often interrupted or delayed by social and institutional barriers, and that a fellowship programme designed for equity must be designed around these realities. Selection involves a multidisciplinary expert panel evaluating both the quality and relevance of the research proposal and the candidate's research skills through interview. The academic and administrative divisions of the Council including the Registrar, Finance Officer, Research officers, Research Associates, and the documentation Officer of the Higher Education Empowerment Implementation Project team are actively involved in the entire process of implementation of the CMNPF.

The 2022–23 Kairali Awardees: A Portrait of Research Excellence

Every awards cycle tells a story about the state of research in Kerala's higher education institutions. The 2022–23 cycle, announced in October 2024 and celebrated at a ceremony presided over by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in March 2025, offers a rich portrait of the diversity and depth of research excellence that the state's institutions have nurtured and sustained.

The Kairali Global Lifetime Achievement Prize was awarded to three scholars of Kerala origin whose careers have brought distinction to the state's intellectual heritage: Prof. Chathanath Achuthanunni, a polyglot, Malayalam language writer and translator (arts and humanities); Prof. P.P. Divakaran, an eminent

scientist specialising in theoretical physics (science); and Prof. K.P. Mohanan, an interdisciplinary scholar specialising in cognitive science (social science).

The Kairali Lifetime Achievement Prize for Researchers was awarded to three eminent scholars serving in Kerala: Prof. B. Rajeevan, an eminent writer, literary critic and teacher (arts and humanities); Prof. K.L. Sebastian, a leading theoretical chemist (science); and Prof. Kesavan Veluthat, a renowned historian, epigraphist and scholar in Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam (social science). The award carries a cash prize of ₹2.5 lakh each and a citation.

Table 4.5 Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram – 2022–23 Recipients

Recipient	Institution	Domain
Dr Rakesh R.	Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram	Arts & Humanities
Dr T.S. Preetha	University College, Thiruvananthapuram	Biological Science
Dr Anas S.	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam	Chemical Science
Dr Subodh G.	University of Kerala	Physical Science
Dr Sangeetha K. Prathap	CUSAT	Social Science

Five faculty members from institutions across Kerala received the Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram, each with financial support of up to twenty-five lakh rupees, reflecting a striking diversity of disciplinary approaches, institutional homes, and geographic distribution. The Kairali Gaveshana Puraskaram, for postdoctoral researchers, was awarded to Sameera Shamsudheen of CUSAT in Biological Science, and Sujesh A.S. of Sri C. Achutha Menon Government College, Thrissur, in Physical Science. Kairali Research Award activities are coordinated by Dr Manulal P Ram, Research Officer in the Council.

The International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education: CUSAT, January 2025

Before the National Research Conference of 2026, KSHEC had already demonstrated its commitment to international engagement through a landmark event that placed Kerala at the centre of global higher education discourse. The International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education, held at Cochin University of Science and Technology on 14 and 15 January 2025, was jointly organised by the Department of Higher Education and KSHEC under the theme ‘Shaping Kerala’s Future: International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education’, with the tagline ‘Towards A New Episteme’.

The Conclave was inaugurated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, with Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu presiding, and was addressed by Nobel Laureate Professor Ada E. Yonath, the Israeli crystallographer whose pioneering work on

the structure of the ribosome won her the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2009. Professor Philip G. Altbach of Boston College, a globally recognised authority on international higher education, delivered the keynote address.

The gathering drew around 2,000 delegates from India and abroad. Global universities represented included the National University of Singapore, Southampton University, University of Michigan Flint, Leeds University, Edinburgh University, Lancaster University, and the OECD Paris, alongside numerous Indian institutions. A pre-conclave workshop on ‘Comprehensive Internationalisation’ was held at Rajagiri College of Business Studies, Kakkannad, led by Dr Zacharia Mathew of University of Michigan Flint. An exhibition showcasing innovative products from universities across Kerala, with thirty-three stalls featuring ultrasafe electric vehicles, medical vending machines, waste segregation equipment, and a solar powered coconut drying machine, was inaugurated by the Higher Education Minister on the eve of the Conclave.

The Conclave addressed a comprehensive range of themes central to Kerala’s higher education transformation: the integration of artificial intelligence in higher education, economic sustainability, internationalisation, research excellence, incorporating sustainable development into curricula, aligning higher education with future job opportunities, and the transformation of campus student unions to ensure inclusivity and democracy. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in his inaugural address, articulated a vision of Kerala as an emerging international hub of higher education. He emphasised the state’s commitment to building a people centric knowledge society through a dual strategy of enhancing employability through skills and curriculum reform and advancing knowledge creation through research and innovation. The Chief Minister also signalled the forthcoming launch of a platform to connect Kerala’s academic diaspora with state institutions, an initiative that materialised a year later as Scholar Connect.

Research Recognition, Startups, and the Innovation Ecosystem

The connection between Kerala’s research recognition programmes and its growing innovation and startup ecosystem is not incidental. It is embedded in the design of KSHEC’s quality and ranking frameworks and reflects a settled understanding that knowledge creation and economic development are parts of a single continuum. The Gaveshana Puraskaram provides up to twenty-five lakh rupees for faculty research projects, creating conditions in which laboratory discoveries and social science insights can be developed sufficiently to attract industry interest, generate patent filings, or seed early-stage ventures.

The National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo 2026

The Kairali Research Awards and the CMNPF converged at a larger event in February 2026 that signalled a new level of ambition in Kerala’s research ecosystem: the National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo, held at Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, from 9 to 11 February 2026. Its theme, ‘Research to Impact: Innovation and Translation for Societal Advancement’, captured the direction in which KSHEC’s research agenda has been moving, from the recognition of excellence in individual researchers towards the systematic translation of research outputs into social, technological, and economic benefit.

Table 4.6 National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo 2026

Session / Component	Details
Inaugural Session — 11 February 2026	Inaugurated by Hon. HE Minister Dr R. Bindu. Distribution of CMNPF completion certificates. Release of Draft Vision Document on Research and Innovation in Kerala.
Kerala Higher Education Expo	Universities, colleges, Centres of Excellence, and research institutions displaying research facilities, major projects, patents, innovations, and international collaborations.
Paper Presentations	Selected oral and poster presentations across seven thematic areas: Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Engineering, Science and Technology, Health and Allied Sciences, Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities, Commerce and Management.
International Seminar	‘Global Institutional Shifts and Lessons for Kerala’: seven Kerala origin scholars from the University of Newcastle (Australia), Queen’s University Belfast, University of New Mexico, James Cook University, RIKEN (Japan), Lehigh University, and University of Michigan Flint.
Capacity Workshops	(1) Reimagining undergraduate research through FYUGP; (2) Building research careers through academic writing and networking; (3) Emerging funding models and grant strategies; (4) Generative AI tools for research.
Vision Deliberation	Collective deliberation on the Draft Vision Document on Research and Innovation in Kerala, a long-term roadmap for globally relevant and socially impactful research, developed through open consultation.

Hon. HE Minister Dr R. Bindu in the inaugural session on 11 February 2026, distributed the Chief Minister’s NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowships and launched the Scholar Connect platform. In her address, she highlighted that the state had spent nearly twenty-five crore rupees on the CMNPF alone and had earmarked an annual sum of seventy-five lakh rupees for the Kairali Research Awards. Despite financial pressures, the government had prioritised these investments to ensure that Kerala’s researchers could gain international recognition.

The Broader Research Ecosystem in Context

Neither the Kairali Research Awards, the Chancellor's Award, the CMNPF, nor the International Conclave exists in isolation. They are components of a research ecosystem that KSHEC has been developing with growing ambition and sophistication, an ecosystem whose parts are designed to reinforce one another, addressing different stages of the research career and different dimensions of the infrastructure that research requires.

Challenges and the Path Forward

For all their significance, the Kairali Research Awards and the CMNPF cannot resolve all the structural challenges that constrain research in Kerala's higher education system. Acknowledging these challenges honestly is a precondition for address them.

The first challenge is scale. The 2022–23 cycle recognised thirteen individuals across all four Kairali categories, each eminently deserving but together representing a tiny fraction of the research active faculty across Kerala's hundreds of higher education institutions. Though the CMNPF has supported 176 fellowships since its inception, the demand from Kerala's early career research community is substantially larger. Expanding coverage requires resources, but as the research ecosystem around these programmes develops, the case for expansion becomes correspondingly stronger.

The second challenge concerns interdisciplinarity. Several of the 2022–23 Gaveshana and Gaveshaka projects already cross disciplinary boundaries: Dr Sujesh's nano-fluidics project applies machine learning to biomedical problems; Dr Rakesh's cricket project draws simultaneously on cultural studies, media analysis, and historical inquiry. A framework that requires these projects to be classified within a single domain necessarily obscures the intellectual ambition that makes them significant.

The third challenge is sustainability. Both programmes depend on budgetary allocation.

A Statement of Faith in the Future

The Kairali Research Awards, the Chief Minister's NavaKerala Postdoctoral Fellowships, and the International Conclave on NextGen Higher Education are, in the end, a statement of faith that research and scholars' matter.

The CMNPF's Rebuild Kerala theme is perhaps the most eloquent expression of this faith. To classify research on climate resilience, coastal erosion, public health after inundation, and land use in flood prone zones as a priority area for postdoctoral fellowships is to say that the university belongs to the floodplain as much as to the seminar room.: that the researcher's obligation extends to the community.

CHAPTER 5

Digital Governance and Transformation: The K-REAP Project

Modernising University Administration in the Digital Age

The Paradox of the Undigitised University

There is a peculiar irony in the way universities, those great engines of knowledge creation, discovery, and critical inquiry, so often face the challenge in the modernisation of their own administration. Institutions that have trained successive generations of engineers, computer scientists, and information technology professionals have frequently continued to manage their own affairs through systems that their graduates would regard as basic. Paper based registers, departmental silos, and incompatible software built by different vendors at different times for different purposes, with no capacity to communicate with one another and no mechanism to generate the integrated, real-time intelligence that modern governance demands, have persisted well into the digital age.

Kerala's higher education institutions were no exception. Each had, over the decades, computerised some operations: an admissions database here, an examination management system there. But these efforts had accumulated into a patchwork of incompatible systems that created as many problems as they solved. All universities had computerised some of their core operations, yet such efforts had been largely fragmented, with each department having separate systems and software. This had paved the way for data duplication, redundancy, and a lack of any mechanism to streamline data flow. The Higher Education Reforms Commission and the Commission for Examination Reforms, both appointed by the Government of Kerala in 2022 highlighted this problem. Most universities in the state, their reports found, were functioning in a conventional manner. Their recommendation was unambiguous. Kerala needed a comprehensive e-governance system for the effective management of its universities and colleges.

Kerala Resources for Education Administration and Planning, known as K-REAP and accessible at [kreap.co.in] (<https://kreap.co.in>), is an ambitious, technically sophisticated, and steadily expanding digital transformation initiative that is reshaping the academic and administrative landscape of

Kerala's universities. Entrusted to KSHEC for implementation across all universities and colleges in the state, the project reflects a conviction that animates all KSHEC's work: that the quality of higher education depends not only on what happens in classrooms and research laboratories, but on the systems and processes that sustain those spaces. Dr. Sudheendran K, Research Officer, Reforms Implementation Cell is the coordinator of the state level PMU of K-REP

KSHEC's Institutional Home: The Unnatha Vidya Bhavan

Before examining the digital architecture that K-REAP represents, it is worth establishing the physical institutional context from which KSHEC coordinates this transformation. The Council currently operates from the Science and Technology Museum Campus, Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram, shared with other government bodies. The constraints of this arrangement have long limited KSHEC's ability to house its expanding staff, host training programmes, and maintain the operational capacity that a multi-university digital transformation demands. The Unnatha Vidya Bhavan project addresses this directly. Shri Pinarayi Vijayan ,the Hon. Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the Unnath Vidya Bhavan in a function presided over by Dr R Bindu , the Hon. Higher Education Minster in July 2022 and the Government of Kerala accorded administrative sanction for Phase 1 construction, with a budget allocation of Rs 634.21 lakhs. The work progressing in the KSSTM Campus was entrusted to ULCCS on non-PMC basis.

The Unnatha Vidya Bhavan, when complete, will provide KSHEC with the dedicated infrastructure that its role as the state's principal higher education co-ordinating body requires. It is a recognition, in bricks and mortar, of the same conviction that K-REAP embodies in software: that institutional ambition must be supported by institutional capacity, and that the quality of the systems through which a body does its work shapes the quality of the outcomes it can deliver.

The Vision: One Integrated System for Every Institution

K-REAP's ambition is stated plainly in its founding documentation: to provide robust, unified, and integrated technology solutions addressing the governance and administrative needs of all universities and colleges in Kerala. The key word is 'unified.' The project is not about giving each university a better version of what it already had. It is about bringing all of them onto a common platform, a shared digital infrastructure through which data flows seamlessly across

functions and institutions, and through which the state can, for the first time, see its higher education system whole. Details of over five lakh students were to be fed into the system within the first year, with the entire process to be completed in three years.

Table 5.2 The Student’s Academic Lifecycle on K-REAP

Admission and Registration	Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Examinations and Graduation
Online application submission; Admission confirmation; Student profile creation; Course registration; Timetabling	Attendance recording; Internal assessment submission; Faculty class schedules; Student engagement tracking; LMS integration	Examination registration; Hall ticket generation; Results publication; Degree certificate issuance; ABC credit recording; DigiLocker integration

For teaching staff, a dedicated teacher portal consolidates all work-related functions: leave applications, salary statements, class schedules, student lists, internal mark submission, and administrative correspondence. Processes that once required visits to multiple offices become routine transactions completed through an interface available at any time from any connected device. For administrators and policymakers, the transformation is even more profound. Realtime dashboards provide aggregate views of enrolment, examination performance, and institutional activity across the entire system. Resource allocation decisions can be based on current evidence rather than outdated surveys. The state can see, for the first time, a coherent picture of what is happening in its higher education institutions.

The Architecture: Built for Scale, Designed for Sovereignty

The platform is implemented using a Software as a Service model that enables centralised management, rapid scalability, and uniform policy compliance whilst allowing institutional level customisation. The Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) Kerala, a Government of Kerala company, served as the implementing agency, with a dedicated Project Development Unit established for platform configuration and customisation. Contact for K-REAP enquiries is routed through kreap@asapkerala.gov.in.

Data Ownership: A Core Principle

Perhaps the most important architectural principle of K-REAP is the clear, unambiguous assignment of data ownership. All academic and administrative data within the system belongs exclusively to the implementing university or higher education institution. Upon completion of each academic or operational cycle, the complete dataset is securely archived and an encrypted copy provided to the respective university for permanent custody. Universities are also supplied with tools to decrypt and access archived data through authorised

channels. This policy protects against data loss from system failures or cyberattacks, ensures that historical records remain accessible for verification and analysis, and reinforces institutional ownership by placing a copy of the data physically within the university’s custody, independent of any vendor relationship.

Interoperability: Connecting to the National Ecosystem

K-REAP is designed as an interoperable system capable of securely integrating with other digital infrastructures. It supports encrypted, authenticated API based data exchange with DigiLocker, the National Academic Depository, and the Academic Bank of Credits, the national system through which students can accumulate, store, and transfer academic credits across institutions and programmes. The Academic Bank of Credits integration is particularly significant in the context of Kerala’s Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, which allows students to exit the programme at different points with different credentials and to re-enter if they choose.

The Rollout: Six Universities and Growing

Implementation has proceeded in carefully sequenced phases, beginning with pilot institutions where the platform could be refined against real world usage before broader deployment. By early 2026, seven universities and Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam, are operational on the KREAP platform as reflected on the official portal at [kreap.co.in] (<https://kreap.co.in>), with Campuslive instances active alongside individual colleges and autonomous institutions onboarding in parallel.

Table 5.3 K-REAP University Rollout – Status as at Early 2026

University	Phase	Key Milestone
Kannur University	Pilot	31,000+ students across 100+ affiliated colleges; multiple FYUGP semesters completed on platform. First university in Kerala to implement KREAP and declare results of four-year undergraduate programmes.
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS)	Pilot	Multiple examination cycles completed on platform; critical test of specialised Sanskrit instruction workflows.
Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University (TEMU)	Pilot	Multiple examination cycles completed; Malayalam medium instruction pathways fully supported.
University of Calicut	Phase 1	2,000+ students onboarded; integrated UG and PG programmes; three semesters completed on platform.

University	Phase	Key Milestone
University of Kerala	Phase 2	18,000 students registered in 22 days across 120+ affiliated colleges; first semester exams initiated. Portal live at [kerala.kreap.co.in] (https://kerala.kreap.co.in).
Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam	Phase 2	2,500+ UG and PG students onboarded on platform.
Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed University	Phase 2	Implementation commenced; performing arts administration workflows being configured.

Pilot Phase: Proving the Model

Kannur University, Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, and Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, served as the initial pilot institutions. These three universities, chosen for a combination of institutional readiness, geographic distribution, and disciplinary diversity, served as testbeds, generating feedback that informed both software development and implementation methodology. The results at Kannur University have been the most extensively documented. More than thirty-one thousand students have been onboarded across over one hundred affiliated colleges, with multiple semesters of the Four-year Undergraduate Programme successfully conducted through the platform. Kannur University became the first in the state to implement K-REAP and declare results of four-year undergraduate programmes, with a grievance redressal committee consisting of K-REAP officials and information technology staff set up centrally to address concerns. This scale of operation, encompassing admission, registration, timetabling, examination, and results publication for tens of thousands of students, has demonstrated that the platform is not merely technically coherent but operationally robust under real world conditions.

Phase Two: Scaling Across the System

The most striking demonstration of the platform’s operational robustness came at the University of Kerala, one of the state’s oldest and most complex institutions. Implementation commenced on 11 November 2024, and within twenty-two days, examination registration was completed for approximately eighteen thousand students across more than one hundred and twenty affiliated colleges, with first semester examinations already initiated. This rapid onboarding, achieved in a matter of weeks at a university managing thousands of affiliated students across a wide geographic spread, provides the clearest evidence yet that KREAP is not merely theoretically sound but operationally capable in demanding environments. At Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam, over

twenty-five hundred students across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have been onboarded.

Governance: Structures for a Complex Enterprise

A project of K-REAP’s complexity, spanning multiple universities, hundreds of affiliated colleges, tens of thousands of students, and a technology implementation that touches every function of academic administration, requires equally sophisticated governance structures. KSHEC functions as the nodal coordinating body responsible for policy formulation, academic standardisation, interuniversity coordination, capacity building, and overall monitoring. It has constituted a dedicated Project Management Unit at the state level to supervise implementation and drive the process standardisation that a unified platform requires.

ASAP Kerala, the implementation agency, is responsible for platform deployment, module development, integration, security, and maintenance. Each participating university has been directed to establish its own University Project Monitoring Unit headed by a designated K-REAP Nodal Officer, with functional representatives from admissions, examinations, and general administration. The KSHEC governing body, meeting in July 2025, reviewed the implementation of K-REAP at Kannur, Sanskrit, Malayalam, and Calicut Universities and decided to expedite the transition of other universities to the K-REAP software system.

The Broader Digital Ecosystem: KREAP in Context

KREAP is the largest and most complex component of KSHEC’s digital transformation agenda, but it is not the only one. A cluster of complementary initiatives together constitutes an ecosystem of digital enablement that is reshaping how knowledge is created, accessed, and administered across Kerala’s higher education institutions.

Table 5.4 KSHEC Digital Ecosystem – Complementary Initiatives

Initiative	Focus	Status / Scale
KREAP ([kreap.co.in] (https://kreap.co.in))	Integrated university administration	8 universities; 50,000+ students; pilot and Phase 2 rollout ongoing
Online Digital Repository	eLearning resources for UG and PG students	3,000+ resources; Rs 1 crore enhancement fund; expansion to 5,000+ planned
DIGICOL / Let’s Go Digital	Moodle LMS training and deployment for colleges	110 colleges trained; server infrastructure provisioned; expansion ongoing

Initiative	Focus	Status / Scale
KALNET / eJournal Consortium	Research journal access for all institutions	Major international databases accessible statewide; democratising scholarly access
Internship Kerala Portal (internshipkerala.org)	FYUGP internship and placement coordination	Launched October 2025; developed with KELTRON; 641 colleges joined; over 80,000 opportunities identified
Scholar Connect (scholarconnect.kshec.org)	Diaspora academic networking and mentorship	Launched February 2026; over 100 scholars from 20 countries onboarded
Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)	Cross institutional credit portability for FYUGP	API integrated with KREAP; enables flexible entry and exit pathways

The Online Digital Repository

In parallel with K-REAP’s transformation of administrative processes, KSHEC’s Online Digital Repository was developed during the COVID19 pandemic, providing students with ready access to study materials for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across state universities. The portal currently hosts over three thousand e-resources, including direct materials and links to video content spanning a wide range of academic subjects. Developed in collaboration with faculty from government colleges, aided colleges, and universities, the repository has been built by the same people who teach the subjects it covers, a quality control mechanism that distinguishes it from generic content aggregation. KSHEC has committed Rs one crore to enhance the portal further, with plans to expand the repository to over five thousand resources and to enable real-time access to faculty led courses as they are delivered.

DIGICOL and the Let’s Go Digital Initiative

The DIGICOL initiative, launched in collaboration with the Digital University of Kerala under the banner ‘Let’s Go Digital’, addresses the challenge of ensuring that colleges across the state have both the infrastructure and the faculty capacity to use Learning Management Systems effectively. The Government of Kerala’s Higher Education Department issued orders to implement the ‘Let’s Go Digital’ project in July 2021, forming a special committee for the purpose. The Moodle LMS, an opensource platform with a large international user base, is the platform of choice, and hands on online training is offered both as institutional training for entire college faculties and as individual sessions for interested faculty members. As of early 2026, more than 110 higher education institutions have received institutional level training through KSHEC’s Moodle LMS training programmes. Once a college’s faculty have been trained, server infrastructure is established to support their Moodle installation, with the Digital University of Kerala providing hosting whilst plans are developed for a dedicated data centre.

The LMS supports assignment submission and grading, discussion forums, quizzes and assessments, video conferencing integration, and the tracking of student engagement, allowing faculty to identify students at risk before they fall too far behind.

Kerala's 'Let's Go Digital' Initiative (Excerpts from NITI Aayog Report-2025)

In 2021, the Government of Kerala initiated digital learning initiatives through ICT based teaching methods, providing Moodle based LMS training to faculty and digital course content to students to bridge the digital divide. It introduced schemes like 'Let's Go Digital' through the Kerala State Higher Education Council and the Digital University of Kerala, offering training on model-based development and content creation. Furthermore, through the Digital project, customised syllabi were provided to colleges trained under this scheme, promoting a tech driven pedagogical approach.

KALNET and the eJournal Consortium

Research requires access to literature, and literature increasingly means electronic journals. KSHEC's eJournal Consortium, the Kerala Academic Library Network (KALNET), provides access across the state to major international academic databases and journal collections that universities could never afford to subscribe to independently. In March 2024, Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu inaugurated a workshop on the functioning of the ejournal consortium, jointly organised by KSHEC, Elsevier, and Knimbus publications. The minister described the consortium as one of the state's flagship programmes, in line with the vision of the government in modernising the higher education sector and enhancing research productivity of state universities. This democratisation of knowledge access is a precondition for the research culture that KSHEC is working to build. KALNET partners include the University of Kerala, Cochin University of Science and Technology, and the University of Calicut, among others, offering a single, unified catalogue to search for items across the collections of different academic libraries in the state. The full architecture of KALNET is examined in Chapter Seven.

The Internship Kerala Portal

A further dimension of KSHEC's digital ecosystem is the Internship Kerala portal at [internshipkerala.org] (<https://internshipkerala.org>), inaugurated by Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu on 22 October 2025, which coordinates internship and placement opportunities for students enrolled in the Four-year Undergraduate Programme. Developed in collaboration with KELTRON, a Government of Kerala undertaking with deep expertise in electronics and

information technology, the portal connects FYUGP students with a network of participating industries, including government departments, public sector units, and private companies relevant to their fields of study. The portal is envisaged as an integrated digital ecosystem connecting students, universities, and industries across the state, providing separate logins for each stakeholder group. Industries can directly post their internship opportunities; students can search and apply for them; and institutions can monitor, certify, and upload the results of the internship. By April 2026, 641 colleges had joined the unified internship portal, and over 80,000 active internship opportunities had been identified for students in more than twenty skill sectors including information technology, electronics, automobile, logistics, and banking. The FYUGP mandates practical training as a core component for academic credit: internship is not optional but curricular. The Internship Kerala portal provides the infrastructure to ensure that this responsibility can be met at scale, across the full diversity of programmes and institutions that the FYUGP encompasses.

Scholar Connect

In February 2026, KSHEC launched the Scholar Connect platform at [scholarconnect.kshec.org] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org>), a pioneering digital initiative to link Kerala's higher education institutions with its global academic diaspora. The platform, the first of its kind in India, provides an integrated space for mentorship, guest lectures, visiting professorships, curriculum development, joint research, and long-term institutional partnerships. Over one hundred diaspora scholars from twenty countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have registered as mentors, representing institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Melbourne, Nanyang Technological University, and Delft University of Technology. The platform seeks to transform Kerala's globally dispersed academic diaspora into a structured and sustained contributor to the state's higher education ecosystem. By early March 2026, Sri Lanka had already expressed interest in studying Kerala's diaspora driven academic engagement model, with a knowledge sharing session held between Sri Lankan officials and KSHEC. The full evolution of Scholar Connect is detailed in Chapter Six.

PART THREE



Internationalisation and Knowledge Sharing

CHAPTER 6

Global Academic Integration: Study in Kerala and Scholar Connect

Engaging the World, Reclaiming the Diaspora

The Paradox of Inward Invisibility

The Kerala State Higher Education Council, in pursuit of its overarching mandate to build a knowledge economy adopt two complementary strategies. The first, Study in Kerala, was designed to attract international students to the state's campuses. The second was a diaspora engagement programme that evolved from the Brain Gain initiative of 2022 into the Scholar Connect platform formally launched on 11 February 2026. Together, these initiatives represent a coherent, multiyear effort to transform Kerala's relationship with the global academic community, from passive exporter of talent to active participant in the world's intellectual life, and from a marginal presence to a meaningful contributor in the conversations that shape higher education internationally.

Study in Kerala: Building the Infrastructure of International Attraction

The Study in Kerala initiative, anchored in recommendations from the 2022 Commission for Reforms in Higher Education, represents a coordinated state level effort to position Kerala as a credible and attractive destination for international students. Kerala's attractions as a study destination are considerable: strong economic infrastructure, a distinguished academic diaspora, excellent digital connectivity, a multicultural society, a remarkable geographical location and natural beauty, a well-developed education sector, and strong air connectivity. The foundational insight, however, was that these advantages do not advertise themselves. Attracting international students requires active effort: understanding what students from different educational cultures seek in a study destination, communicating Kerala's specific strengths to global audiences who have no existing reason to consider it, and building the institutional infrastructure that turns initial enrolment into positive experience and positive advocacy.

KSHEC's dedicated internationalisation unit, led by Eldho Mathew, Program Officer, has been central to this growth, working with universities to streamline

admission procedures, building the state's presence in international higher education discussions, and preparing a comprehensive strategy report for the government outlining steps to improve Kerala's international student numbers and overall student experience. At the time of writing, twenty-nine colleges and seven universities from Kerala participate in the national Study in India programme, establishing them within the broader national framework for higher education internationalisation. The University of Kerala has introduced a fulltime two-year postgraduate course in Russian language, expanding its range of international racing programmes.

The Broader Institutional Picture

Kerala's improved national and global rankings have contributed substantially to this growing international visibility. The improved rankings serve as a door opener that makes prospective students consider Kerala in the first place. The institutional data above suggests that this door is now opening at a meaningful pace.

Partnerships and the Pedagogy of Internationalisation

Attracting international students at scale requires that Kerala's institutions be visibly embedded in global networks: that their faculty have international collaborators, their curricula reflect global perspectives, and their partnerships with foreign universities create the institutional level relationships that generate regular student flows. KSHEC has pursued this dimension of internationalisation through strategic partnerships designed not merely as symbolic gestures but as working frameworks for genuine academic exchange.

The University of Michigan Flint Partnership

The most significant of KSHEC's international partnerships to date is the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the University of Michigan Flint, which was KSHEC's first international MoU. Despite geopolitical pressures affecting American universities' international engagement more broadly, Michigan Flint has reaffirmed its commitment to the relationship. Dr Zachariah Mathew, a professor at Michigan Flint who is himself a member of Kerala's academic diaspora and a Brain Gain Faculty Award recipient, has been a key architect of this relationship, embodying in his own career the connection between Study in Kerala and diaspora engagement.

In February 2025, a workshop organised in Thiruvananthapuram focused on strategies for attracting international students to Kerala's universities. Led by

experts from Michigan Flint, including professors Sapna Thwaite and Zachariah Mathew, alongside Prof. Matthew A. Witenstein from the University of Dayton, the workshop explored the full range of internationalisation mechanisms: short-term courses, exchange programmes, faculty led study tours, summer schools, and the longer-term development of dual degree programmes and joint articulation arrangements. A parallel strand focused on Collaborative Online International Learning, the pedagogical approach in which students at partner institutions in different countries work together on joint academic projects in virtual environments. In March 2025, the first COIL workshop for Kerala faculty was conducted online, with twenty faculty members from universities and colleges across the state participating.

The most durable output of the Michigan Flint partnership to date is the Practitioner’s Handbook on Internationalisation, being prepared in collaboration with Dr Mathew. Rather than allowing each institution to reinvent the wheel independently, the handbook provides a common framework that any institution can adapt to its own context and resources. Prof. Rajan Gurukkal, KSHEC Vice Chairman, has confirmed that discussions with several other international universities for similar partnerships are under way.

The University of Hyderabad MoU: A Landmark for Research Collaboration

On 22 January 2026, KSHEC formalised one of its most consequential domestic partnerships when it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Hyderabad (UoH), a premier central university holding the prestigious Institution of Eminence status. The formal signing ceremony was held on 12 February 2026 in Thiruvananthapuram at the office of Dr R. Bindu, Honourable Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice, Government of Kerala, lending the partnership the full weight of governmental endorsement.

Table 6.4 University of Hyderabad MoU – Key Dimensions

Dimension	Detail
Date	Administratively formalised 22 January 2026; formal signing ceremony 12 February 2026
Concluded Through	KNRSHE: Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KSHEC Centre of Excellence)
UoH Representatives	Prof. M. Ghanashyam Krishna (Director, IoE) and Prof. Samrat L. Sabat (Director, R&D Cell)
Research Access	Kerala institutions gain access to UoH’s high end research infrastructure and the ANRFPAIR project ecosystem
Faculty Development	Structured professional development programmes for faculty and researchers across Kerala’s universities

Dimension	Detail
Student Internships	UG and PG students from Kerala institutions access UoH’s laboratories and research centres
Joint Research	Coauthored publications, shared grant applications, and sustained collaborative projects
Significance	First interstate MoU of its kind, establishing a focused platform for research collaboration between a central university and a state higher education council

The partnership is designed around four principal areas of collaboration, all of which respond directly to gaps that have constrained research in Kerala’s universities. First, it aims to enhance access to high end research facilities at University of Hyderabad (UoH), a university that, by virtue of its Institution of Eminence status, has invested substantially in research infrastructure that most state universities in Kerala are still working to develop. Second, it prioritises the professional development of faculty and researchers in Kerala through structured exposure to UoH’s research culture, methodologies, and international networks. Third, it provides internship opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students from Kerala’s institutions at University of Hyderabad (UoH’s) laboratories and research centres, giving the next generation of Kerala trained scholars direct experience of research at the national frontier. Fourth, it facilitates joint academic and research projects that will generate coauthored publications, shared grant applications, and sustained intellectual collaboration.

Hon. HE Minister Dr R. Bindu, speaking at the ceremony, emphasised that such partnerships are essential for enhancing academic standards across the state, ensuring that researchers have the tools and networks they need to conduct globally competitive research. She expressed appreciation for the University of Hyderabad’s decision to partner with KSHEC, recognising that the collaboration addressed a genuine need on Kerala’s side whilst also offering University of Hyderabad (UoH) a meaningful opportunity to extend its research influence across state boundaries.

From Brain Gain to Scholar Connect: The Evolution of Diaspora Engagement

If Study in Kerala looks outward, drawing the world towards Kerala, the diaspora engagement strand looks in the other direction, seeking to reconnect the state with its scattered intellectual community. The story begins with a methodologically careful undertaking: a research project commissioned by KSHEC and funded by the State Planning Board to build, for the first time, a

comprehensive database of Keralite scholars working in academic and research institutions around the world.

The Database Project: Mapping a Dispersed Community

The proposal was approved with administrative sanction under order No. 130/2021/EVN/SPB dated 22 February 2021, with funding of three lakh rupees from the State Planning Board. KSHEC's Research Officer Dr Manulal P. Ram was designated Principal Investigator for the project entitled 'Building up Database of the Keralite Academic Diaspora around the Globe.' The objectives were ambitious: to identify scholars across all domains including scientists, social scientists, humanities experts, medical professionals, technologists, and specialists in emerging fields working anywhere in the world; to build direct communication channels with them; to identify those who could contribute to curriculum development; and to create a resource that could inform government policy on higher education.

The methodology combined systematic direct search, combing the faculty directories of universities and research institutions globally and drawing on databases such as VIDWAN maintained by the INFLIBNET Centre, with an indirect approach that leveraged existing networks. Correspondence was initiated with Malayali academic associations and professional organisations abroad, student organisations, and individual scholars identified through internet searches. A dedicated registration portal was developed, allowing scholars to enter their own information and to recommend others. The project was significantly disrupted by the Covid19 pandemic, converting what had been planned as a partly in person effort into an entirely online exercise. By the project's conclusion, seventy-one scholars had registered through the portal, with contact details collected for more than one hundred and fifty additional individuals and information gathered about approximately three hundred Malayali organisations and associations around the world.

The Brain Gain Programme: From Database to Action

The official launch of Brain Gain by the Department of Higher Education in January 2022 marked the transition from research to action. The programme was designed around a model of brain circulation rather than the binary alternatives of brain drain or brain gain. It did not ask scholars to leave their positions abroad, for that would be unrealistic and, for many, undesirable, since their continued engagement with global research networks was precisely the asset the programme sought to leverage. Instead, it invited them for defined shorter-term engagements: as short-term teachers, as parttime collaborators on research projects, as co-supervisors of doctoral students, as contributors to

curriculum revision, and as advisors on educational policy. This model drew on international experience demonstrating that the most durable diaspora contributions to home country institutions come not from dramatic gestures of return but from structured, repeated engagements of manageable duration and clearly defined purpose.

Scholar Connect: Kerala Becomes a National First

By 2025, the Brain Gain programme had demonstrated both the potential of diaspora engagement and the limitations of its existing infrastructure. The database remained modest in scale; the matching process between scholars and institutions was partly manual; and the platform could not offer the range of engagement modes that different scholars and institutions required. A new, purpose-built digital platform was needed.

Scholar Connect, formally launched on 11 February 2026 by Hon. HE Minister Dr R. Bindu at the Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, on the valedictory occasion of the National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo.

Kerala became the first state in India to institutionalise diaspora academic engagement through a dedicated digital platform. This is not merely a point of chronological precedence but a statement of institutional seriousness, of a government that has moved beyond proclamations about leveraging its diaspora to building the infrastructure that makes such leverage possible and sustainable.

Purpose, Vision, and Mission

Scholar Connect's purpose is to actively involve Kerala's global diaspora in advancing the state's higher education through collaboration and knowledge exchange. Its vision is to make Kerala a globally connected academic hub and to position the state as a model of educational excellence, innovation, and societal progress. Its mission is to leverage technology for impactful academic interaction and to build sustainable pathways for educational advancement. These three formulations move from action to aspiration to method: they tell both diaspora scholars and host institutions exactly what the platform exists to do and why it matters.

The Platform's Architecture of Engagement

Scholar Connect is designed around a principle of structured, demand driven collaboration, supporting two distinct user communities: diaspora scholars and host faculty or institutions in Kerala, with mechanisms for each to find, connect with, and engage the other in ways suited to their specific needs.

For diaspora scholars, the platform offers a structured registration process at [scholarconnect.kshec.org/scholar/login] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/scholar/login>), through which they create academic profiles capturing credentials, areas of expertise, institutional affiliation, and availability preferences. They can indicate willingness to participate in guest lectures and presentations, choosing between in person visits and virtual participation, and schedule engagements through an integrated calendar. The Virtual Mentorship module, one of the platform’s most innovative features, enables host faculty to define their specific needs in structured terms: syllabus benchmarking, grant writing assistance, research methodology guidance, curriculum development, or internationalisation strategy. Registered diaspora scholars can then respond according to their expertise and availability, creating a demand driven matching process focused on specific, achievable impacts rather than generalised goodwill.

For institutions in Kerala, faculty members register with verified academic credentials at [scholarconnect.kshec.org/faculty/login] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/faculty/login>) and complete institutional verification via KSHEC. They then access a growing, verified database of diaspora scholars filterable by area of expertise, geographic location, and availability; send targeted invitations for specific academic collaborations; coordinate visit schedules through the platform; and maintain records of past engagements, building institutional relationships with scholars over time rather than treating each interaction as a one-off event.

Strategic guidance is provided by two advisory boards. An international Advisory Board drawn from eminent academic leaders at institutions in the United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, Canada, Australia, and France provides global perspective and legitimacy. A local Administrative Advisory Board based in Kerala ensures that the platform’s development and operation remain aligned with the state’s educational policies and institutional needs. This dual governance structure ensures that Scholar Connect is neither a purely global initiative disconnected from local realities nor a parochial programme that fails to reflect global academic standards.

Table 6.5 Scholar Connect – The Fourteen Modes of Engagement

InPerson Engagements	Virtual Formats	Sustained Collaboration
Keynote Address, Guest Lecture, Research Symposium, Career Development Seminar, Panel Discussion, Roundtable Workshop, Meet the Expert Session	Virtual Lecture, Virtual Research Webinar, Virtual Symposium, Virtual Mentorship	Research Collaboration, Curriculum Development

The platform’s Ongoing Initiatives page at [scholarconnect.kshec.org/currentpriorities]

(<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/current%E2%80%91priorities>) lists fourteen distinct modes through which diaspora scholars can contribute to Kerala’s higher education institutions. These range from in person engagements to virtual formats and sustained collaborative work. This breadth of engagement modes is deliberate: it ensures that scholars with different availability, different disciplinary profiles, and different institutional contexts can all find a meaningful way to contribute. A distinguished academic with limited availability may deliver a single keynote; an early career researcher in a compatible time zone may commit to a semester long virtual mentorship. Both contributions matter, and the platform is designed to accommodate both.

Countries of Registration

Within weeks of its formal launch, Scholar Connect had registered diaspora scholars from twenty countries. The geographical reach of early registrations speaks to the global spread of Kerala’s academic diaspora, including scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Singapore, Japan, and the Middle East. This initial registration represents not the full extent of the Keralite academic diaspora, which is vastly larger, but a community of scholars who have actively chosen to declare their interest in contributing to Kerala’s higher education. It is a foundation on which the platform can build through sustained outreach, word-of-mouth advocacy amongst diaspora academic communities, and the demonstration effect of successful engagements.

Scholar Endorsements: The Voice of the Diaspora

The Scholar Connect homepage features endorsements from distinguished diaspora academics that reveal how the platform is perceived from the outside. Five voices, drawn from institutions across three continents, speak to both its potential and its reception in the global academic community.

Table 6.6 Scholar Connect – Voices from the Global Academic Diaspora

Scholar and Institution	Perspective
Prof. Mohan Jacob, James Cook University, Australia	Describes Scholar Connect as a timely platform that transforms diaspora goodwill into measurable outcomes by linking Kerala’s universities with global scholars for mentorship, collaborative research, and industry ready innovation.
Prof. Kapil Chalil Madathil, Clemson University, USA	Identifies the platform as a bold step in the right direction, harnessing the power of Kerala’s academic diaspora, collaboration, and networks to drive discoveries, foster innovation, and deliver use inspired research.

Scholar and Institution	Perspective
Prof. Chindu Sreedharan, Bournemouth University, UK	Notes that Scholar Connect links Kerala’s universities with its global diaspora, fostering collaborations that enrich research and teaching and placing Kerala’s ideas in global conversations that shape the world far beyond its borders.
Prof. Krishna R. Salin, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand	Describes it as having immense potential to infuse cutting edge expertise, enrich curricula, and advance research across Kerala’s institutions.
Prof. Deepa Oommen, Minnesota State University, Mankato, USA	Sees it as an opportunity for scholars of the Malayali diaspora to give back to the state, a formulation that captures the spirit of mutual benefit at the heart of the platform.

Scholar Connect in Action: Engagements Across Kerala

The platform’s Scholar Engagements page at [scholarconnect.kshec.org/scholarenagements] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/scholar%E2%80%91engagements>) documents the real-world collaborations that Scholar Connect has already catalysed. The table below summarises the engagements visible on the platform as of early 2026.

Table 6.7 Documented Scholar Engagements – Scholar Connect (Early 2026)

Scholar	Home Institution	Host in Kerala
Prof. Deepak P.	Queen’s University Belfast, UK	KSHEC
Dr Zachariah Mathew	University of Michigan Flint, USA	Govt. College of Nursing, Thiruvananthapuram
Dr Zachariah Mathew	University of Michigan Flint, USA	Mar Theophilus Training College
Prof. Vinod Namboodiri	Lehigh University, USA	KSHEC
Prof. Mohan Jacob	James Cook University, Australia	Mahatma Gandhi University
Prof. Mohan Jacob	James Cook University, Australia	CUSAT
Sarada B.S.	RIKEN, Japan	MBCET

The Focus Areas and the Road Ahead

The Scholar Connect platform has defined five broad focus areas for collaboration, reflecting both Kerala’s developmental needs and the aspirations of its knowledge economy vision. These are drawn from [scholarconnect.kshec.org/priorityareas] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/priority%E2%80%91areas>).

Table 6.8 Scholar Connect – Five Focus Areas for Collaboration

#	Focus Area	What It Involves
1	Science, Technology and Innovation	Research and applications in emerging technologies to address societal needs and drive Kerala’s knowledge economy
2	Transnational Networks in Education	Lasting partnerships across borders for collaborative research and sustained academic exchange between institutions
3	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Understanding	Fostering intercultural competence and global perspectives amongst students across Kerala’s campuses
4	Education Transformation and Future Skills	Curriculum innovation, digital pedagogy, teacher development, and knowledge economy skills for the 21st century
5	Greener and More Resilient Future	Climate action, biodiversity conservation, disaster preparedness, and sustainable development initiatives

These five areas are not narrow technical categories but broad intellectual commitments. They invite diaspora scholars from every discipline to find their place within them: the climate scientist who contributes to the fifth area, the curriculum specialist who enriches the fourth, the cross-cultural educator who advances the third, the institution builder who strengthens the second, and the applied technologist who drives the first. The breadth of the focus areas is a deliberate signal of welcome.

The platform’s Looking Ahead section at [scholarconnect.kshec.org/futurepriorities] (<https://scholarconnect.kshec.org/future%E2%80%91priorities>) reveals a rich pipeline of planned initiatives: the Global Engagement Fellowship, International Research Seed Grants, Global Classrooms, Professional Development Programmes led by diaspora experts, Diaspora Climate Action Partnerships, Knowledge Transfer and Industry Linkages, and Entrepreneurial Guidance Programmes. Together, these planned initiatives constitute an ambitious roadmap for institutionalising diaspora engagement in forms that are increasingly specific, measurable, and consequential.

The Erudite Programme: Excellence at the Apex

Alongside Study in Kerala and Scholar Connect sits a third pillar of global engagement that has been part of KSHEC’s internationalisation architecture since the Council’s early years: the Erudite Scholar in Residence Programme. Where Scholar Connect engages Kerala’s diaspora in sustained, structured contribution, the Erudite Programme reaches for the very highest levels of global scholarship, bringing distinguished academics, including Nobel Laureates, to

Kerala's universities for defined periods of residency. Its visiting scholars are not necessarily of Kerala origin; they are figures of international distinction whose presence enriches any academic environment they inhabit.

For students and early career researchers in Kerala's universities, the opportunity to engage directly with world leaders in their fields, to attend their lectures, to participate in seminars they conduct, and to ask questions and receive the kind of intellectual challenge that only genuine eminence can provide, can be genuinely transformative. For faculty, the collaboration opportunities that Erudite visits create can initiate research partnerships that outlast the visit itself.

The Erudite Programme and Scholar Connect are designed for different purposes that together constitute a comprehensive approach to international academic engagement. Scholar Connect builds the broad, sustained connection between Kerala's institutions and its diaspora. The Erudite Programme provides the periodic moments of exceptional intellectual encounter that inspire, catalyse, and signal excellence at the highest level. The two programmes complement each other and together express a vision of internationalisation that goes beyond student recruitment into the transformation of institutional culture itself. Mr Dileep M, Research Associate has been coordinating the activities related to Erudite programme.

International Recognition: Sri Lanka Looks to Kerala's Model

The most striking early validation of Scholar Connect's significance came within weeks of its February 2026 launch, from an entirely unexpected source. On 6 March 2026, KSHEC announced that the Sri Lankan government had indicated interest in understanding and potentially adapting Kerala's diaspora engagement model, and that a knowledge sharing session had been held online between officials of the Presidential Secretariat of Sri Lanka and KSHEC representatives.

The discussions covered the operational architecture of Scholar Connect: how diaspora scholars are identified and engaged, the legal and institutional considerations that govern such a programme, the due diligence processes that ensure the platform maintains quality and integrity, and the digital infrastructure required to make it function at scale. Sri Lanka's interest is not incidental: the country faces a diaspora engagement challenge with structural similarities to Kerala's, having sent large numbers of highly educated professionals abroad whilst struggling to leverage that intellectual resource for domestic higher education development.

That a national government sought to learn from a state level programme within weeks of its launch reflects several things simultaneously. It reflects the seriousness of Scholar Connect's design, demonstrating that it is not a promotional exercise but an operationally sophisticated platform with a replicable architecture. It reflects Kerala's growing reputation as a site of educational innovation in a region where higher education systems are urgently seeking models for quality improvement. And it reflects the broader significance of what KSHEC has built: not merely an instrument for Kerala's own development but a contribution to the collective intelligence about how diaspora resources can be harnessed for higher education improvement across the developing world.

Challenges and the Longer View

The trajectory of Study in Kerala and Scholar Connect over the past five years demonstrates that deliberate, sustained institutional effort can overcome structural inertia and produce real results.

In absolute terms, Kerala's international student numbers remain modest compared to states and countries with established reputations as study destinations. A state with Kerala's educational depth and global connectivity should, in the medium term, be hosting tens of thousands of international students. Getting there requires more partnerships with foreign universities, particularly in Africa and West Asia where Kerala has historical connections; stronger institutional capacity at colleges as well as universities to provide quality international student support; and a sustained presence at international education fairs and in the digital spaces where prospective students make their decisions.

For Scholar Connect, the growth challenge is different but equally real. The platform's architecture is sound, but the database of registered diaspora scholars needs to grow substantially to realise its potential. The Keralite academic diaspora extends into hundreds of institutions across dozens of countries; twenty countries of registration within weeks of launch is a promising start, but it represents a fraction of what is possible. The conversion of registered scholars into active engagements is a distinct challenge. Registration expresses interest; engagement requires specific matching of scholar expertise with institutional need, logistical coordination, and the willingness of institutions to invest the time required to make a visiting engagement productive. Building that capacity through KSHEC's training and guidance, through the dissemination of good practice from institutions that have managed successful engagements, and

through the gradual accumulation of positive experience, is a task that will occupy the programme for years.

From Asymmetry to Partnership

What Study in Kerala, Brain Gain, and Scholar Connect together represent is the recognition that a knowledge economy cannot be built in isolation: that knowledge is, by its nature, a global enterprise, and that a state which fails to engage with the world's intellectual life will progressively fall behind those that do. Kerala has a head start in the raw material of global engagement: a vast, accomplished, and globally dispersed diaspora that retains deep emotional and cultural connections to its home state; a higher education system with genuine strengths in teaching and growing strengths in research; and a government that has made higher education transformation a political priority.

The Scholar Connect platform is the most sophisticated and scalable instrument yet developed to translate that head start into sustained institutional benefit. Its five focus areas map the intellectual terrain; its fourteen modes of engagement provide the operational pathways; its dual advisory boards offer global and local perspective; and its planned future programmes chart the trajectory of deepening ambition. That Sri Lanka's Presidential Secretariat came asking within weeks of the launch suggests that Kerala has created something not merely useful to itself but of wider significance.

CHAPTER 7

Resource Sharing and Collaborative Networks: KALNET

Uniting Kerala's Academic Libraries in a Single Digital Embrace

The Paradox of Accumulated Wealth

Knowledge has always been unequally distributed. There is a particular frustration, however, in knowing that the materials one needs exist somewhere in the same state, in a library within a few hours' journey, yet remain effectively inaccessible because no mechanism exists to locate them, request them, or connect across institutional boundaries. For decades, this was the ordinary experience of students and researchers across Kerala's higher education system. The intellectual wealth of eleven universities and 147 libraries, accumulated over generations and painstakingly catalogued and preserved, sat distributed across the length and breadth of the state in isolated collections that had no common language, no shared address, and no way of presenting themselves to anyone with a question to ask.

The Kerala Academic Library Network, KALNET, is KSHEC's answer to that. Launched in February 2021 and continuously expanded since, KALNET provides a unified search interface for the library resources of eleven universities and 147 libraries, making more than fifteen lakh titles searchable through a single access point at [kalnet.kshec.kerala.gov] (<https://kalnet.kshec.kerala.gov>).in. This chapter traces the conception and implementation of KALNET, examines the technical architecture and opensource philosophy that make it work, explores what it makes possible for the students, researchers, and institutions that use it, and situates it within the broader digital ecosystem that KSHEC has been building as a coherent infrastructure for higher education in Kerala.

The Problem KALNET Was Built to Solve

To understand KALNET's significance, it is necessary to dwell for a moment on the state of Kerala's academic libraries before its creation, not because the situation was one of failure or neglect, but precisely because it was one of accumulated wealth that could not be accessed. Each of the state's universities had, over decades, invested seriously in its library. The University of Kerala,

founded in 1937, had built collections encompassing rare manuscripts and historical documents of incalculable scholarly value alongside its extensive holdings in the arts, sciences, and social disciplines. Cochin University of Science and Technology had developed a worldclass collection in science, technology, and engineering. Kerala Agricultural University's libraries held materials on agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and rural development that could not be found in comparable depth elsewhere in the region.

The specialised universities, among them Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, the National University of Advanced Legal Studies, and Kannur University and Mahatma Gandhi University with their extensive affiliated networks, each held collections shaped by their distinctive academic missions, gathering materials that no general university would have had reason to acquire. Taken together, these collections formed a scholarly resource of extraordinary breadth.

The catalogues were maintained in different systems with different standards. A researcher who knew that the University of Calicut might hold relevant materials on North Kerala's cultural history would have to navigate Calicut's catalogue separately, using its own interface, its own search conventions, and its own subject headings, and then repeat the exercise for each of the other universities whose holdings might also be relevant. Many researchers simply did not bother. The transaction costs of cross institutional discovery were so high that it was rational, if intellectually impoverishing, to confine one's searching to whatever was available locally.

This produced consequences that ramified through the system. Research was constrained by local availability rather than shaped by scholarly need. Students in smaller affiliated colleges with modest collections were significantly disadvantaged relative to students at the university main campuses, not because the state had failed to invest in libraries, but because the investment was invisible to them. Expensive materials were duplicated across institutions when acquisitions librarians had no way of knowing what comparable institutions already held. Unique materials went undiscovered by the researchers for whom they would have been invaluable. The whole was substantially greater than the sum of its parts, yet there was no mechanism for accessing the whole. This was the problem KALNET was designed to solve.

One Search Interface, Fifteen Lakh Titles

The vision KSHEC articulated for KALNET was at once simple to state and technically demanding to realise: a single search interface that would allow any user, whether student, researcher, or faculty member, at any institution or at home, to discover and locate materials held in any academic library across Kerala. A search that would reach, simultaneously, the holdings of all eleven partner universities and their 147 constituent libraries, returning unified, relevance ranked results regardless of which institution held the items found.

The ambition was not merely technical but philosophical. KALNET was conceived as an expression of a conviction about how educational resources should function in a public system: that the state’s investment in library collections should serve the whole academic community, not just the patrons of each individual institution; that the boundaries between institutions, always administrative rather than intellectual, should become as permeable as possible to scholarly inquiry; and that the quality of a student’s education should not be determined by which institution they happen to attend, but enriched by the collective resources available to the system as a whole.

KALNET operates at two levels: university libraries and libraries of affiliated colleges, with plans to include other higher education institutions in the future as the network expands in its second phase. Two foundational commitments shaped the design. The first was to opensource technology, a principled choice that eliminated vendor dependency, enabled community driven development, and made the platform financially sustainable at state scale. The second was to collaboration, recognising that a library network is built not by one institution but by the sustained collective commitment of all partner institutions to contributing accurate, well-maintained data to the shared catalogue.

The Technical Architecture: VuFind, Koha, and the Open Source Foundation

KALNET’s technical foundations rest on two internationally proven opensource platforms, each chosen to serve a distinct function in the network’s architecture. Together, they form the engine that makes fifteen lakh titles searchable from a single interface.

Table 7.1 KALNET Technical Architecture – VuFind and Koha

VuFind (Discovery Layer)	Koha (Library Management)
Discovery Layer	Library Management
Origin: Developed by Villanova University, USA; adopted by academic library networks worldwide	Origin: World’s most widely adopted opensource library management system; used in 100+ countries

VuFind (Discovery Layer)	Koha (Library Management)
Function: Unified discovery layer sitting on top of existing catalogues, indexing all holdings into one searchable interface	Function: Full library management: cataloguing, acquisitions, circulation, patron management, serials control, and reporting
User Experience: Autocompletion, spelling suggestions, faceted filtering by author, subject, language, date, format, and institution	Target Users: Affiliated colleges with limited budgets and small collections; eliminates licensing cost barriers to network participation
Virtual Browse: Shows materials adjacent to any given item, enabling serendipitous discovery similar to browsing a physical shelf	Deployment: Centrally hosted instances reduce technical burden on individual colleges, removing the need for specialist onsite IT staff

VuFind: Discovery at Scale

At the heart of KALNET’s discovery service lies VuFind, an opensource discovery layer developed by Villanova University in the United States and adopted by library networks around the world. VuFind is designed to sit on top of existing library catalogues and management systems, harvesting their data, indexing it in a unified search engine, and providing users with an interface that combines the comprehensiveness of a professional catalogue with the accessibility of a modern search engine.

Koha: The Platform for College Level Expansion

For the second phase of KALNET, which will link the libraries of affiliated colleges to the network, Koha is the enabling technology. Kerala’s affiliated colleges number in the hundreds; many operate with limited budgets, small collections, and minimal dedicated technical staff. The licensing costs of proprietary library management systems are simply out of reach for most of them. Koha, being freely available and actively maintained by an international community of developers and library professionals, eliminates that barrier. Centrally hosted instances can further reduce the technical burden on individual colleges, allowing them to participate in KALNET without requiring specialist IT personnel on site.

What KALNET Makes Discoverable: The Full Spectrum

The fifteen lakh titles currently indexed in KALNET represent not a single type of material but the full spectrum of scholarly resources that universities acquire and preserve. Books form the core of the collection: rare volumes, scholarly monographs, reference works, standard texts, and the accumulated acquisitions of decades across every discipline represented in Kerala’s universities. A single search now surfaces items that previously would have required separate visits to eleven different catalogues, and that many researchers simply never found

because they had neither the time nor the knowledge to conduct such searches systematically.

PhD theses and postgraduate dissertations represent one of KALNET’s most distinctive contributions to research discovery. Doctoral dissertations are among the most valuable and most difficult to locate of all scholarly materials. They represent years of original research, often addressing highly specific questions that lie outside the scope of published literature. They are typically held only in the university library where the degree was awarded, physically inaccessible to researchers at other institutions, and rarely indexed in commercial databases. KALNET makes these materials discoverable across the state system for the first time, enabling researchers to identify what doctoral work has already been done in their field, regardless of which university produced it.

Table 7.2 Material Types Discoverable Through KALNET

Material Type	Research Significance
Books and Monographs	Core scholarly holdings spanning all disciplines, including rare and out of print works previously invisible to cross institutional searches
Journals and Periodicals	Physical journal runs held across partner libraries, complementing the electronic access provided by the eJournal Consortium
PhD Theses and Dissertations	Original doctoral research across Kerala’s universities, previously accessible only at the awarding institution; KALNET makes these findable across the whole state system for the first time
Rare Manuscripts	Irreplaceable historical and cultural materials, including works in Sanskrit, Malayalam, and other regional traditions held by specialised institutions
DAISY Digital Talking Books	Accessible audio materials for users with print disabilities, giving operational expression to KALNET’s commitment to inclusive access
Institutional Reports (Grey Literature)	Data, analysis, and primary research published outside formal commercial channels, often addressing region-specific questions of direct relevance to Kerala

The inclusion of DAISY Digital Talking Books makes KALNET’s commitment to inclusive access visible and operational. This is an expression of the same values of equity that have characterised Kerala’s approach to education across its modern history: that access to knowledge must not be conditioned on sensory or physical ability, and that the digital transformation of library services must serve all users, not merely the majority. Rare manuscripts, including those in Sanskrit, Malayalam, and other regional traditions held by specialised institutions such as Sree Sankaracharya University and Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, add a dimension of cultural heritage preservation that places KALNET in a broader civilisational context, safeguarding the intellectual inheritance of many centuries.

The Online Digital Repository: Knowledge Produced Within Kerala

Where KALNET and the eJournal Consortium connect Kerala’s researchers to knowledge produced elsewhere, the Online Digital Repository, launched by KSHEC and accessible through its eLearning portal at [elearning.kshec.org] (<https://elearning.kshec.org>), makes available knowledge produced within Kerala itself. The repository currently hosts over three thousand electronic resources, including more than five hundred direct materials and links to video content, developed in collaboration with faculty from government colleges, aided colleges, and universities. Covering the full range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, it provides students with study materials created by the same academic community that teaches them, rooted in Kerala’s specific curriculum frameworks and pedagogical traditions.

KSHEC has committed Rs one crore to expand the repository substantially, with plans for over five thousand resources, enhanced digital content development training for faculty, financial support for high quality electronic content creation, and integration of advanced digital pedagogy tools. In its expanded form, the repository will complement KALNET in a way that mirrors the relationship between production and discovery: KALNET helps researchers find what others have produced; the repository helps students access what their own faculty have created for them.

KALNET and DELNET: A National Tradition, a State Level Innovation

KALNET did not emerge from a vacuum. It was modelled, in significant part, on DELNET, the Developing Library Network, which has been linking libraries across India since 1988 and today connects thousands of libraries in more than forty countries. DELNET established the foundational principles that KALNET has adapted for the state level: unified discovery across multiple collections, cooperative cataloguing to reduce duplication of effort, interlibrary lending to enable physical access to materials discovered in other institutions’ collections, and the use of shared standards to make cross institutional searching possible.

Table 7.3 KALNET and DELNET – Similarities and Distinctions

Dimension	DELNET	KALNET
Founded	1988	February 2021
Scale	National and international; thousands of libraries in 40+ countries	State level; 11 universities and 147 libraries in Kerala
Library Types	Public, academic, special, and school libraries of varying types and user communities	Exclusively higher education institutions in Kerala; tailored to academic users

Dimension	DELNET	KALNET
Core Function	Unified discovery, cooperative cataloguing, interlibrary lending, shared standards	Unified discovery, interlibrary lending planned
Distinctive Feature	Breadth and international connectivity across diverse library types	First platform specifically designed for university library resources at state level in India; PhD thesis discovery; Kerala specific collections

What distinguishes KALNET from DELNET is its specificity and its tailoring to a clearly defined user community. DELNET operates at national and international scale, linking very different kinds of libraries with correspondingly varied collections and user communities. KALNET is focused entirely on higher education in Kerala, with a mandate to serve the state’s academic community, its students and researchers, and its faculty. This focus allows KALNET to be tailored to the specific needs of academic users in ways that a general library network cannot.

The Significance of Open Source: A Philosophical Commitment

The choice to build KALNET on VuFind and Koha, both freely available, openly licensed, and community maintained, deserves more than passing notice. It reflects a set of values about how public educational infrastructure should be built and sustained that goes well beyond considerations of cost.

The Collaborative Foundation: Eleven Universities, One Network

The technical architecture of KALNET is the visible part of the project. The invisible part, and in many ways the harder part, is the collaborative institutional work that makes it function. A library network is only as good as the data its members contribute, and contributing good data requires sustained professional effort across all partner institutions.

Table 7.4 KALNET’s Eleven Partner Universities and Their Collections

University	Type	Distinctive Collection Strengths
University of Kerala	General (Founded 1937)	Arts, humanities, sciences; rare manuscripts and historical documents of incalculable scholarly value
Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT)	Science and Technology	Worldclass holdings in science, technology, and engineering; extensive research publication archives
University of Calicut	General	Broad general academic materials across arts, sciences, and commerce; North Kerala cultural history

University	Type	Distinctive Collection Strengths
Mahatma Gandhi University	General	Extensive affiliated college network; THE Asia Rankings 3rd; wide ranging academic disciplines
Kerala Agricultural University (KAU)	Specialised: Agriculture	Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and rural development; depth unmatched elsewhere in the region
Kannur University	General	Collections reflecting the cultural and political history of northern Kerala
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit	Specialised: Sanskrit	Indological studies, classical philosophy, Sanskrit textual traditions of South Asian civilisations
Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University	Specialised: Malayalam	Malayalam literature, linguistics, and cultural history; named for the father of the Malayalam language
Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU)	Specialised: Veterinary	Animal sciences, veterinary medicine, and livestock management relevant to Kerala's agricultural ecosystem
Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS)	Specialised: Marine Science	Coastal ecosystem management, fisheries science, and ocean studies for Kerala's extensive coastline
National University of Advanced Legal Studies (NUALS)	Specialised: Law	Comprehensive legal resources for a state with a distinguished tradition of social legislation and judicial activism

The eleven universities that form KALNET's current membership bring the full diversity of Kerala's higher education system to the network. The University of Kerala's historical collections anchor the network in the arts, humanities, and sciences. CUSAT contributes worldclass holdings in science and technology. Mahatma Gandhi University and Calicut University, with their extensive affiliated college networks, provide breadth of general academic materials across the state's central and northern regions. Kerala Agricultural University's collections serve the research communities working on food security, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture, areas of growing global urgency in which Kerala has specific expertise.

The specialised universities add dimensions that no general university collection could replicate. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit holds materials of irreplaceable value for Indological studies, classical philosophy, and the textual traditions of South Asian civilisations. Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University holds collections of singular importance for the study of Malayalam literature, linguistics, and cultural history.

Challenges and the Path to Full Realisation

KALNET's achievements to date are real and substantial. But an honest account of the project must also acknowledge the challenges that remain, because they define the work that the coming years must accomplish.

The second phase expansion to affiliated colleges is the most important priority and the most technically and organisationally demanding. Hundreds of colleges will need to be brought into the system, each with its own catalogue, its own data quality challenges, and its own institutional capacity for the work of digitising holdings, maintaining records, and keeping the catalogue current. The Koha platform provides the technical pathway, but the human pathway, training college library staff, establishing workflows, and building the culture of data quality that a shared network requires, is the more demanding challenge. KSHEC's capacity building programmes, already supporting digital enablement through DIGICOL, will need to extend into library management training at scale. When that work is done, bringing hundreds of college library collections into the unified discovery network will effectively democratise access to scholarly materials in ways that the current system cannot yet achieve.

PART FOUR



Curriculum and Data

CHAPTER 8

Curriculum Restructuring: The Four-year Undergraduate Programme and Knowledge Systems of Kerala

Reimagining the Undergraduate Years for a Knowledge Society

Why the Undergraduate Years Matter Most

No level of education is more consequential, in aggregate, than the undergraduate years. It is here, in the three or four years that follow the school leaving examination, that most young Indians who enter higher education form their intellectual habits, develop their professional orientations, and encounter, or fail to encounter, the breadth of learning that makes for a genuinely educated person. Doctoral research matters profoundly for the generation of new knowledge; postgraduate study deepens and specialises. Yet it is at the undergraduate level that scale meets significance: where millions of students, the majority of whom will not proceed further in formal education, receive the foundational academic experience of their lives.

For Kerala, a state whose higher education system has been shaped by decades of commitment to access, equity, and quality, the stakes of getting undergraduate education right are especially high. As noted in Chapter One, the state's Gross Enrolment Ratio of 41.3 per cent means the undergraduate curriculum is not merely an academic document but a social instrument. What it emphasises, what it requires, what it enables, and what it constrains will shape the intellectual lives and professional futures of hundreds of thousands of young Keralites, many of whom arrive in the classroom carrying aspirations that are the first in their families to find expression in higher education.

The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), implemented across eight Universities and nearly 845 colleges from the academic year 2024-25, is Kerala's most ambitious and most consequential curriculum reform in recent years. It is the culmination of a longer trajectory of pedagogical evolution that began with the adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the Choice-Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS), and was realised through years of consultative design, faculty training, and institutional preparation. This chapter traces that trajectory, examines the FYUGP's distinctive architecture in detail, explores the

Knowledge Systems of Kerala and the Internship Kerala programme that give it particular character, and reflects on the challenges and prospects of a reform whose full impact will take years to measure.

The Road to Reform: From CBCSS to FYUGP

The introduction of the FYUGP did not arrive without precedent or preparation. It was the most recent and most ambitious step in a sustained sequence of curriculum reforms that KSHEC had been shepherding across Kerala's higher education institutions for the better part of two decades. Each stage built on what came before, creating the institutional readiness and pedagogical culture that the programme now demands.

The adoption of the Choice-Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS) had replaced the earlier annual examination model with a semester-based structure and introduced the credit system through which students accumulate and transfer academic achievements. In place of rigid, all-or-nothing progression, CBCSS created a framework within which course choices could be made, credit loads managed, and academic achievement measured in granular, transferable units. This was a significant departure from the inherited model of annual university examinations that had governed undergraduate education for generations.

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) followed, and KSHEC has been actively involved in capacity building for both faculty and administrative staff in state universities and colleges to support its implementation. The OBE framework, developed in collaboration with Prof. N.J. Rao of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, shifted the focus of curriculum design from what faculty teach to what students learn. Each course was required to articulate specific Learning Outcomes, to identify how those outcomes map onto broader Graduate Attributes, and to design assessment instruments capable of measuring actual attainment. The framework is not merely a planning tool; it represents a cultural shift. It asks institutions to be accountable for what students really achieve, not merely for what has been taught.

The genesis of FYUGP in the state can be traced to the recommendations of the Commission for Reforms In Higher Education (Shyan B Menon, 2022) and the fourth chapter of the report which recommended four-year structure for the undergraduate programme with a single lateral exit option at the end of the third year. Dr Suresh Das (Former Executive Vice President, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE), was the Chairman of the 39

member Kerala State Committee for Higher Education FYUGP which drafted the detailed curriculum.

Table 8.1 Kerala’s Undergraduate Curriculum Reform – Timeline

Year / Period	Milestone	What It Achieved
Pre 2019	Choice-Based Credit System (CBCSS)	Annual examinations replaced by semester structure; credit system introduced for accumulation and transfer of academic achievement
2019 onwards	Outcome Based Education (OBE)	Shift from content delivery to learning outcomes; course design centred on graduate attributes; developed with Prof. N.J. Rao, IISc Bengaluru
2022	Commission for Reforms In Higher Education in Kerala 2022	Four-year structure for UG with single lateral exit option in the third year, flexible alternative pathways exit after three years with major, minor options. multidisciplinary, and integration with the Academic Bank of Credits, Honours with Research.
2023	Kerala State curriculum Committee for Higher Education FYUGP	Drafted the curriculum for FYUGP by 39-member team headed by Dr Suresh Das (Former Executive Vice President, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE))
2024	FYUGP model regulation	KSHEC drafted the model FYUGP regulation incorporating flexible pathways/ major, minor, capstone options
2024-25	FYUGP Implementation	Full rollout across eight Universities and 845 colleges in Kerala; first cohort enrolled; 177credit Honours with Research/ capstone component introduced
June 2025	Kerala Knowledge Systems Keraleeya Vijnana Vyavasthakal	Mandatory course in UG and PG level introduced by Kerala
Oct 2025	KSHEC Internship Kerala Portal	State level internship coordination portal inaugurated by Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu; developed in collaboration with KELTRON
Mar 2026	FYUGP Internship Guidelines	KSHEC publishes formal guidelines specifying 90 mandatory hours after the fourth semester (summer internship)

The Architecture of the FYUGP: Flexibility Grounded in Purpose

The FYUGP offers a flexible, multidisciplinary education focusing on research, skill development, and the holistic growth of every learner. Its central educational philosophy, as articulated in the KSHEC Curriculum Framework, is the building of a strong knowledge society that can help develop and sustain a knowledge economy, connecting the individual undergraduate classroom to the state’s broader developmental aspirations.

Multiple Pathways: Honouring Diversity of Aspiration

The most structurally innovative feature of the FYUGP is its provision of multiple exit and progression pathways, each corresponding to a distinct educational goal and life plan. The table below summarises the principal pathways available to students.

This architecture recognises a truth that uniform degree structures obscure: students who enter higher education come with widely varying aspirations, resources, and life circumstances. A student who needs to enter the workforce after three years should not be compelled to stay for fourth year. A student who is deeply motivated by research can continue in the fourth year. The multiple pathways allow the system to honour this diversity rather than forcing everyone into a single mould.

Table 8.2 FYUGP – Multiple Degree Pathways

Exit Point	Award	Credits
After 3 years	UG Degree (Major)	~133 credits
After 4 years	UG Degree (Honours)	~177 credits
After 4 years	UG Degree (Honours with Research)	177 credits (incl. 12 research credits)
FastTrack	Degree in N-1 Semesters	Max. 28 credits/semester

Credits are stored in the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), enabling transfer, re-entry, and lifelong learning at any participating institution.

The fast-track option (N-1) introduced in the FYUGP in Kerala is recognised by the UGC – Accelerated Degree Programme (ADP) to allow bright undergraduate students to finish their degrees faster by earning extra credits per semester deserves mention. Students who can manage a maximum of twenty-eight credits per semester can complete a degree or honours programme in one semester less than the normal duration.

Table 8.3 The Four Foundation Baskets of the FYUGP

Course Basket	Abbrev.	Focus and Purpose
Ability Enhancement Courses	AEC	Language, communication, and critical reasoning skills essential for all academic and professional pursuits; the intellectual tools without which education of any kind is hampered
Skill Enhancement Courses	SEC	Practical and vocational competencies aligned with employment needs and digital era professional demands; digital literacy, quantitative reasoning, and discipline specific technical capabilities
Value-added Courses	VAC	Ethics, citizenship, environmental awareness, gender sensitivity, constitutional literacy, and the dispositions of a responsible, engaged member of society
Multidisciplinary Courses	MDC	Learning across disciplinary boundaries to build integrative thinking; students venture outside their major discipline to understand how other fields frame their questions and to develop the cross-domain reasoning that complex real-world problems increasingly demand

The Three-part Curriculum: Foundation, Discipline, and Research

The FYUGP curriculum is organised around three broad parts. The first comprises general foundation courses, standard for all students regardless of their major discipline. The second encompasses the discipline specific major

and, for students who choose it, a discipline specific minor or multidisciplinary minor. The third comprises the research component, which for students pursuing Honours with Research includes a dissertation or research project worth twelve credits. The foundation courses are organised into four major baskets, each addressing a distinct dimension of undergraduate formation.

This four-basket architecture embodies a conviction about what undergraduate education is for. Ability Enhancement Courses address the communicative and intellectual tools without which education of any kind is hampered. Skill Enhancement Courses address the practical competencies that make graduates employable and professionally effective. Value-added Courses address the ethical and civic dimensions of education: the responsibilities that come with knowledge and the obligations that educated persons owe to their communities. Multidisciplinary Courses are perhaps the most philosophically distinctive of the four baskets. They require students to venture outside their major discipline, to understand how other fields of inquiry approach and frame their questions, and to develop the integrative thinking that complex, real-world problems increasingly demand.

The foundation course focus on the four Cs - Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration - as the defining twenty first century skills runs through the entire curriculum structure. This is a curriculum that is not content to produce students who know things; it aims to produce students who can do things with what they know. As the University of Kerala's curriculum framework articulates, the focus of the knowledge component is on encouraging the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations, enhancing these four skills, building awareness, and developing competence in using the most modern and relevant technology for change.

Knowledge Systems of Kerala: Rootedness as an Intellectual Resource

Amongst the most distinctive and philosophically significant elements of the FYUGP is the course on Knowledge Systems of Kerala, proposed by KSHEC as a compulsory multidisciplinary course for third semester students across the system. The course represents something genuinely novel in Indian undergraduate education: a sustained, academically rigorous engagement with the intellectual, cultural, and scientific traditions of a specific region. KSHEC has published a dedicated textbook, Knowledge Systems of Kerala, available in both Malayalam and English, which introduces students to the diverse and rich intellectual, cultural, and scientific traditions of Kerala. Published in 2025, the

book represents both a scholarly achievement and a practical teaching resource for immediate institutional use.

The rationale for a course on Kerala’s knowledge systems begins with a simple but often overlooked observation: every region has its own intellectual heritage, developed over centuries through the interaction of human minds with specific environments, social structures, and cultural traditions. Kerala’s knowledge heritage is, by any measure, remarkable in its breadth and depth.

Table 8.4 Kerala’s Knowledge Heritage – Selected Traditions

Domain	Representative Tradition	Contemporary Relevance
Mathematics	Kerala School of Mathematics (14th-16th c.); Madhava of Sangamagrama’s infinite series and trigonometric functions, anticipating European mathematics by over a century	History of mathematical thought; epistemological diversity in scientific discovery; the globally distributed nature of mathematical progress
Medicine and Healing	Ashtangahridayam of Vagbhata; Keraliya panchakarma therapy; kalari medicine connected to Kalaripayattu, with insights into anatomy, injury treatment, and physical conditioning	Comparative pharmacology, ethnobotany, integrative medicine, and sports physiology
Performing Arts	Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Koodiyattam (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage), Theyyam: complete knowledge systems encoding cosmologies, ethics, and aesthetic philosophy	Cultural theory, performance studies, cognitive science of embodied knowledge, and heritage conservation
Natural Knowledge	Encyclopaedic ecological knowledge of farmers, fishers, and forest dwellers: plant medicine, coastal marine rhythms, forest biodiversity, and sustainable resource management	Ecology, conservation biology, climate adaptation, and sustainable fisheries management in a region of exceptional biodiversity
Architecture	Thachu Shastra: climate responsive design, natural ventilation, and sustainable building principles encoded in classical treatises	Sustainable architecture, bioclimatic design, and culturally rooted approaches to urban planning
Language and Literature	Malayalam literary tradition from Thunchath Ezhuthachan to the modern period; Sanskrit scholarship; multilingual traditions of oral and written literary expression	Linguistics, literary studies, translation theory, and the study of language change and cultural transmission

The decision to make the Knowledge Systems of Kerala course compulsory, is in response to the introduction of Indian Knowledge System as a compulsory course in the UG/ PG level by UGC. Students who understand the intellectual traditions of their own region approach universal knowledge differently from those who encounter it as though it arrived from nowhere. They understand that knowledge is always produced in specific social, ecological, and cultural contexts; that the universality of valid knowledge is achieved through, not despite, its embeddedness in particular experiences; and that their own heritage is not a parochial limitation to be transcended but an intellectual resource to be understood, interrogated, and, where appropriate, extended.

This is not a sentimental or antimodern argument. It is an argument about epistemological perspective and the enrichment that comes from understanding more than one tradition of knowledge making. A student who understands the Madhava-Gregory series alongside the Leibniz series has a richer understanding of the history of mathematical thought than one who knows only the latter. A student who understands Keraliya Ayurveda alongside biomedical pharmacology has more conceptual tools for thinking about the relationship between traditional and modern medicine than one who knows only the latter. A student who understands the ecological knowledge embedded in traditional fishing practices alongside contemporary marine biology is better equipped to think about sustainable fisheries management than one who knows only the latter.

The Knowledge Systems of Kerala course operationalises the FYUGP's commitment to multidisciplinary in a specifically Keralite register. It places the state's students in productive relationship with their own intellectual inheritance, not to celebrate it uncritically, but to engage with it as a genuine intellectual tradition deserving the same scholarly rigour that is applied to any other tradition. This engagement is itself a form of the critical thinking that the FYUGP's four C framework identifies as central to twenty first century education.

Internship Kerala: Learning Through Doing

The FYUGP does not confine learning to the classroom. In alignment with the UGC Guidelines for Internship/Research Internship for Undergraduate Students (2023), all undergraduate students are required to complete a mandatory internship of 60 to 120 hours after the fourth semester. Students who do not undertake a research dissertation in their final year must complete an internship project of fifteen weeks, and internship is embedded as a credit bearing component throughout the programme's structure. Under the FYUGP, internship is curricular: academically assessed, structurally integrated, and pedagogically purposeful.

The Genesis of Internship Kerala

The Internship Kerala portal at [internshipkerala.org] (<https://internshipkerala.org>) was inaugurated on 22 October 2025 by Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu in Thiruvananthapuram, as a state level platform to coordinate internship and placement opportunities for FYUGP students across Kerala. Its development followed a formal process: G.O. (Rt) No. 724/2024/HEDN dated 24 June 2024 provided the framework for FYUGP

internship coordination, and following Government Order No. 356/2025/HEDN dated 4 June 2025, KSHEC and KELTRON formalised their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding for the development and management of the portal. KSHEC published comprehensive guidelines for internship under the FYUGP in March 2026, providing direction on the identification and empanelment of Internship Providing Organisations and ensuring uniform implementation across all institutions.

The choice of KELTRON as the technology partner is significant. KELTRON, the Kerala Electronics and Technology Corporation, a Government of Kerala undertaking with decades of experience in electronics, technology education, and skills development through its CSDCCP centres, brings to the portal both technical expertise and an institutional network that extends across the state. KELTRON's existing relationships with industries, universities, and colleges provided the foundation for building the three-way linkage that Internship Kerala requires - students seeking placements, industries offering them, and institutions coordinating between the two.

The portal establishes a unified digital platform for internship management across Kerala. Through it, students can browse available placements filterable by discipline, district, and sector; industries and government departments can post openings and specify the skills and academic backgrounds they seek; and KSHEC and universities can monitor participation rates, track student outcomes, and identify sectors or regions where internship access needs to be strengthened. The nodal officer structure, through which each university and college appoints a designated coordinator to liaise between the portal and their students, ensures that access to the platform is institutionally supported rather than dependent on individual initiative.

Internship as Pedagogy, Not Placement

It is important to understand the FYUGP's conception of internship as pedagogy rather than merely as placement. Students are expected to bring to their placement the analytical and research skills they have developed over their undergraduate years, to apply their disciplinary knowledge to genuine problems rather than merely observing how professionals handle them, and to produce a documented account of their engagement that can be assessed against the learning outcomes of the programme.

Table 8.5 Internship Kerala – Three Types of **Internships

Free Internships	Paid / Stipend Internships	Research Internships
Exposure to real world systems without financial commitment from the hosting organisation. Enables a wide range of public sector bodies, small enterprises, and civil society organisations to participate as hosts; particularly important for first-generation learners with limited personal networks.	Industry and government placements offering a stipend to students. KSHEC guidelines prioritise these arrangements to protect students from exploitative paid internship schemes and ensure genuine professional engagement with real learning outcomes.	Academically supervised placements aligned with the student’s research interests, supporting progression towards the Honours with Research pathway and preparing students for advanced postgraduate study.

Duration: 90 hours (completable within the first six semesters, including summer vacations).

A student in the Biological Sciences major who completes an internship at a Kerala agricultural research station is not simply gaining work experience; she is conducting a supervised inquiry into a problem in her field, drawing on the research methodology she has learned, and producing a report that demonstrates her ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application. A student in Management Studies who completes an internship placement with a cooperative bank is not simply learning how banking works; she is applying the conceptual frameworks of her discipline to a real institutional context and producing an analysis that advances her understanding in ways that classroom case studies cannot.

KSHEC has also published dedicated learning materials for the FYUGP, including the Curriculum Framework document, the Foundations of Knowledge and Enquiry Across Disciplines course materials, OBE implementation guides in both general and engineering variants, and the Handbook for Master Trainers. These publications, all downloadable from the FYUGP page at [kshec.kerala.gov.in] (<https://kshec.kerala.gov.in>), constitute a practical resource library for any institution implementing the programme and seeking to align its approach with the state level framework.

The FYUGP and the Academic Bank of Credits: Enabling Lifelong Learning

The FYUGP’s multiple pathway architecture depends for its practical realisation on the Academic Bank of Credits, the national system through which students can accumulate, store, and transfer credits across institutions and programmes. KREAP’s integration with the ABC is not a technical add-on but a structural necessity: without it, the mobility and flexibility that the FYUGP promises cannot be delivered in practice.

The ABC system means that a student who exits the FYUGP after three years with a standard UG Degree, and who later decides to return to complete the fourth year, does not need to repeat courses or negotiate institutional credit recognition. Her credits are held in the national system, accessible to any participating institution, and immediately applicable to the requirements of the programme she re-enters. This portability is what distinguishes the FYUGP's multiple pathways from the old model of lateral transfers that required laborious, individual, case by case assessment by receiving institutions.

The ABC also enables the kind of lifelong learning model that the knowledge economy increasingly requires. A graduate who enters employment after three years of undergraduate study but later identifies a need for additional academic preparation, whether a new technical competency, a postgraduate qualification, or a research credential, can build on rather than repeat her existing academic achievement. The credit accumulation model treats education not as a bounded episode in the early years of life but as a continuing resource that can be drawn on, added to, and built upon across a working lifetime. This is a profoundly democratic model: it is particularly valuable for those who cannot afford extended fulltime study, but who can manage shorter, stackable periods of learning across years or decades. KSHEC is the state level nodal agency for ABC& Digi locker in the state and Dr Sudheendran K (Research Officer) is the officer in charge of these activities.

The FYUGP and Research Culture: Seeding Inquiry from the Beginning

One of the FYUGP's most consequential contributions to Kerala's broader knowledge economy agenda is its embedding of research orientation within the undergraduate years. Earlier undergraduate programmes treated research as a postgraduate preoccupation: something students might encounter at the master's level or, if they proceeded that far, in doctoral study. The undergraduate years were for learning what others had established, not for beginning to contribute what one might discover oneself.

The FYUGP's Honours with Research pathway directly challenges this assumption. Students who pursue this route and secure a minimum of 177 credits, including 12 credits from a research project or dissertation, graduate with an academic record that demonstrates the capacity for original inquiry. This record is of direct value both for admission to advanced postgraduate programmes and for the growing number of employers in research intensive sectors who value evidence of independent analytical work.

The undergraduate research component of the FYUGP was a central focus of one of the capacity strengthening workshops at the National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo held in February 2026. The workshop on ‘Reimagining Undergraduate Research through the FYUGP’ brought together faculty, administrators, and policymakers to explore how undergraduate research could be designed, supervised, and assessed in ways that were genuinely intellectually demanding rather than ceremonially nominal. The discussions reinforced a point that KSHEC’s Vision 2031 framework has articulated clearly: the aspiration to build a research oriented higher education ecosystem cannot begin at the doctoral level; it must begin with the undergraduate curriculum, with the habits of inquiry, evidence, and rigorous argument that the FYUGP’s research components are designed to cultivate.

The Knowledge Systems of Kerala course, in this context, is more than a curricular curiosity. It is an invitation to every third semester student, regardless of their major discipline, to approach their own cultural inheritance with the tools of scholarly inquiry: to ask what the Kerala School of Mathematics actually discovered and why it matters; to investigate the botanical knowledge embedded in Ayurvedic texts and assess its validity against contemporary pharmacological evidence; to examine the performance traditions of Theyyam or Koodiyattam not as tourism objects but as complex, historically layered cultural practices encoding philosophies of body, cosmos, and community. This is undergraduate research in the most fundamental sense: the application of curious, disciplined minds to materials that have not yet been exhausted.

Challenges: Implementation at Scale

The FYUGP’s implementation across all higher education institutions in Kerala from 2024/25 is an undertaking of remarkable scope. Its ambitions are genuine and its design is sophisticated. Its challenges are equally real and deserve honest acknowledgement.

Infrastructure inequality is a pressing concern. Multidisciplinary minor requirements, research components, internship integration, and active pedagogies all demand resources that are distributed unevenly across the system. KSHEC has responded with targeted support through shared resources: KALNET provides access to library materials across institutions, the online digital repository delivers course content to students regardless of location, and training programmes prioritise remote and smaller institutions in capacity building allocation.

Faculty readiness has emerged as a critical dimension in the successful implementation of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), as the new curriculum demands pedagogical approaches that move significantly beyond the conventional lecture-and-examination model followed over decades. The programme emphasizes project-based learning, interdisciplinary engagement, research supervision, experiential learning, and flipped classroom practices, requiring substantial academic reorientation among teachers. Recognizing this transition, the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC), through its Centre for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Training (CETLT), has developed a large reservoir of master trainers across universities and colleges in the State. Extensive teacher training and faculty development programmes were organized in all districts of Kerala to equip faculty members for handling newly introduced FYUGP courses and academic frameworks. The Council’s Research Officers, along with national-level experts in digital pedagogy, Outcome-Based Education (OBE), and Artificial Intelligence-enabled teaching and evaluation tools, played a key role in introducing contemporary academic practices to teachers. The impact of these interventions is increasingly visible in classrooms across the State, reflecting a gradual but significant shift in teaching-learning culture. However, sustaining this transformation will require continued institutional encouragement, recognition of pedagogical innovation within academic career structures, and the cumulative confidence that emerges when new teaching approaches demonstrably enhance student learning outcomes.

Table 8.6 FYUGP – Key Implementation Challenges and Responses

Challenge	The Problem	The Response
Infrastructure Inequality	Multidisciplinary minor requirements, research components, internship integration, and active pedagogies all demand resources distributed unevenly across the system	Targeted support through shared resources via KALNET, online repository, and KSHEC training programmes; prioritising remote and smaller institutions in capacity building allocation
Faculty Readiness	The FYUGP requires project-based learning, research supervision, portfolio assessment, and flipped classroom models genuinely different from the lecture and examination default that many faculty developed over long careers	OBE training through CETLT’s cascade Training of Faculty Trainers model; recognition of pedagogical innovation; gradual accumulation of pedagogical experience and confidence across the system
Assessment Architecture	Continuous evaluation, project assessments, and portfolio requirements alongside terminal examinations place significant demands on both faculty time and administrative systems	KREAP’s examination management modules designed to support this complexity; careful transition management; KSHEC guidance distinguishing meaningful assessment from bureaucratic compliance
Internship Quality and Access	Building genuine, high-quality placements appropriate to every discipline across Kerala’s diverse system is a long-term project; early implementation revealed risks of paid	KSHEC’s March 2026 guidelines prioritise stipend based and free opportunities; vetting of Internship Providing Organisations; nodal officer oversight;

Challenge	The Problem	The Response
	arrangements that burden rather than benefit students	voluntary nature of the portal preserves institutional flexibility

The examination and assessment architecture of the FYUGP, with its continuous evaluation components, project assessments, and portfolio requirements places significant demands on both faculty time and administrative systems. It is important to avoid both the temptation to revert to old forms and the risk of assessment overload that exhausts faculty without improving learning. KSHEC’s March 2026 internship guidelines make clear that the Internship Kerala portal is voluntary in nature: students, universities, and institutions are free to explore internship opportunities independently, preserving institutional flexibility whilst establishing the quality framework that protects students from exploitative arrangements.

A Curriculum Worthy of Its Ambition

The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme represents the most comprehensive reimagining of undergraduate education in Kerala’s history. It connects the individual undergraduate student to the broader purposes of the knowledge economy through its research orientation; to the social life of her community through its internship requirement; and to the intellectual heritage of her region through the Knowledge Systems of Kerala course. In all three connections, it insists that education is not merely preparation for life but a form of life in itself: active, curious, engaged, and continuously surprised by what it finds.

The Knowledge Systems of Kerala course is, in miniature, a symbol of what the FYUGP aspires to accomplish. It does not merely add local content to a globally standardised curriculum; it asserts that regional intellectual traditions deserve the same rigorous scholarly engagement as any other, and that students who understand where they come from are better equipped to go where they are going.

CHAPTER 9

A Data Driven Landscape: The All-Kerala Higher Education Survey

Measuring Progress, Illuminating Pathways

The Discipline of Evidence

There is a peculiar kind of authority that resides in numbers, not because numbers are infallible or self-interpreting, but because they impose a discipline on argument that rhetoric alone cannot provide. To govern a complex system is to make choices under uncertainty: about where to direct resources, which institutions need support, which communities remain underserved, and which trends, if left unaddressed, will harden into permanent inequalities. These choices can be made based on intuition, precedent, or political calculation; they can equally be made with the backing of evidence. The All-Kerala Higher Education Survey (AKHES) represents a fundamental commitment to the second approach.

Conducted periodically by the Kerala State Higher Education Council and now actively coordinating the 2024-25 data cycle, AKHES is the only comprehensive, state specific survey of higher education in Kerala. The KSHEC website describes its purpose precisely: surveys at both the state and national levels are crucial tools for shaping the future of higher education, providing comprehensive data on key indicators such as student enrolment, faculty strength, infrastructure, academic performance, and research output. At the state level, AKHES captures localised insights, helping stakeholders make informed decisions, bridge gaps, and implement policies that enhance quality, access, and equity in higher education.

The survey covers all institutions in the state engaged in imparting higher education. These comprise 25 universities (as per the AISHE portal, encompassing state public, deemed, and private university level institutions) and over 1,500 colleges of Government, Aided, and Private Self-financing sectors. KSHEC directly coordinates the data submission for the 16 state universities under its purview. Reference dates for the 2024-25 cycles have been issued, a User Manual published, and a helpline established. Institutions across the state are actively uploading data to the designated web portal. The report that emerges from this cycle will differ in important ways from its 2021-22

predecessor, because the system it measures has itself undergone transformative change: the Four Year Undergraduate Programme is now in its second year of full system operation, the KREAP platform has onboarded eight universities, the Internship Kerala portal has been launched, and KIRF's second edition has ranked 519 institutions.

This chapter examines the findings of the AKHES 2021-22 report, the most recently published comprehensive survey, situates them within the national context established by the All-India Survey on Higher Education, and reflects on what the survey, as an institution, represents for Kerala's approach to educational governance. It asks what the data reveal about access, equity, quality, and the material conditions of learning in Kerala, and what the 2024- 25 cycle will need to capture to keep pace with a system in rapid motion.

The Rationale for a State Level Survey

India already has a national mechanism for surveying higher education. The All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), conducted annually by the Ministry of Education since 2010¹¹, gathers data from every higher education institution in the country and publishes findings that include state level breakdowns. It is a substantial and valuable instrument, and KSHEC actively coordinates with it as the state nodal agency for Kerala's AISHE data. Yet the national survey has inherent limitations as a tool for state level governance. It is designed to produce comparable figures across 28 states and 8 union territories, which means its parameters are necessarily general. It cannot capture the nuances of Kerala's distinctive institutional landscape: the mix of university affiliates, the legacy of aided colleges, the rapid expansion of the self-financing sector, the geographic distribution across fourteen districts, the specific social categories that matter for Kerala's equity agenda, or the state's unique curricular experiments.

AKHES was designed to fill precisely this gap: a survey instrument calibrated to Kerala's own conditions, producing the localised intelligence that effective state level governance requires. The AKHES methodology is carefully aligned with AISHE's conventions. Reference dates follow the same principle: enrolment data is captured as of 30 November of the survey year; examination outcome data refers to students who passed or were awarded degrees by 31 March of the following year; financial information covers the previous financial year. A nodal officer appointed by each university or institution uploads data through the dedicated web portal. This alignment ensures that AKHES data is nationally comparable where comparisons are meaningful, while remaining Kerala specific where local detail is essential.

Table 9.1 AKHES and AISHE – Complementary Instruments

Dimension	AISHE (National)	AKHES (Kerala)
Scope	All 36 states and union territories; national comparability the primary purpose	All higher education institutions in Kerala; state level precision the primary purpose
Frequency	Annual, since 2010-11	Annual; 2021-22 published, 2024-25 currently under way
Parameters	General indicators applicable across all Indian states; standardised for national comparison	Includes Kerala specific social categories, institutional types, and curricular indicators (FYUGP, internship, ABC data from 2024-25)
State Nodal Role	KSHEC is state nodal agency for Kerala’s AISHE data submission	KSHEC designs, coordinates, and publishes; institutions upload directly to AKHES portal
Relationship	Provides the national frame for assessing Kerala’s performance	Provides the internal detail enabling state level governance with precision
Prerequisite Link	Kerala institutions must submit AISHE data	AKHES registration is a prerequisite for KIRF participation

What AKHES Measures: The Data Architecture

The comprehensiveness of AKHES’s coverage is what distinguishes it from narrower administrative datasets. The table below summarises the principal data domains that the survey captures, updated to reflect the expanded scope that the 2024 - 25 cycle must address.

Table 9.2 AKHES Data Architecture – Principal Domains

Data Domain	Key Indicators Collected
Student Enrolment	Total enrolment by gender, social category (SC/ST/OBC/EWS/PwD), programme level (UG/PG/PhD), foreign students, management type, and district; 2024-25 adds students from other Indian states
Faculty Profile	Strength by gender, qualification (PhD, PG, other), designation, management type, and pupil teacher ratios across university and college levels; data on FDP and LMS training completion
Institutional Infrastructure	Classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computer facilities, internet connectivity, hostels, sports facilities, and accessibility provisions for students with disabilities
Academic Outcomes	Examination pass rates, outturn ratios, scholarship uptake by category, dropout indicators, and time to completion patterns
Financial and Governance	Fee structures, grant utilisation, endowment funds, internal revenue, IQAC status, and compliance with regulatory frameworks
FYUGP Specific Indicators (2024-25)	Programme wise enrolment under FYUGP tracks, exit point patterns, credit accumulation, internship completion hours (60120 hour requirement), and Academic Bank of Credits registration data

The 2024 - 25 cycle also adds a new data point: the number of students from other Indian states enrolled in Kerala’s institutions, addressing a significant gap that KSHEC’s AISHE nodal office had specifically identified in earlier cycles.

Gross Enrolment Ratio: Achievement and Its Limits

Of all the statistics that the AKHES 2021-22 report presents, none commands more immediate attention than the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). GER measures total enrolment in higher education as a percentage of the eligible population aged eighteen to twenty-three, irrespective of whether those enrolled fall within that age band. It is, in essence, a measure of how widely a society has extended access to education beyond the school level, and it is the most widely used comparative indicator in the field.

In 2021 - 22, Kerala's GER stood at 41.3 per cent, against the national average of 28.4 per cent for the same year. More than four in every ten young Keralites were enrolled in some form of higher education, placing the state significantly above the national mean and amongst the highest performing states in the country for higher education participation. When the AISHE data for 2020 - 21 placed Kerala's GER at 41.3 per cent against a national average of 28.4 per cent, the state ranked high amongst all Indian states, a position that reflects the accumulated effect of decades of sustained investment in educational infrastructure.

Table 9.3 Gross Enrolment Ratio – Kerala vs National (2021-22)

Category	GER (%)
Kerala Overall	41.3
Kerala Female	49.0
Kerala Male	34.1
Kerala SC	28.3
Kerala ST	28.9
National Overall	28.4
National SC	25.9
National ST	21.2

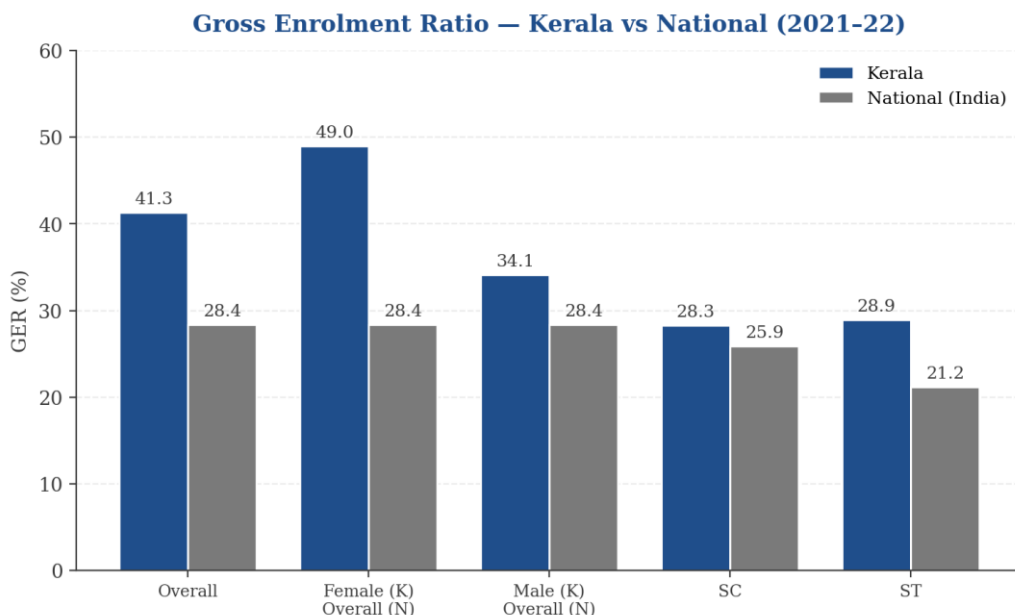


Figure 9.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio — Kerala vs National (2021-22)

Sources: AKHES 2021-22; AISHE 2021-22, Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Gender Parity: The Dimensions of a Transformation

Perhaps the most analytically striking feature of Kerala’s higher education enrolment data is not the aggregate GER but the patterns of gender that lie beneath it. Of the total enrolment of 10,99,113 students recorded in 2021 - 22, female students numbered 5,95,512, representing 59.47 per cent of the total. Male students accounted for 4,05,655, or 40.51 per cent. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) stood at 1.44 for Kerala overall, meaning that for every one hundred male students in higher education, there were one hundred and forty four female students. Against the All-India GPI of 1.01, itself a figure that represents national level female parity achieved only in 201718, Kerala’s 1.44 represents not mere parity but a substantial and structural reversal.

What makes this picture still more remarkable is the pattern amongst socially disadvantaged communities. For Scheduled Caste students, the GPI in Kerala reaches 1.80: for everyone hundred SC male students enrolled, one hundred and eighty SC female students are enrolled. For Scheduled Tribe students, the GPI is 1.41.

Social Inclusion: SC and ST Students, and the Unfinished Agenda

Kerala's commitment to social justice in higher education, articulated in the KSHEC Act's explicit emphasis on inclusiveness and operationalised in SAAC's assessment criteria addressing social inclusiveness, equity and excellence, and scientific temper, finds its empirical expression in the enrolment data for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students.

The gap between Kerala's overall GER of 41.3 per cent and the SC GER of 28.3 per cent, thirteen percentage points, is itself a finding that demands sustained policy attention. It means that, despite Kerala's social reform legacy and its explicit commitment to inclusive higher education, students from Scheduled Caste backgrounds participate in higher education at rates substantially lower than the state average. The SAAC framework's requirement that institutions document specific support mechanisms for first-generation learners and socially disadvantaged students, and that this documentation carries real accreditation weight, is one instrument for closing this gap at the institutional level. The AKHES data provides the system level evidence that shows how large the gap is and in which districts it is most acute, enabling targeted intervention rather than generalised aspiration.

Whether these distributions reflect the intended priorities of scholarship policy or anomalies in coverage and uptake is a question the data raise without resolving, and that is precisely the kind of question that data driven governance should be asking. It is a question that the 202425 AKHES cycle will need to revisit in the context of the expanded scholarship landscape that KSHEC's programmes now cover.

The Institutional Landscape: Scale, Diversity, and Distribution

Kerala's higher education system in 202122 comprised twenty-five universities/university level institutions listed on the AISHE portal, and 1,463 colleges distributed across three management categories: 236 government institutions, 184 aided colleges, and 1,043 self-financing colleges. The KSHEC survey coverage has since expanded: AKHES 202425 now coordinates data for 16 universities and over 1,500 institutions, reflecting the continued growth of the sector.

Table 9.6 College Distribution by Management Type 2021–22

Government Colleges	Aided Colleges	Self-Financing Colleges
236	184	1,043

Kerala Colleges by Management Type (2021-22) — Total 1,463

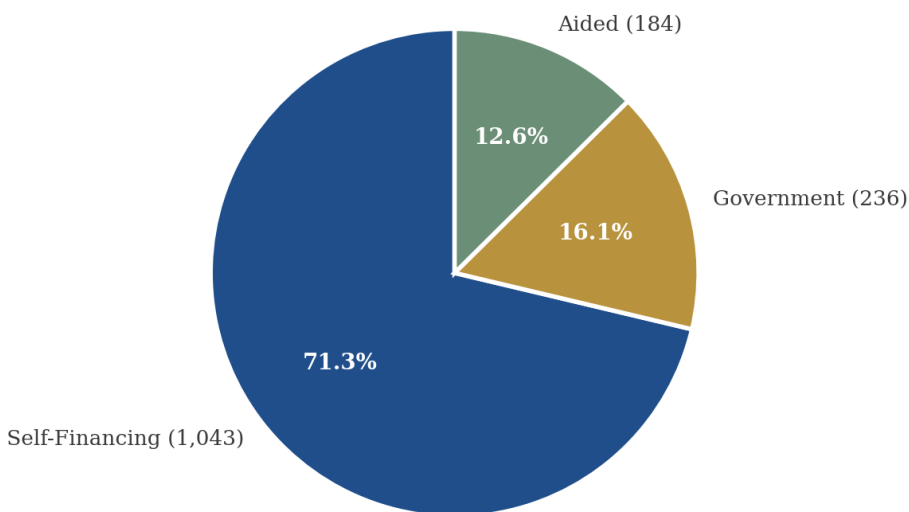


Figure 9.2 Kerala Colleges by Management Type 2021–22

The dominance of the self-financing sector, accounting for more than two thirds of all colleges, is amongst the most consequential structural features of Kerala’s higher education landscape. The self-financing sector has undeniably expanded access: without it, the quantity of higher education seats available would be substantially smaller. Yet it has also introduced new questions about quality, equity, and the distribution of educational benefit. Private self-financing colleges depend on fee revenue rather than government subvention, which means their sustainability depends on enrolment, an incentive structure that does not always align well with the pursuit of educational quality or geographic equity.

The geographic dimension of institutional distribution is one of the less discussed but practically important findings of the survey. Kerala’s fourteen districts vary considerably in college density relative to population, with the more urbanised central and southern districts typically better served than the more rural northern districts. Students in college poor areas face a choice that their counterparts in college rich districts do not: to travel significant distances to access higher education, or to forgo it. AKHES’s district level data makes this

geographic inequality visible in a form that can guide decisions about where to prioritise new institutional development or infrastructure investment.

Faculty: Strength, and the Quality Question

No aspect of educational quality is more fundamental than the faculty who deliver it. The AKHES data on teaching staff reveal a total faculty strength of 58,255, comprising 36,629 women (62.9 per cent) and 21,616 men (37.1 per cent). This pronounced female majority among the teaching workforce mirrors the female majority in the student body, though at a somewhat lower intensity.

Table 9.7 Faculty Profile 2021–22

Indicator	Total	Women
All Institutions	58,255	36,629 (62.9%)
State Universities	2,312	1,163 (50.3%)
Affiliated Colleges	55,943	35,466 (64.1%)
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	17.76 overall	Universities: 40 (regular)

State university faculty numbered 2,312, with near gender parity at 50.3 per cent women, a lower female share than in colleges where 64.1 per cent of the teaching staff is female. This differential may reflect the greater weight given to research credentials at the university level, where doctoral qualifications and publication records are emphasised in appointment processes, alongside the persisting challenges women face in combining research careers with family responsibilities that continue to fall disproportionately on them.

The pupil-teacher ratio stood at 17.76 overall in 2021/22. Universities recorded a ratio of 40 for regular enrolment, reflecting larger postgraduate cohorts and the additional demands on university faculty for supervision and research, whilst colleges recorded 15.17, favourable by national and international standards and suggestive of conditions in which meaningful student faculty interaction is at least structurally possible.

Outcomes, Infrastructure, and the International Dimension

Examination Outcomes

The overall outturn across state universities, the proportion of students who pass their examinations, was 70 per cent, with some universities exceeding 90 per cent. In affiliated colleges, the pass rate was 70.26 per cent, a figure remarkable in its near identity with the university result. These figures require careful interpretation. A pass rate of 70 per cent is cause neither for complacency nor

alarm without understanding what a pass represents: what level of attainment it certifies, what the examination measures, and whether the 30 per cent who do not pass are failing to meet a genuinely demanding standard or are encountering obstacles, whether financial, personal, or health related, that interrupt their studies rather than reflecting educational failure in any deep sense.

Infrastructure

The survey's data on infrastructure—classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computer facilities, internet connectivity, hostel accommodation, sports facilities, and provisions for students with disabilities—confirm that infrastructure quality varies enormously across Kerala's higher education institutions. Well established government colleges and aided institutions have often accumulated substantial physical plant. Newer self-financing colleges may have more modern facilities in some respects whilst lacking depth in library collections, laboratory equipment, and the accumulated resources that support sustained intellectual work. The SAAC accreditation process, which assesses infrastructure as one of its nationally aligned criteria, uses AKHES as a baseline data source, making the accuracy and completeness of the survey's infrastructure data directly consequential for accreditation outcomes.

International Students: Baseline and Trajectory

The international student dimension, whilst modest in the 2021- 22 baseline, deserves attention as an indicator of the system's global engagement and its trajectory. In 2021 - 22, a total of 437 foreign students were enrolled across Kerala's universities and affiliated colleges, representing twenty-eight countries, captured in the disrupted conditions of the post pandemic period when international student mobility was globally constrained. Since then, the trajectory has been sharply upward. The Study in Kerala initiative, the Scholar Connect platform, and the broader internationalisation strategy described in Chapter Six have driven substantial growth: for 2025 - 26, the University of Kerala alone received 2,620 applications from 81 countries, with 205 enrolled students from 52 countries. Across Kerala's universities, 371 foreign students from 55 countries are enrolled in 2025 - 26. The 202425 AKHES will capture the first full year system level picture of this internationalisation surge, establishing a new baseline against which the Vision 2031 target of attracting 10,000 international students annually can be measured.

Table 9.8 International Student Trajectory From Baseline to Internationalisation

Reference Point	Foreign Students Enrolled	Countries Represented
2021 - 22 (AKHES)	437	28
2025 - 26 (University of Kerala alone)	205 enrolled	52
2025 - 26 (All Kerala universities)	371	55
Vision 2031 Target	10,000 annually	—

International Student Trajectory — Baseline to Vision 2031

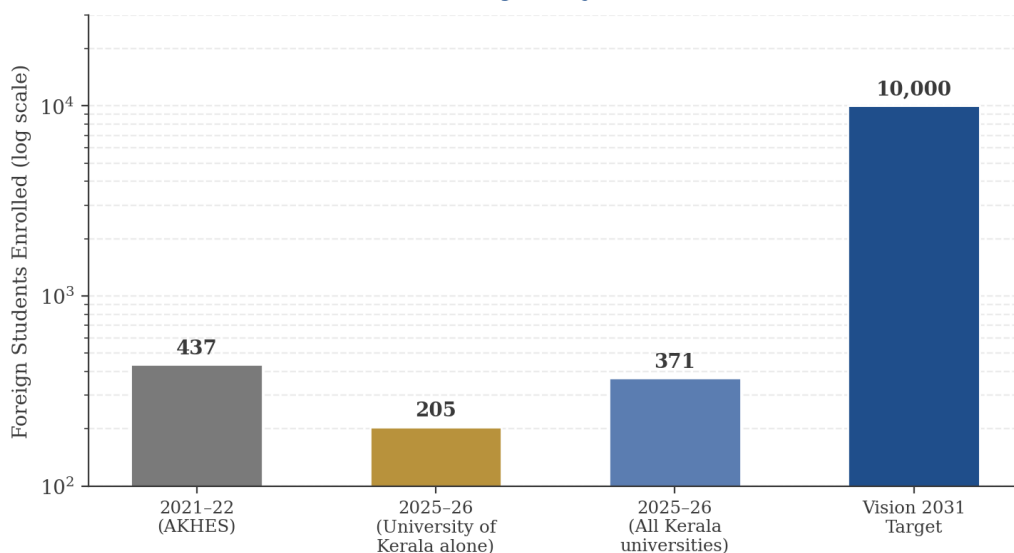


Figure 9.3 International Student Trajectory — Applications & Enrolments

Data as Governance: From Measurement to Action

The philosophical premise of AKHES is that educational governance should be empirically grounded, that decisions about resource allocation, institutional support, regulatory intervention, and policy design should be informed by systematic evidence about what is happening in the system. This premise, while widely acknowledged in principle, is in practice observed to varying degrees. Too often, policy is shaped by the visible and the anecdotal rather than the systematic and the representative.

AKHES in the Ecology of KSHEC’s Instruments

The All-Kerala Higher Education Survey does not exist in isolation. It is one element in an interconnected set of instruments through which KSHEC seeks to

know, assess, and improve Kerala’s higher education system. The relationship between AKHES and each of the other instruments examined in this book is worth tracing briefly, because it reveals the coherence of an institutional architecture whose parts are designed to reinforce rather than merely coexist with one another. Higher Education Implementation Team led by Dr Deepika Lakshman did exemplary work in producing the brilliant reports of AKHES

Table 9.9 AKHES in the KSHEC Ecosystem – Interconnections

KSHEC Instrument	How AKHES Connects	Direction of Benefit
KIRF (Rankings)	AKHES registration is a mandatory prerequisite for KIRF participation; AKHES data categories directly parallel KIRF’s ranking parameters	AKHES data enables ranking; KIRF compliance incentivises accurate AKHES submission
SAAC (Accreditation)	AKHES data on SC/ST enrolment, infrastructure, and inclusiveness provisions provides baselines for SAAC’s state specific accreditation criteria	SAAC uses AKHES as baseline; SAAC’s institutional reporting supplements AKHES coverage
KREAP (Administration)	KREAP’s real-time student life cycle data will progressively supplement AKHES’s periodic survey, transforming snapshot governance into continuous monitoring	KREAP data enriches AKHES; AKHES frameworks provide analytical structure for KREAP data
FYUGP (Curriculum)	202425 AKHES adds FYUGP specific indicators tracking exit point patterns, ABC registrations, internship completion, and major minor enrolments	AKHES is the first instrument to measure FYUGP’s systemwide implementation; findings will inform reform refinement
Scholar Connect and Study in Kerala	International student data in AKHES tracks the internationalisation surge and progress towards the Vision 2031 target of 10,000 annual international students	AKHES provides the systemwide picture that institutional enrolment data alone cannot supply
Higher Education for the Future	AKHES data constitutes primary empirical material for the journal’s analysis of Kerala’s higher education system	Journal ranked 1st globally in education, 2024 Scopus rankings; AKHES analysis gains international scholarly reach

PART FIVE



Research Infrastructure and Scholarly Publishing

CHAPTER 10

Centres of Excellence: Building the Infrastructure of Innovation

Creating Nodal Points of Advanced Knowledge in Kerala

The Moment for Dedicated Excellence

In any serious account of how a society transforms itself into a knowledge economy, there comes a moment when incremental improvement is no longer sufficient. The accumulated infrastructure of teaching, quality assurance, and data driven governance must be complemented by something more deliberately ambitious: institutions whose purpose is not to transmit existing knowledge but to create new knowledge, not to maintain standards but to exceed them. Kerala reached that moment in the report of the Commission for Reforms in Higher Education, which identified the absence of dedicated research centres as a structural gap that no amount of improvement to the universities and colleges would close. The response, a comprehensive network of Centres of Excellence sanctioned by the Department of Higher Education under the Kerala State Higher Education Council, represents the most significant investment in Kerala's research infrastructure since the state was formed.

As the KSHEC website describes them, these Centres are designed to operate under KSHEC with structured administration, expert advisory boards, and targeted academic and community engagement programmes. They advance teaching, research, innovation, and inclusivity in higher education: the four pillars that KSHEC has been building across all the initiatives examined in this book. What is novel in Kerala's case is the scale and breadth of the ambition: centres spanning the performing arts and advanced materials science, gender studies and nanotechnology, indigenous education and semiconductor research, astronomy and Ayurveda, all conceived as an integrated ecosystem anchored in the conviction that excellence and inclusivity are not competing values but mutually constitutive ones.

This chapter tells the story of how that ecosystem came into being, what each centre within it is designed to achieve, and where the initiative stands as it moves into its more ambitious phase of development. It draws on the official list of sixteen centres as of 19 February 2026, the KSHEC Centres of Excellence page, and the minutes of KSHEC's 17th Executive Body meeting of October 2025,

which provide the most authoritative account yet published of the financial and operational status of the centres.

From Reform Commission to Administrative Sanction

The commission recommended Centres of Excellence with a clearly articulated model: autonomous institutions, governed by boards drawing from government, universities, research institutes, and industry; staffed by core teams of nationally and internationally recognised scholars; equipped with the financial independence to sustain major facilities through block grants; and designed to generate additional resources through competitive funding from national and international agencies. In the state budget for 2024-25, the government announced its intention to launch seven Centres of Excellence under KSHEC. Administrative sanction followed in July 2024, with Rs 11.4 crore allocated for the first year’s operations.

By July 2025, through G.O. (Rt.) No. 925/2025/HEDN dated 17 July 2025, the government accorded administrative sanction for a total of ten Centres of Excellence, the original seven plus three new ones. In addition, by G.O. (Rt.) No. C3/147/2025/HEDN dated 28 May 2025, Rs 25 crore was earmarked for the initial phase development of the seven centres already operational. By the National Research Conference of February 2026, six further domain specific Centres of Excellence had been announced, bringing the total to sixteen. The scale of investment had grown substantially in a single year.

Table 10.1 Centres of Excellence Timeline of Key Developments

Year / Period	Milestone	What Happened
2022	Reform Commission Report	Commission chaired by Shyam B. Menon diagnoses structural gap: no institution in Kerala where a critical mass of scholars can pursue ambitious, long-range research. Recommends Centres of Excellence with autonomous governance and block grant funding.
2024-25 Budget	Government Announcement	State budget announces seven Centres of Excellence under KSHEC. Rs 11.4 crore allocated for first-year operations. Each centre to have a Director and up to five core academic team members.
July 2024	Administrative Sanction	Administrative sanction accorded. Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu announces governance structure: boards drawing from government, universities, research institutes, and industry.
January 2025	First Centres Inaugurated	CETLT and KNRSHE inaugurated at KSHEC headquarters, Thiruvananthapuram. MoU signed with Mahatma Gandhi University for KISTI. MoU signed with SSUS for KIGE.
May 2025	Capital Investment Earmarked	G.O. (Rt.) No. C3/147/2025/HEDN: Rs 25 crore earmarked for the initial phase development of the seven operational centres.

Year / Period	Milestone	What Happened
June 2025	KIGE Inaugurated	Kerala Institute for Gender Equality was officially inaugurated at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, by Higher Education Minister Dr R. Bindu.
July 2025	Network Expands to Ten	G.O. (Rt.) No. 925/2025/HEDN: administrative sanction accorded for three additional centres: Kerala Knowledge Consortium, Kerala Centre for Analytical Services, and Kerala Institute of Policy Studies.
October 2025	17th Executive Body Meeting	Detailed operational review of all centres. Budget plan of Rs 228 lakh for 202526 finalised. KIAS space allotted at College of Engineering, Munnar. KREAP Project Monitoring Unit allocated Rs 40 lakh.
February 2026	Six Domain Specific Centres Announced	National Research Conference announces six further centres: Ayurveda Research, School of Mathematics, Thanu Padmanabhan Astronomy Centre, Neurodegeneration, One Health/Zoonotic Diseases, and Nanoscience. Total reaches sixteen.

The Full Network: Sixteen Centres Across Kerala

The table below presents the complete network of Centres of Excellence as of 19 February 2026, drawn from the official KSHEC list and operational records. The sixteen centres are organised in three groups: the seven founding centres sanctioned in 2024 - 25, three new centres added in July 2025, and six domain specific centres announced at the National Research Conference of February 2026.

Table 10.2 The Complete Network – Sixteen Centres of Excellence (19 February 2026)

No.	Centre of Excellence	Host Institution	Status
PART A	Seven Founding Centres (Sanctioned 202425)		
1	Centre of Excellence for Teaching, Learning and Training (CETLT)	KSHEC HQ, Thiruvananthapuram	Operational
2	Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE) subcentres: Govt. Women’s College TVM, Kannur University, CUSAT Kochi	KSHEC HQ + 3 confirmed subcentres	Operational
3	Kerala Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation (KISTI)	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam	Operational
4	Kerala Institute of Advanced Studies (KIAS)	College of Engineering, Munnar (CCEK campus)	Space allotted
5	Centre for Indigenous People’s Education (CIPE) transforming Institute for Tribal Studies and Research, Chethalayam	University of Calicut / Wayanad	Advancing
6	Kerala Institute for Gender Equality (KIGE)	Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady	Inaugurated
7	Kerala Language Network (KLN) subcentres: Translation Centre Ponnani; Language Technology Mission Kannur	Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University	Operational

No.	Centre of Excellence	Host Institution	Status
PART B	Three New Centres (G.O. No. 925/2025/HEDN)		
8	Kerala Knowledge Consortium Centres	KSHEC	Sanctioned
9	Kerala Centre for Analytical Services (KCAS)	CUSAT	Sanctioned
10	Kerala Institute of Policy Studies (KIPS)	KSHEC	Sanctioned
PART C	Six Domain Specific Centres (February 2026)		
11	Centre of Excellence in Ayurvedic Research, Manuscript Museum and Medicinal Plants Garden	Iritty, Kannur	Announced
12	School of Mathematics	Kozhikode	Announced
13	Thanu Padmanabhan Centre of Excellence in Astronomy and Astrophysics	University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	Announced
14	Centre of Excellence in Neurodegeneration and Brain Health	CUSAT, Kochi	Announced
15	Centre of Excellence in One Health, Western Ghats Biodiversity, Human Wildlife Interface and Zoonotic Diseases	KVASU, Wayanad	Announced
16	Centre of Excellence in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam	Announced

Source: *KSHEC Centres of Excellence List, 19 February 2026.*

The Seven Founding Centres: Vision and Early Operation

Each of the seven founding centres addresses a distinct gap in Kerala’s research and educational ecosystem. Together, they span the full breadth of what a knowledge society requires: pedagogical excellence, research infrastructure, advanced science, humanistic scholarship, indigenous education, gender equality, and language capacity.

Three New Centres: Expanding the Network

The October 2025 Executive Body minutes confirm that the Government, through G.O. (Rt.) No. 925/2025/HEDN dated 17 July 2025, accorded administrative sanction for three additional Centres of Excellence, bringing the total to ten under KSHEC’s Centres of Excellence programme. Each of the three new centres extends the network’s reach into domains not covered by the founding seven.

Six Domain Specific Centres of Excellence

The National Research Conference and Kerala Higher Education Expo held in February 2026 saw the announcement of six additional domain specific Centres of Excellence, each embedded in a university already demonstrating strength in that domain. These six centres bring the total to sixteen, and together they

demonstrate that the Centres of Excellence model, once established through the founding seven, can be extended across disciplines with considerable flexibility and speed.

Financial Architecture: The Costs of Excellence

The financial architecture of the Centres of Excellence initiative has evolved substantially since its announcement. The original 2024 - 25 budget allocation was revised during the financial year, with Rs 1,54,49,657 expended across the seven centres and related KREAP operations. This compression of the initial allocation reflects the early-stage character of the centres' establishment: constituting governing bodies, securing host premises, registering as societies, and recruiting core team members are processes that take time, and capital expenditure on facilities cannot precede the institutional foundations required to receive it. For 202526, a more ambitious and operationally realistic expenditure plan has been prepared.

In addition to the Rs 228 lakh for the seven centres, the KREAP Project Monitoring Unit has been allocated a further Rs 40 lakh within the same budget head, bringing the total planned disbursement to Rs 268 lakh for 202526. A separate Rs 25 crore earmarked under the budget speech for the initial phase development of the first seven centres, confirmed by G.O. (Rt.) No. C3/147/2025/HEDN dated 28 May 2025, provides the capital underpinning for the more permanent infrastructure investments that will be required as the centres move beyond their initial operational phases. The Detailed Project Report submitted for government approval proposes three major capital investments: the establishment of CADLET and the KLearn platform adjacent to CETLT; the creation of a Semiconductor Research Laboratory as part of KISTI's infrastructure at MGU; and the development of permanent premises for KIAS at the College of Engineering, Munnar.

Table 10.3 Centres of Excellence – Approved Expenditure Plan 2025–26 (₹ Lakh)

Centre / Sub centre	Operational	Asset Creation
KNRSHE Subcentre Kannur University (CIRL and CNRF)	20	10
KNRSHE Sub-Centre Govt. Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram (CIRL and CNRF)	15	30
Kerala Language Network Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University	15	30
Kerala Institute for Gender Equality SSUS, Kalady	15	5
Kerala Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation (KISTI) MGU	30	20

Centre / Sub centre	Operational	Asset Creation
KNRSHE (KSHEC HQ)	5	10
Centre for Teaching, Learning and Training (CETLT)	18	2
Kerala Institute of Advanced Studies (KIAS) CoE Munnar	10	23
Centre for Indigenous People’s Education (CIPE) Wayanad	5	—
TOTAL	133	95
Plus: KREAP Project Monitoring Unit Rs 40 lakh	Total planned disbursement: Rs 268 lakh	Separate capital: Rs 25 crore (G.O. Rt. No. C3/147/2025/HEDN, 28 May 2025)

The Work of Becoming: Challenges and the Path Forward

As this chapter is written, in early 2026, the Centres of Excellence initiative is in its most demanding phase: the phase that separates institutions that successfully translate aspiration into operational reality from those that stall in the gap between administrative sanction and scholarly life. CETLT and KNRSHE are operational. KIGE has been inaugurated. KISTI has been formally anchored at MGU. KIAS has been allocated space at the College of Engineering, Munnar, with permanent land identified. CIPE is advancing towards full functioning as a joint operation of KSHEC and Calicut University. The Kerala Language Network has an active first subcentre. Three new centres have received administrative sanction. Six domain specific centres have been announced.

Table 10.5 Centres of Excellence – Challenges and the Path Forward

Challenge	The Problem	The Response
Scholar Recruitment	Researchers of national and international standing require competitive packages, genuine institutional autonomy, and a scholarly culture that takes years to build. Administrative sanction does not solve this.	Residential fellowship model at KIAS; industry partnership model at KISTI; competitive salaries and research freedom built into governing body constitutions from the outset.
Permanent Infrastructure	CADLET/KLearn at CETLT, the Semiconductor Research Lab at KISTI, and KIAS premises at Munnar are in DPR stage.	Rs 25 crore capital earmarked by G.O. May 2025; DPR submitted for government approval; space allotted at KIAS Munnar.
Budget Release and Utilisation	Approved allocations must be effectively released and spent. Early-stage institutions often face delayed procurement and institutional registration bottlenecks.	KSHEC facilitating academic operations on interim basis.
Domain Specific Centre Operationalisation	Six centres announced in February 2026 are commitments rather than functioning institutions. Each needs governance structures, dedicated budgets, and a recruited scholarly community.	The pattern of the founding seven, from administrative sanction in 2024 to operational subcentres and inaugurated institutions by 2025, provides a realistic template. Host

Challenge	The Problem	The Response
		universities already have domain strength.

The challenges that remain are real. Recruiting the calibre of scholars that these centres require, researchers of national and international standing who will find in these institutions the resources and freedom they need to do their best work, is not a problem that administrative sanction solves. It requires competitive packages, genuine institutional autonomy, and the kind of scholarly culture that takes years to build. The permanent infrastructure for KIAS at Munnar, the Semiconductor Research Laboratory at KISTI, and the CADLET and KLearn platforms at CETLT are the subject of a Detailed Project Report.

The domain specific centres announced in February 2026 will each require host university support, governance structures, dedicated budgets, and the patient recruitment of scholarly communities. They are, as of this writing, commitments rather than functioning institutions. But the commitment is serious, the institutional architecture is in place, and the pattern of the founding seven centres, from administrative sanction in 2024 to operational subcentres and inaugurated institutions by 2025, provides a realistic template for the speed at which well-resourced institutional will can be translated into scholarly reality. Dr Sudheendran K, Research Officer has been working as the State Level Coordinator of the scheme in the Council.

CHAPTER 11

KSHEC Publications

Higher Education for the Future and Higher Education Matters

Two Kinds of Scholarly Voice

A higher education council that confines itself to administration is a body that manages the present. One that also publishes, producing knowledge about higher education rather than simply policy concerning it, is a body that helps to shape the future. Since its inception, the Kerala State Higher Education Council has understood this distinction and acted upon it. Its two publications represent two distinct modes of scholarly engagement with the world of higher education. The peer reviewed academic journal Higher Education for the Future addresses the international scholarly community in the rigorous voice of evidence-based research. The monthly magazine Higher Education Matters speaks in the accessible voice of informed commentary to the wider community of educators, policymakers, students, and citizens with a stake in the quality of higher education.

Taken together, these two publications embody KSHEC's conviction that the Council is not merely an advisory body or an administrative apparatus, but an intellectual institution whose identity is shaped as much by what it thinks and publishes as by what it regulates and funds. This conviction has produced, in the case of Higher Education for the Future, an achievement so remarkable that it calls not merely for description but for explanation. The story of how a journal launched from Thiruvananthapuram with an annual budget of one lakh rupees came, by 2024, to stand at the very summit of its field globally is one of the most distinctive chapters in the story of Indian scholarly publishing.

This chapter tells both stories. It traces Higher Education for the Future from its founding in 2010, through changes in name, scope, and editorial philosophy, to its confirmed first place position in the Scopus CiteScore 2025 rankings among 1,620 education journals worldwide. It then turns to Higher Education Matters, the Council's more recent and differently conceived contribution to educational discourse: a monthly magazine whose accessibility and breadth serve purposes that no peer reviewed journal can. Finally, it reflects on what these two publications, taken together, reveal about KSHEC's understanding of its own role: not merely to administer higher education, but to think seriously and publicly about it.

Table 11.1 KSHEC's Two Publications – Comparative Profile

Publication	Profile
Higher Education for the Future	Format: Peer reviewed biannual academic journal. Publisher: SAGE Publications. Frequency: January and July. Audience: International researchers, policymakers, and academics. Indexing: Scopus, ERIC, ICI, ProQuest, JGate, DeepDyve, OCLC. APCs: None – no Article Processing Charges. CiteScore 2024: 31.4 – ranked #1 globally among 1,620 education journals. ISSN: 23476311 (print), 23485779 (online).
Higher Education Matters	Format: Monthly magazine with expert commentary. Publisher: Kerala State Higher Education Council. Frequency: Monthly. Audience: Faculty, administrators, students, policymakers, and the general public. Subscription: Rs 1,000 per year; up to 20% discount on special offers. Access: Current and archived issues through KSHEC website and highereducationmatters.com. Coverage: Global higher education news and Keralaspecific achievements and policy developments.

Higher Education for the Future: Origins and Early Identity

Every journal begins with a conviction: that there are questions worth asking whose answers are not yet being sought adequately, and that a publication can create the space in which that searching may occur. The conviction behind what would become Higher Education for the Future was articulated by Professor K.N. Panikkar, the distinguished historian who served as KSHEC’s first Vice Chairman from 2007 to 2011. Prof. Panikkar recognised that a scholarly journal could serve several purposes at once: providing a platform for rigorous thinking about higher education, connecting Kerala’s academic community to global conversations, and establishing KSHEC as a serious intellectual presence in a landscape in which councils of this kind were often regarded as administrative rather than scholarly bodies.

The journal was launched in 2010 as the Journal of Convergence Studies, a title reflecting the interdisciplinary orientation envisaged by its founders and their ambition to bring different fields of inquiry into productive dialogue. From its very first issue, the advisory board signalled global intent: Noam Chomsky, the world’s most cited living intellectual and a foundational figure in linguistics and political thought; Romila Thapar, one of India’s foremost historians of ancient and medieval South Asia; Terry Eagleton, arguably the most widely read literary theorist of his generation; and Roger Y. Tsien, the Nobel Prizewinning chemist whose work on fluorescent proteins revolutionised cell biology. These were not simply names on a letterhead but scholars whose presence declared that this publication intended to engage with the most significant intellectual currents in the world, not merely to document the concerns of a regional institution.

In subsequent years, the advisory board expanded to include figures whose contributions to twentieth and twenty first century thought have been foundational: Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian philosopher whose work at the intersection of psychoanalysis, Marxism, and cultural theory has shaped intellectual debate across continents; Michael W. Apple, one of the foremost

critical theorists of education; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose work on postcoloniality has transformed how scholars think about knowledge, power, and representation; and Aijaz Ahmad, the Marxist literary and political theorist. The presence of these scholars was not merely decorative. They engaged substantively with the journal's direction, lending both intellectual guidance and the sort of legitimacy that opens doors within the global academic community.

During these early years, the journal operated with very modest resources. Until 2018, it carried an annual subvention charge of one lakh rupees, a figure that speaks not of parsimony but of the realities of a publication in its formative years, before reputation translates into citations, and citations into the visibility that sustains a journal's development. During the tenure of former Vice Chairman T.P. Sreenivasan, the journal underwent its first major transformation: a change of name from the Journal of Convergence Studies to Higher Education for the Future. The new title was both more specific and more ambitious: more specific in naming higher education as its domain, and more ambitious in claiming a role in shaping the future of that domain rather than merely describing its present.

The SAGE Partnership: From Aspiration to Global Reach

The partnership with SAGE Publications, one of the world's leading academic publishers with a global distribution network reaching libraries and individual subscribers in every country with a serious research infrastructure, marked the decisive stage in the journal's development. SAGE brought not only distribution, but also production standards, ethical publishing frameworks through membership of the Committee on Publication Ethics, and the marketing capacity to make Higher Education for the Future visible to scholars who had previously had no reason to look in its direction. The financial consequences were equally transformative. From an annual subvention of one lakh rupees, the journal evolved into a royalty generating publication, self-sustaining and increasingly able to attract the high-quality submissions that would further strengthen its standing.

The journal is published biannually, in January and July, and is available online via the SAGE Publications homepage. It carries the print ISSN 23476311 and eISSN 23485779. Its indexing and abstracting coverage is comprehensive and spans multiple databases: Scopus, ERIC, the Indian Citation Index, ProQuest, JGate, DeepDyve, DutchKB, OCLC, and Ohio, a presence that ensures its articles are discoverable by the widest possible research community worldwide. Submission and publication involve no Article Processing Charges, reflecting a commitment to open intellectual exchange. The journal does not ask authors to

pay for visibility, nor does it limit its own impact by placing its content behind financial barriers for readers.

Table 11.2 Higher Education for the Future – Distinguished Advisory Board (Selected)

Scholar / Institution	Scholar / Institution
Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (retd.) – World’s most cited living intellectual; foundational figure in linguistics and political thought	Romila Thapar, Jawaharlal Nehru University (retd.) – One of India’s foremost historians of ancient and medieval South Asia
Terry Eagleton, University of Lancaster – Arguably the most widely read literary theorist of his generation	Alessandro Giuliani, Professor in Mathematical Physics, University of Roma Tre
Slavoj Žižek, International Centre for Humanities – Philosopher at the intersection of psychoanalysis, Marxism, and cultural theory	Michael W. Apple, University of Wisconsin Madison – One of the foremost critical theorists of education
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Columbia University – Postcolonial theorist who transformed how scholars think about knowledge, power, and representation	

The Editorial Philosophy That Built Excellence

The turning point in the journal’s trajectory came with the arrival of Professor Rajan Gurukkal as Chief Editor during his tenure as KSHEC’s Vice Chairman. His approach to the journal’s editorship was guided by a clear and demanding philosophy: that the path to scholarly impact lay not in the pursuit of prestigious names or fashionable topics, but in the unrelenting cultivation of quality, article by article and issue by issue.

The double anonymised peer review process, in which neither author nor reviewer knows the identity of the other, was implemented not as a formality but as a genuine intellectual instrument. Reviewers were asked to assess not merely whether an article had been competently executed, but whether it made a real contribution to knowledge: whether its research questions were genuinely significant, whether its methodology was sound, whether its language was precise, whether its premises led with logical necessity to its conclusions, and whether it added something to the scholarly conversation that was not already available.

The editorial team that implemented this vision was small but deeply committed. Professor P.K. Michael Tharakan, a distinguished educational thinker and scholar of Kerala’s social history, served as Editor, bringing intellectual breadth and sensitivity to argument and evidence. Dr Rajan Varughese, KSHEC’s Member Secretary, served as Associate Editor, ensuring that the editorial work remained connected to the Council’s broader intellectual

mission. Dr Deepika Lakshman, KSHEC’s documentation officer, managed the editorial administration: the flow of submissions, the coordination of reviews, communication with authors, and the meeting of production deadlines, with the efficiency and care that are invisible to readers but without which no journal can function.

The Metrics: An Extraordinary Trajectory

The rise of Higher Education for the Future to global pre-eminence can be traced with unusual precision through the Scopus CiteScore data. CiteScore measures the average number of citations received per document over a four-year rolling window, a metric released annually by Elsevier in June, with the 2025 release covering citations accumulated during 2021 to 2024. The table below presents the full trajectory.

Table 11.3 Higher Education for the Future – CiteScore Trajectory (2020–2024)

Year	CiteScore	Score Visualised
2020	0.43	Q4
2021	0.96	Q4
2022	11.98	Q1
2023	24.1	Q1
2024	31.4	Q1 #1

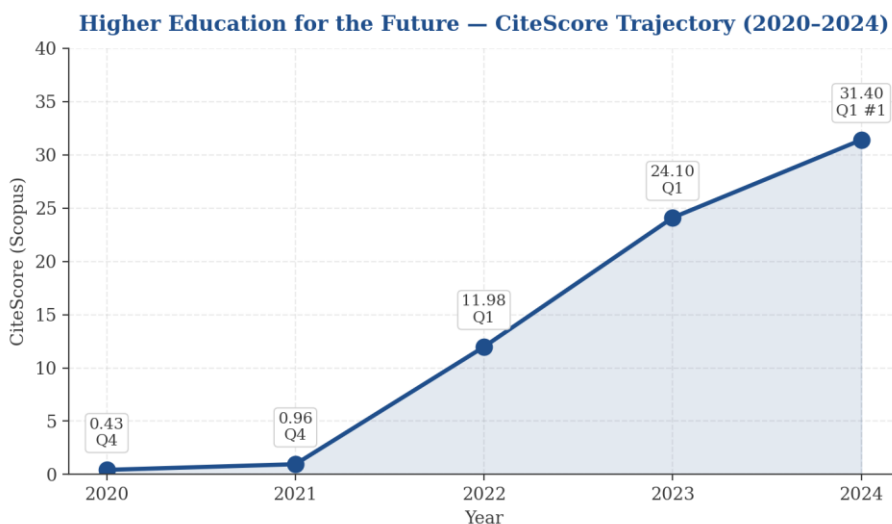


Figure 11.1 Higher Education for the Future — CiteScore Trajectory

Sources: Scopus CiteScore 2025 released June 2025; Scopus Education Q1 List.

Table 11.4 Global Peer Comparison – CiteScore 2024 (Scopus)

Journal	Publisher	CiteScore 2024
Higher Education for the Future	SAGE / KSHEC	31.4
Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	Elsevier	28.7
Review of Educational Research	AERA (USA)	~8–9
Higher Education	Springer (Netherlands)	~7.2
Studies in Higher Education	Taylor and Francis	~6.8

The movement from 0.43 to 31.4 in four years is extraordinary by any standard. In academic publishing, where progress is usually measured in decimal increments accumulated over decades, this kind of movement represents not incremental improvement but categorical transformation. In 2020, the journal stood in the fourth quartile of education journals, receiving fewer than half a citation per article per year. By 2024, it had achieved a CiteScore of 31.4, confirmed as first among 1,620 indexed education journals in the Scopus CiteScore 2025 data released in June 2025, together with a Source Normalised Impact per Paper of 4.950 and an hindex of 13.

The June 2025 release of the Scopus CiteScore 2025 data, covering the period 2021 to 2024, confirmed the journal’s position. The document listing Scopus Education Q1 journals, compiled in August 2025 and widely circulated within the international academic community, places Higher Education for the Future first, with a CiteScore of 31.4. The second ranked journal, Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, stood at 28.7. The gap between first and second was not slight. Of the 31,138 journals with CiteScore across all fields indexed in Scopus, Higher Education for the Future retained its number one position in the Education category.

The Review of Educational Research, published by the American Educational Research Association and one of the most prestigious education journals in the world, has a CiteScore in single figures. Higher Education, the Netherlands based journal that is a standard point of reference in the field, stands well below. Studies in Higher Education, published by Taylor and Francis, is likewise outranked by a substantial margin. The journal from Thiruvananthapuram, without an institutional endowment, without a century of publishing history, and without affiliation to a globally recognised university, has surpassed them all, and by a considerable distance. Total citations in 2024 stood at 519, of which only three were self-citations: a significant figure, because self-citation can inflate metrics without offering real evidence of impact on the wider scholarly community. The journal’s citations were external, organic, and earned.

Special Issues: Catalysts of Global Attention

Behind the aggregate metrics lie specific editorial decisions whose effects can be traced in the citation record. Two special issues accelerated the journal’s rise and demonstrate the editorial intelligence that chose to address the right questions at the right moments.

The first catalytic special issue addressed the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on higher education. The pandemic confronted higher education with a crisis unlike anything the sector had experienced in living memory: the simultaneous closure of campuses worldwide, the forced transition to online teaching with weeks rather than years of preparation, severe financial stress as revenue streams collapsed, and fundamental questions about what universities were for, raised in acute form by their sudden inability to perform their ordinary functions. Scholars and policymakers urgently needed rigorous analysis to make sense of what was happening and to prepare for what might follow. The journal provided that analysis at the moment of greatest demand, and the resulting issue was read and cited very widely. It reflected an editorial awareness of when the scholarly community most needed a platform, and the institutional capacity to provide it quickly.

The second catalytic special issue addressed the National Education Policy 2020, the most comprehensive reform of India’s education system since Independence. The NEP attracted intense scholarly attention both within India and internationally. The journal’s special issue offered rigorous, multidisciplinary analysis of the policy’s provisions, its theoretical foundations, its implementation challenges, and its likely effects, analysis that drew contributions from scholars across India and positioned the journal as the premier venue for serious engagement with Indian education policy at a moment of global interest. The citations generated by this issue reached into the substantial international literature on education reform and policy, bringing the journal to the attention of scholars who had not previously encountered it. The journal has indicated that it will continue this tradition of timely and substantial engagement through a forthcoming special issue on artificial intelligence and the future of higher education.

Table 11.5 Key Milestones in the Journal’s Journey

Period	Development	Significance
2010	Inaugural Issues	Journal of Convergence Studies launches with advisory board including Noam Chomsky, Romila Thapar, Terry Eagleton, and Nobel Laureate Roger Y. Tsien. CiteScore: below 0.5, Q4.

Period	Development	Significance
~2018	Name Change to Higher Education for the Future	Under Vice Chairman T.P. Sreenivasan, the journal is renamed. New title signals specific domain (higher education) and directional ambition (shaping the future). Partnership with SAGE Publications deepens editorial reach.
Prof. Gurukkal's tenure	Editorial Philosophy Transforms Quality	Intensive double anonymised peer review and editorial engagement elevate articles from descriptive to theoretical. CiteScore begins rapid climb. The gap between Q4 obscurity and Q1 excellence begins to close.
2020	Covid19 Special Issue	Timely, rigorous analysis of the pandemic's impact on higher education globally. Widely read and cited by researchers, institutions, and policymakers worldwide. CiteScore jumps from 0.43 to 0.96.
Post2020	National Education Policy 2020 Special Issue	Multidisciplinary analysis of India's most comprehensive education reform since Independence. Attracts citations from the substantial international literature on education reform and policy. CiteScore leaps to 11.98.
2022-2023	Q1 Entry and Rapid Ascent	CiteScore reaches 11.98 (Q1, top 5 globally) in 2022, then 24.1 (Q1, 3rd among 1,543 journals) in 2023. hindex reaches 13.
June 2025	Scopus CiteScore 2025 Confirms #1	CiteScore 2024 confirmed at 31.4 – first among 1,620 indexed education journals worldwide. SNIP of 4.950. Second ranked journal (Computers and Education: AI) stands at 28.7. Total citations in 2024: 519, of which only 3 are self-citations.

Thematic Scope: What the Journal Publishes and Why It Matters

Table 11.6 Higher Education for the Future – Core Thematic Areas

Thematic Area	Description
Curricular and Educational Reforms	Comparative study of reform initiatives across national systems, with particular attention to implementation challenges and unintended consequences
Internationalisation of Higher Education	Student mobility, cross border research collaboration, and the global circulation of knowledge across different national and cultural contexts
Governance and Operational Practices	University governance, leadership, accountability frameworks, and the organisational dimensions of higher education institutions
Comparative Studies	Cross-national analysis of higher education systems, enabling evidence-based policy borrowing and contextualised evaluation of reform strategies
Pedagogical Innovation	Transformations in teaching and learning, including digital pedagogy, active learning, and outcome-based design of educational experiences
Philosophy of Higher Education	Foundational questions about what universities are for, what knowledge is worth pursuing, and the relationship between higher education and the broader social good

The Significance for Indian and Global Scholarship

The achievement of Higher Education for the Future must be understood against the long and complicated history of India's relationship with global scholarly

authority. Since Independence, Indian academics have produced research of genuine distinction, yet that research has often been published in international journals edited from the Global North, filtered through editorial processes dominated by scholars from Western institutions, and evaluated according to citation practices shaped by the reading habits and reference cultures of those institutions. The result has been a persistent asymmetry: Indian scholars contribute to global knowledge, but the journals and publication infrastructure through which that knowledge is disseminated have remained overwhelmingly Western.

This asymmetry is not merely a matter of prestige. It has epistemological consequences. When the journals that define a field are edited from a narrow range of locations, reflecting the concerns and frameworks of a particular intellectual tradition, the knowledge that is produced and valorised tends to reflect those concerns and frameworks. Questions that matter in one context but not another are asked, or not asked, not always because of their intrinsic importance, but because of whose questions are taken seriously. The achievement of Higher Education for the Future is a challenge to this asymmetry: a demonstration that a journal edited from India, drawing on scholarship from the Global South as well as the North, cannot merely participate in international conversations about higher education but help to set their terms.

Higher Education Matters: The Popular Voice of a Scholarly Institution

If Higher Education for the Future is KSHEC's contribution to the scholarly conversation among researchers and academics, Higher Education Matters is its contribution to the wider public conversation about education: the conversation that includes not only researchers but teachers, administrators, students, parents, policymakers, and every citizen with a stake in the quality of higher education. The two publications serve different yet complementary purposes, addressing different audiences with different kinds of knowledge and different modes of presentation.

Higher Education Matters is a monthly magazine dedicated to the evolving world of higher education globally, while also highlighting achievements and developments in Kerala. It offers insightful analysis, expert perspectives, and in-depth reporting on policies, innovations, and emerging trends shaping education worldwide. With contributions from thought leaders, educators, and policymakers, each issue examines the forces influencing institutions and student experiences. More than a publication, Higher Education Matters serves as a platform for dialogue, debate, and solutions, aiming to inform, inspire, and

empower stakeholders navigating the complex and everchanging landscape of higher education.

The magazine is published monthly, a frequency that Higher Education for the Future, as a peer reviewed scholarly journal, cannot match, but which the magazine format both permits and makes appropriate for its purposes. Current and archived issues are accessible through the KSHEC website, and a paid subscription is available at Rs 1,000 per year, a modest sum reflecting the magazine's commitment to accessibility. Special subscription offers providing discounts of up to 20 per cent are periodically available. The website for direct subscription access is higher education[matters.com] (<https://matters.com>). Dr. Manulal P. Ram, the Executive Editor of the magazine, brings exceptional skill and creativity to editing, design, and layout, ensuring each issue is both visually engaging and intellectually compelling.

Purpose and Audience: The Complementary Role of Accessible Scholarship

The existence of Higher Education Matters alongside Higher Education for the Future reflects a sophisticated understanding of how knowledge reaches different audiences and serves different purposes. Peer reviewed research, published biannually in a journal indexed in Scopus, is written by specialists for specialists. Its language is technical, its argumentation dense, its citations extensive, and its readers are primarily researchers who possess both the expertise and the time required to engage with it seriously.

But the knowledge generated by peer reviewed research must reach a wider audience if it is to influence practice and policy. The principal of a government college in Palakkad managing the transition to the FYUGP is unlikely to be reading Higher Education for the Future, however relevant the journal's contents may be to her challenges. The education correspondent of a Malayalam newspaper covering the rollout of KIRF's second edition rankings needs information in a form she can use for general readers. The student union leader preparing a submission on campus conditions needs data and analysis she can access without specialist training. Higher Education Matters is designed to serve all these readers, and by serving them, to extend the reach of the educational thinking in which KSHEC is engaged beyond the narrow community of researchers to whom Higher Education for the Future speaks.

The model is not without precedent. Some of the world's most influential intellectual institutions publish both scholarly journals and accessible magazines: the London School of Economics publishes the LSE Review of Books alongside its scholarly journals; the Brookings Institution publishes both research reports and accessible policy briefs. KSHEC's two publications follow

this well-established pattern of layered communication: deep and specialised at one level, broad and accessible at another, but consistent in their commitment to quality and their grounding in evidence at both.

Table 11.7 Higher Education Matters – Three Reader Communities

The Practitioner	The Policymaker	The Citizen Learner
Faculty, college principals, administrators, and student union leaders navigating the complex realities of higher education reform on a daily basis.	Government officials, education journalists, civil society leaders, and citizens with a stake in the direction of Kerala’s higher education system.	Students, parents, and community members trying to understand the options, challenges, and direction of higher education in their state and across the world.

The Publications as Mirrors of Institutional Identity

Within the broader architecture of KSHEC’s work—the quality assurance of SAAC, the institutional benchmarking of KIRF, the digital administration of KREAP, the diaspora engagement of Scholar Connect, the library integration of KALNET, the curricular renewal of the FYUGP, and the research infrastructure of the Centres of Excellence—the two publications occupy a distinctive place. They are the Council’s contribution to the global intellectual conversation on higher education: not policy instruments, not administrative systems, not recognition programmes, but vehicles for ideas.

Higher Education for the Future is the most visible expression of KSHEC’s intellectual seriousness, and its global standing gives that seriousness an authority that no internal document or policy achievement could confer. Higher Education Matters, by contrast, measures its impact not in citations but in conversations: in the discussions it prompts among faculty in college staff rooms, among students on campuses, among policymakers in government offices, among journalists covering education, and among parents trying to understand the options available to their children. These conversations are harder to measure than citations, but they are no less real and no less consequential.

Taken together, the two publications demonstrate that KSHEC is not merely an organisation that does things to higher education, but one that thinks about it, and that shares its thinking, in different forms and with different audiences, with the seriousness and accessibility that the subject requires.

EPILOGUE

This comprehensive volume documenting the journey of the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) (2017 - 2026), is presented with a profound sense of both pride and responsibility. Documenting the evolution of an institution as dynamic as KSHEC is no simple task, for the Council has never been a static entity. Conceived in 2007 and nurtured through the years, it has functioned as a living and evolving institution. Reflecting on its trajectory, particularly the intensive phase of reforms in recent years, it is evident that the Council has come to serve as both the conscience and the compass of higher education in Kerala.

I was deeply conscious of the legacy entrusted to me as the Member Secretary of the Council. The foundational contributions of scholars such as Professor K.N. Panikkar, and Professor Thomas Joseph, had already established KSHEC as a distinctive advisory body. Its strength lies in its ability to bring together the academic, administrative, and aspirational dimensions of higher education within a single institutional framework. The various bodies of the Council bringing together the Honourable Minister for Higher Education, Vice-Chancellors, eminent scholars and teacher/ student representatives which reflects a microcosm of the broader higher education ecosystem.

The evolution of the Council represents a sustained policy effort to build a coherent, responsive, and future-oriented higher education system. Positioned at the interface of government and universities, KSHEC has enabled a model of coordination that balances institutional autonomy with systemic accountability, and academic excellence with social equity.

The KSHEC initiatives outlined in this volume reveal a clear and consistent policy trajectory. They include the Higher Education Empowerment Implementation Plan approved by the government of Kerala amounting to Rs. 99.95 Crores, The Chief Minister's NAVA Kerala Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Kairali Research Award, Brain Gain, Scholar Connect, SAAC, KIRF, FYUGP, Revised PG, Revised B Voc. Curriculum, CSDCP, Internship Kerala, K-REAP, K Learn, Centres of Excellence (CoE). The Council's organisation of the International Higher Education Conclave (January 2025) and the National Research Conference (February 2026) stands as a set of landmark events in the state's higher education sector. The KSHEC publications Higher Education for the Future and Higher Education Matters have emerged as exemplary chronicles of higher education in the country. Simultaneously, targeted investments in research and human capital—through fellowships, awards, and international

academic engagement—have initiated a structural shift from a predominantly teaching-oriented system to one that integrates research and innovation. The development of digital public infrastructure, particularly through platforms such as K-REAP and associated knowledge networks, has strengthened administrative efficiency and transparency, thereby enabling the modernisation of higher education institutions in the state.

The strategic integration of technology in the implementation and administration of Council initiatives—evident in digital platforms such as the Higher Education Scholarship Portal, the revamped KSHEC website, Scholar Connect, Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF), and the Higher Education Survey—alongside the establishment of ten KSHEC Centres of Excellence and key infrastructure initiatives, including the allotment of land for the KSHEC headquarters and commencement of the first phase of construction of Unnatha Vidya Bhavan at the KSSTM campus, Thiruvananthapuram, and the Government decision to provide one acre of land for KIAS at Munnar, stands out as a notable achievement of this period.

Curricular and structural reforms, most notably the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, mark a significant transition towards flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and outcome-based education. Supported by state-wide data systems such as the All-Kerala Higher Education Survey and shared academic resources like KALNET and DIGICOL these initiatives collectively signal the emergence of a sustainable and integrated knowledge architecture in the state. The experience of KSHEC offers an important policy lesson: meaningful transformation in higher education is incremental, cumulative, and dependent on institutional continuity and participation of Universities / Colleges and faculty and non-teaching staff. In this regard, the Kerala model presents an alternative framework—one that is grounded in the social achievements of the state rather than uniform standardisation enunciated at the national level. Its emphasis on inclusiveness, public accountability, and knowledge-driven development provides valuable insights for subnational governments seeking to balance higher education expansion with equity and excellence.

This volume, therefore, is not merely a record of initiatives during the last decade.; it is a policy reference point. While significant foundations have been laid, the task ahead lies in consolidation, scaling, and continuous refinement to ensure that higher education remains central to Kerala's broader social and economic transformation. It documents policies, programmes, and milestones, but more importantly, they reflect the collective will of an academic community. From the dedicated KSHEC Team of efficient staff of the Council to faculty in

distant colleges, from visionary Vice-Chancellors to the students who animate our classrooms, the story of KSHEC is, ultimately, the story of all of them.

It has been the honour of my professional life to serve as the Member Secretary of this remarkable institution. I extend my deepest gratitude to Shri Pinarayi Vijayan ,Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala ,Dr. R. Bindu, the Hon'ble Minister for Higher Education, Prof. Rajan Gurukkal, Vice Chairman, KSHEC, Vice Chancellors, Registrar/Controller of Examinations in various Universities Members of the Executive Body, Principal Secretary Higher Education, my colleagues in the Council including Research Officers, Registrar, Finance officer, academic/ documentation/ administrative personnel and my own personal staff in the Member Secretary's office. This volume stands as a tribute to that shared commitment.

Member Secretary

Thiruvananthapuram

30.04.2026

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Appendix

Centres of Excellence:

Sl No.	Centres of Excellence	Agency/ Location
1	Centre of excellence for Teaching, Learning and Training	Kerala State Higher Education Council, Thiruvananthapuram
2	Kerala Institute for Science, Technology, and Innovation (KISTI)	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
3	Kerala Institute of Advanced Studies (KIAS)	Munnar Engineering College campus of the Centre for Continuing Education Kerala (CCEK)
4	Kerala Network for Research-Support in Higher Education – (KNRSHE) Sub Centres	Main Centre, Kerala State Higher Education Council, Thiruvananthapuram
	Central Instrumentation Laboratory, TVPM (South)	i. Government Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram
	Central Instrumentation Laboratory – Kannur (North)	ii. Kannur University, Kannur
	Centre for Academic Computing, Cochin	iii. Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur
5	Centre for Indigenous People's Education (CIPE) Institute for Tribal Studies and Research (ITSR) at Chethalayam to be transformed as Centre for Indigenous People	University of Calicut, Kozhikode
6	The Kerala Institute for Gender Equality (KIGE)	Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady
7	Kerala Language Network Sub Centre – a. Translation Centre, Ponnani b. Language Technology Mission, Kannur	Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University
8	Kerala Knowledge Consortium Centres	KSHEC
9	Kerala Centre for Analytical Services (KCAS)	CUSAT
10	Kerala Institute of Policy Studies (KIPS)	KSHEC
11	Centre of Excellence in Ayurvedic Research, Manuscript Museum, Medicinal Plants Garden, Iritty, Kannur	
12	School of Mathematics, Kozhikode	Kozhikode
13	Thanu Padmanabhan Centre of Excellence in Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Kerala	University of Kerala
14	Centre of Excellence in Neurodegeneration and Brain Health (CENABH), CUSAT	CUSAT

Sl No.	Centres of Excellence	Agency/ Location
15	Centre of Excellence in One Health, Western Ghats Biodiversity, Human-Wildlife Interface and Zoonotic Diseases, KVASU, Wayanad	KVASU, Wayanad
16	Centre of Excellence in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, M G University, Kottayam	M G University, Kottayam

Members of the Kerala State Higher Education Council, 2026

Role	Name	Designation
Patron	Shri. Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar	Hon'ble Governor of Kerala
Visitor	Sri Pinarayi Vijayan	Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala
Chairperson	Dr R Bindu	Hon'ble Minister for Higher Education
Vice-Chairman	Dr. Rajan Gurukkal P.M.	—
Member Secretary	Dr. Rajan Varughese	—

Executive Body

No.	Name	Position / Note
1	Dr. Rajan Gurukkal P.M.	Vice-Chairman
2	Dr. Rajan Varughese	Member Secretary
3	Dr. Saji Gopinath	Vice Chancellor, KUDSIT (nominated by rotation)
4(a)	Dr. Sabu Thomas	Former VC, Mahatma Gandhi University – Educationalist, Clause (d) of Section 14
4(b)	Dr. K.K. Damodaran	Educationalist, Clause (d) of Section 14
4(c)	Dr. M.S. Rajasree	Technical Education Director – Educationalist, Clause (d) of Section 14
4(d)	Sri. Paul V Karanthanam	Educationalist, Clause (d) of Section 14
4(e)	Dr. P.P. Ajayakumar	Educationalist, Clause (d) of Section 14
5	Dr. Sharmila Mary Joseph IAS	Secretary to Government, Higher Education Dept, Ex-officio

Details of Staff – KSHEC 2026

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal	Vice Chairman
2	Dr. Rajan Varughese	Member Secretary
3	Smt. Beena Rani G S	Registrar
4	Smt. Haseena M	Finance Officer
5	Smt. Rashmi P. R	Deputy Registrar

KSHEC Initiatives — A Summary Outline

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
6	Sri. Suresh Babu R	Section Officer
7	Dr. Manulal P Ram	Research Officer
8	Dr. Uthara Soman	Research Officer
9	Smt. Tinchu P James	Research Officer
10	Dr. Shefeeq V	Research Officer on Special Duty
11	Dr. Sudheendran K	Research Officer on Special Duty
12	Smt. Deepika Lakshman	Documentation Officer
13	Sri. Eldho Mathews	Program Officer
14	Sri. Dileep M	Research Associate
15	Smt. Heidi Sande Mariam	Research Associate
16	Dr. Chithra V. S	Research Associate
17	Sri. Sandeep S Nair	System Analyst
18	Sri. Arun S S	Research Assistant
19	Sri. Prashobh P Prakash	Technical Assistant
20	Smt. Jeenu K. S	Technical Assistant
21	Smt. Radhika R	Technical Assistant
22	Smt. Asa Rani G	Assistant
23	Smt. Sabitha S	Assistant
24	Smt. Lakshmi A R	Assistant
25	Sri. Rajkumar B	Assistant
26	Smt. Lathika K	Assistant
27	Smt. Divya A S	Confidential Assistant, O/o the Vice-Chairman
28	Sri. Krishna Kumar P. J	Assistant, O/o the Member Secretary
29	Smt. Vimala S	Data Entry Operator
30	Smt. Sherin A.S	Data Entry Operator
31	Smt. Ajitha S	Data Entry Operator
32	Sri. Syam S	Data Entry Operator
33	Sri. Jose Raj S	Office Attendant
34	Sri. Bincy Thomas	Office Attendant
35	Sri. Vysakh B	Office Attendant
36	Sri. Antin Vinod H	Driver
37	Sri. Selvarajan K.S	Driver

Committee Reports 2017-2026

Title	Chairperson
Guidelines for Starting New programmes in Emerging Areas	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M
Report of the Committee to Frame Guidelines for Equivalency Recognition of Degrees/Diploma of Universities and Institutions	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M

KSHEC Initiatives — A Summary Outline

Title	Chairperson
Report of the Committee to Study the Academic and Other Aspects of the Functioning of the Autonomous Colleges in the State	Dr. Joy Job Kulavelil
State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC) Manual	KSHEC
Interim Report of the Committee to Study the Problems of Inter University Centres	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M
Report of the Committee to Evolve Implementation Proceedings for the Institution of the Kerala Open University	Prof. Fathimathu Zuhara
Perspective Plan for Starting New Colleges of Architecture in the State	KSHEC
Perspective Plan for State Higher Education with Special Reference to Arts & Science Colleges in Kerala	KSHEC
Report on B.Voc Courses in State Universities	KSHEC
Perspective Plan for Setting up New Engineering Institutions	KSHEC
Perspective Plan for Starting New Polytechnics in the State	KSHEC
Report on Implementation of Prabudhatha	KSHEC
Report of the Committee to Study the Admission Procedure in Engineering Colleges in Kerala	Prof. R.V.G. Menon
Report of the Committee Constituted for Standardizing the Non-teaching Posts of the Universities	Shri. K.T. George
Report of the Committee for Restructuring Post Graduate Curriculum in State Universities/Colleges	Prof. E.D. Jemmis
Interim Report of the Committee for Curriculum Restructuring in Teacher Education Programmes (B.Ed).	Prof. Anil Kumar K
Handbook on Equivalency of Academic Programmes/Degrees of Universities	KSHEC
Report of the Committee for The Formation of Directorate of Legal Education for Government Law Colleges in the State of Kerala	Prof. (Dr.) Vikraman Nair
Report on Legal Education in Kerala and the Feasibility of Starting Three Year LLB Evening Course in Govt. Law College, Ernakulam	KSHEC
Mode of Appointment of Registrar/Controller of Examinations/ Finance Officer in Universities in State	KSHEC
Report of the Committee to Study the Problems of Filling up Teaching Posts in Universities	Dr. Fathimathu Zuhara
Report on Academic Performance of Autonomous Colleges in the State	KSHEC
Report on Earn While You Learn Scheme	KSHEC
Report of the Six Member Committee on National Education Policy 2020 and Kerala	Prof. Prabhat Patnaik
Chancellors Award Revised Guidelines	KSHEC
Report on Examination Reforms in State Universities	Prof. N.J. Rao
Report on the Unification of Fees in Respect of Foreign Students Studying in the Universities in Kerala	Dr. Sabu Thomas Dr. Gopinath Ravindran
Chief Minister's Nava Kerala Post-Doctoral Fellowship- Guidelines	KSHEC
Project Grant Guidelines-Kairali Research Awards	KSHEC

KSHEC Initiatives — A Summary Outline

Title	Chairperson
Digital Enablement of HEIs in Kerala – Implementation of Learning Management System (LMS) : Plan Proposal	Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P.M. Dr. Saji Gopinath
Problems of Researchers in State Universities and Colleges	Dr. J. Rajan
Centres of Excellence- (Concept Paper)	KSHEC
Centres of Excellence – DPR – 7	KSHEC
Chief Minister’s Nava Kerala Post Doctoral Fellowship – Revised Guidelines	KSHEC
Directory of Researchers: Chief Minister’s Navakerala Post Doctoral Fellowships (CMNPF) 2022 Batch I	KSHEC
Guidelines Knowledge Translation Research 2022	KSHEC
Handbook: Outcome Based Education (General)	KSHEC
Handbook: Outcome Based Education (Engineering) 2020	KSHEC
Outcome Based Education (OBE) for Redesigning Courses Choice Based Credit Semester System (CBCSS)	KSHEC
MOODLE- LMS Training Programme: Digital Enablement of Higher Education Institutions	KSHEC
Medical Research Ecosystem – Report Recommendation	KSHEC
Report Commission for the Reforms in Higher Education in Kerala 2022	Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of Kerala
Report Kerala State University Law Reforms Commission (KSULRC) 3 Vols	Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of Kerala
Report Commission for the Reforms in Examination in the Universities and Higher Education Institutions of Kerala June 2022	Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of Kerala
All Kerala Higher Education Survey 2020 – 21	KSHEC
All Kerala Higher Education Survey 2021-22 AKHES report 24-25	KSHEC KSHEC
SAAC Assessment and Accreditation Centre : Partnering the Quest for Excellence	KSHEC
Social Preparedness of Disaster management and Geo-Scientific Strategies	KSHEC
Status Report on E-Governance in State Universities	KSHEC
കോവിഡ് 19 - ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിലുടനീളം ഓരോ മാറ്റം സർക്കാരിന് സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനായി കേരള സംസ്ഥാന ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ കൗൺസിൽ തയ്യാറാക്കിയ നയോപദേശ രേഖ	KSHEC
Covid 19 - Policy advice document prepared by the Kerala State Higher Education Council to submit to the Government of Kerala	KSHEC
നാലുവർഷ ബിരുദ പ്രോഗ്രാം - സംഗ്രഹം	KSHEC
നാലുവർഷ ബിരുദ പ്രോഗ്രാം - കോളേജ് തല സമിതിക്കുള്ള കൈപ്പുസ്തകം	KSHEC

KSHEC Initiatives — A Summary Outline

Title	Chairperson
നാലുവർഷ ബിരുദ പ്രോഗ്രാം - സ്റ്റുഡന്റ്സ് കൈപ്പുസ്തകം	KSHEC
Handbook for Master Trainers in Kerala State Higher Education Curriculum Framework for Undergraduate Education	KSHEC
Towards Centralised Computerisation of Higher Education Institutions in Kerala	KSHEC
Foundation of Knowledge and Inquiry Across Disciplines/ Tara Mohanan & K.P. Mohanan	KSHEC
Foundation Courses for Undergraduate General Programs	KSHEC
Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) Kerala State Higher Education Curriculum Framework	Dr. Suresh Das
Curriculum and Credit Framework for Bachelor of Vocation (B.Voc) Programmes	KSHEC
Annual Plan & Budget Proposal for 2019-20	KSHEC
Higher Education Matters – 5	KSHEC
Higher Education for the Future	KSHEC- Sage
Kerala State Higher Education Plan (RUSA 2.0)	KSHEC
Curriculum & Credit Framework for Postgraduate Programmes	KSHEC
13th Five Year plan Proposal of the Kerala State Higher Education Council	KSHEC
റിപ്പോർട്ട് ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ശാക്തീകരണം (2021)	KSHEC
Proposal for State Specific Grants (Art.2020)	KSHEC
Report on Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Act 2018	Dr. Prabhat Patnaik
Higher Education Empowerment Implementation Plan - Projects	KSHEC
Shaping Kerala's Future - International Conclave on Next-Gen Higher Education - Proceedings	KSHEC
Preliminary Observations - Draft UGC – Regulation, 2025	Dr. Prabhat Patnaik
സംസ്ഥാന ആരോഗ്യശാസ്ത്ര ഗവേഷണ നയം	KSHEC
Curriculum & Credit Framework for Post Graduate Programme	KSHEC
NCC as a Value – Added Course (VAC) under FYUGP – Guidelines	KSHEC
Standard Operating Procedure for Implementing Skill Based and Vocational Education Components in FYUGP through Centres for Skill Development Courses and Career Planning	KSHEC
Vision 2031 നവകേരളത്തിനായുള്ള ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം : റിപ്പോർട്ട്	KSHEC
The Viksit Bharath Shiksha Adhistan Bill 2025 - Report	Dr. Prabhat Patnaik
KIRF 2025 - Report/KIRF 2024	KSHEC
Report on Uniform Norm for Awarding Grace mark 2024	KSHEC
Knowledge Systems of Kerala (2025)	KSHEC- Orient & Black swan
Handbook on Scholar Connect (2026)	
Report on Curriculum Review & the Revision of the Academic Activities of Fine Arts Colleges in Kerala (2025) – (Shivaji K Panikkar)	Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of Kerala

KSHEC Initiatives – A Summary Outline

Title	Chairperson
Proposal for implementation of K-Reap (2024)	KSHEC
K-Reap – Status Report (2026)	KSHEC
Report on CoE (2026)	KSHEC
Report on Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) (2026)	KSHEC
Report on K-Learn (2026)	KSHEC
Report on Innovative and Interdisciplinary Programme (2025)	KSHEC
IT Infrastructure Report	KSHEC
Action Plan for Empowering Higher Education 2021	KSHEC
NRC Proceedings – Selected Paper (2026)	
NRC Proceedings – Abstract – 2020	
KSHEC Initiatives (2017-2026)	
GOs/Regulations/Ordinance/Notifications	Year
Constitution of State Level Academic Committee (SLAC) in Kerala State Higher Education Council	2018
Norms/Guidelines Relating to Equivalency/Recognition of Academic Programmes or Areas of Studies and Nomenclature and Degrees of Other Universities	2018
Rules of Recruitment of Non-Teaching Posts of the Universities through PSC	
University Laws (Amendment) Ordinance - 2019	2019
Sree Narayana Guru Open University Ordinance 2020	2020
University Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2021	2021
Kerala Self Financing College Teaching and Non-Teaching Employees (Appointment and Conditions of Service) Ordinance 2021	2021

Annual Reports

Annual Report of Council 2016-2017
Annual Report of Council 2017-2018
Annual Report of Council 2018-2019
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Annual Report of Council 2021-2022
Annual Report of Council 2022-2023
Annual Report of Council 2023-2024
Annual Report of Council 2024-2025
Annual Report of Council 2025-2026

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Brain Gain Cum Building up database of Keralite-Academic Diaspora/Scholar Connect
Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF)
Kairali Research Awards
Chief Minister’s Nava Kerala Post Doctoral Fellowship
Kerala Academic Library Network (KALNET)
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Faculty Development Centre-Training Programmes
Journal Publications-Higher Education for the Future/Higher Education Matter
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The Kerala State Higher Education Council

A Summary Outline: 2017-2026



ABOUT THIS BOOK

This volume documents the decade-long journey of the Kerala State Higher Education Council, 2017 to 2026. It records the principal instruments through which the Council has shaped Kerala's higher education ecosystem: the State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC), the Kerala Institutional Ranking Framework (KIRF), the Kairali Research Awards, the Chief Minister's Navakerala Post-Doctoral Fellowships, the K-REAP digital platform, the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, KALNET library network, the Centres of Excellence, and the two KSHEC publications - *Higher Education for the Future* and *Higher Education Matters* "

"A reference point for higher education policy in Kerala: documenting policies, programmes, and milestones, but more importantly the collective will of an academic community committed to excellence and inclusion."

Kerala State Higher Education Council

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