

School of Social Sciences
Mahatma Gandhi University
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Institutional Development Plan

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September 2022



Executive Summary

This dossier of proposals submitted by the School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, reflects its persistent commitment to develop a Centre of Excellence in inter-disciplinary social sciences fostering teaching and research that strives to create a just and inclusive society. The research projects at the school have a clear focus on the issues faced by socially, economically, and politically marginalized sections of Kerala society in efforts to produce interventions that can create an egalitarian society that is devoid of discrimination based on caste, gender, class, sexuality, and ecology. The twenty-year goal for the School is to transform itself into a School of Liberal Arts that anchor a Master in Liberal Arts in close collaboration with other Schools at MG University working in the fields of social sciences and humanities broadly. Our larger goal for these 20 years is to design research and intervention projects that can help in strengthening academic knowledge production to solve Kerala's social and environmental problems. To do this it is important to establish linkages with community organizations and therefore, the Centres proposed in this plan all seek to build such collaborations.

Hence, the Institutional Development Plan submitted includes proposals for new Masters (**MA in Liberal Arts, MA in Development and Change**) and PG Diploma programmes (**PG Diploma in Computational Social Sciences**) that can lay the groundwork for building a School of international standards that can offer high-quality courses on Liberal Arts. After the fifth year, the plan proposes to offer this MA in collaboration with other Schools and Departments at the University. This goal is extended by proposing research Centres that will work to complement the advancements made in the teaching programmes. Given the impending threat from global climate change, the School proposes to create research projects and a **Centre for Critical Geography, Labour Studies, and Climate Change** to explore the social dimensions of climate disruptions and the ways to devise climate action to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change on various sectors of the economy and society. The School also plans to launch extensive inquiries into the origin and trajectory of social movements surrounding various social, economic, and environmental grievances in Kerala. A **Centre for Collective Action and Social Movements** is proposed in this plan to house such inquiries. Additionally, the plan proposes a **Centre for Queer Studies** to bring together research and praxis on the queer community and collective action in Kerala. To meet the infrastructural limitations that the School faces and to create additional facilities for the proposed programmes, the Plan proposes to construct an Annex building with classrooms, labs, and other basic requirements.



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I. Details of the respective School

1.Name of the School- School of Social Sciences

Institutional Profile: The School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University (hereafter, the School or SSS) was established in 1989 with the objective of advancing teaching and research in social sciences by creating a space of scholarly conversation that transcends the conventional disciplinary divide. The School is committed to the educational empowerment of socially and economically disadvantaged students, especially those from rural background. The School figures in India's academic map for the ABILITY project – a pioneering effort to ensure knowledge access for the visually-impaired students and researcher, which was established with the financial aid from the Government of Kerala. The School is committed to conserving its environs even while undertaking inevitable, new expansion.

The School of Social Sciences is a socially inclusive community with a large representation of women and persons of socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Its faculty members are drawn from varied but interactive knowledge domains as history, political economy, sociology, development and policy studies, and social anthropology. Besides undertaking teaching and research, the faculty are involved in environmental movements, archaeological and anthropological field-exploration and research, and human rights activism. The School of Social Sciences Library, although relatively small with about 13,000 volumes, has to its credit one of the richest collections in theoretical social sciences in southern India, built up assiduously over the years. The Archaeological Museum of the School is already marked high for the quality of its collection and display. The School is currently involved in establishing a sensory museum with the financial support of the Government of Kerala. The working paper series, *Lateral Studies*, of the School has found a space in scholarly literature. The Department of Forests and Wildlife, Government of Kerala, has regularly engaged the School as evaluators of its participatory forest management programmes. SSS has found special mention in international journals and in the India component of the status of research survey conducted by the Social Science Research Council, New York. The School has facilitated the rise of a generation of brilliant, young scholars who are now associated with some of the best centres of social science learning within and outside the country.

2.Present HOD- Prof (Dr). Dinesan V

3.Details of Faculty

Prof.(Dr). Dinesan V, Professor and Director

Dr. Rajesh Komath, Associate Professor

Dr. Abhilash Babu, Associate Professor

Dr. Silpa Satheesh, Assistant Professor



4.Course Offered

The School currently offers a Ph.D. Programme in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences and two MA Programmes (in Anthropology and History). The School of Social Sciences is one of the two centres in Kerala that offers a Masters programme in Anthropology. The annual in-take of students for MA Programmes is fixed at 40. At any given time, however, the total student-strength, including students of senior batches and doctoral scholars, would be approximately 100.

5.Post Graduate Courses

We have two MA programmes in which there are 66 students enrolled.

6.PhD programme

We currently 26 students enrolled in our Ph.D. programme.

7.Number of classrooms/seminar hall/lab

Currently the School has 2 classrooms, 2 seminar halls and a computer lab.

8.Library details

The School of Social Sciences Library, although relatively small with about 13,000 volumes, has to its credit one of the richest collections in theoretical social sciences in southern India, built up assiduously over the years. The working paper series, *Lateral Studies*, of the School has found a space in scholarly literature.

9. Limitations

The lack of basic infrastructure including functional classrooms is one of the biggest challenges faced by the school. Faculty shortage also impedes the efforts to offer quality education to the MA programmes housed at the School. The proposed plan hopes to overcome this by listing the need for more Faculty positions, Research centres with clearly identified thrust areas Social and Environmental Justice with sub-areas including Climate Change, Political Ecology, Gender, Labour Studies, and Critical Geography will foster academic excellence in terms of high-quality research works on Kerala society. The proposed Annex building will house the new centres, MA programmes as well as alleviate the existing infrastructural limitations experienced by the School. Additionally, funding for research projects in the Thrust Areas will enable the convergence of the research incubations with other departments at the university level.



Project A: Centre for Critical Geography, Labour Studies, and Climate Change

The emerging discourse surrounding Anthropocene and the growing threat from climate disruptions make inquiries into climate action more significant. Much of the discussions surrounding the origin and spread of this catastrophe force one to investigate the unequal exchange between the Global North and South and within the South, thus positioning such inquiries within the realm of critical geography. The Centre aims to locate inquiries into environmental politics, social justice, social movements, and working-class communities in Kerala. The proposed Centre aims to provide a platform to consolidate the research on climate change, labour-environmental relations, and political ecology to devise innovative and grounded solutions to tackle the challenges posed by global warming and extreme weather events.

The centre aims to:

- To create a platform to consolidate research and activists' projects that broadly fall within the realm of Critical Geography. This includes deliberations and struggles surrounding the nature and meaning of resource use, access, and rights.
- To produce grounded knowledge on environmental social movements and climate justice movements in Kerala
- To strengthen existing theories on mobilization, Marxist geography and critical social theory surrounding environment

1. Financial Requirements

The major financial requirement for this includes establishing the Centre and creating basic infrastructure for operation. The table below gives a detailed breakup of the 2 crores requested for this project.

Sl. No	Item	I year In Rs	II year In Rs	III year In Rs	IV Year In Rs	V year In Rs
1	Personnel					
	a. Faculty, Assistant Professor Grade@57,7000 basic pay/PM	57,7000x2x12=1384800	57,7000x2x12=1384800	57,7000x2x12=1384800	57,7000x2x12=1384800	57,7000x2x12=1384800
	b. Research Assistants @30000 /PM	30000x5x12=1800000	30000x5x12=1800000	30000x5x12=1800000	30000x5x12=1800000	30000x5x12=1800000
2	Course Lab					
	a. Desktops (10)	3,00,000	-	-	-	-
	b. Laptops (5)	2,00,000	-	-	-	-
	c. Audio Recorders	12,000	-	-	-	-
	d. Digital Scanner	8,000	-	-	-	-



	c. Printer	8000				
	f. External Storage Device	20,000				
3	Research travel, accommodation, & hiring vehicles	2,00,000	2,00,000	2,00,000	2,00,000	3,00,000
4	Seminars & Workshops	100,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	2,00,000
5	Books & Journals	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	50,000
6	Data Processing & Publication	50,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	1,00,000
7	Contingency Grant	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
8	Overhead Charges	3,22,300	2,74,000	2,85,025	2,96,603	3,22,755
9	Total	45,30,100	39,58,800	39,69,825	39,81,403	41,82,555
	GRAND TOTAL	Rs. 2,06,22,683 Rupees Two crore Six lakhs twenty-two thousand six hundred and eighty-three only				

Justification: The heightened vulnerability of South Asian countries to global climate change disruptions makes systematic inquiries into the impact of such crises on the local community more important. The recurrent floods and adverse weather events in Kerala and the massive burden it imposes on the people call for extensive dialogues on rebuilding the state so that it becomes a **climate-resilient state** that can navigate these disruptions in future. To be able to propose such solutions to **mitigate the effects of climate change**, it is imperative to have a Centre that brings together Climate Science and Social Science disciplines so as to come with action plans that can be implemented at the grassroots level. Particularly so since Kottayam also has a diverse set of districts that face the brunt of climate crisis in varied ways ranging from flooding, prolonged flooding and landslides to acute water shortage. More importantly, the emergent discourse on **just transition**, that call to transition energy regimes away from fossil-intensive sources, put the discussion of ensuring that the transition of workers from these sectors is done without compromising on social justice and equity.

2. Duration

The Centre will be launched after identifying and completing research projects in the thrust area identified- Climate Change, Environmental Politics, Political Ecology, Labour Studies and Critical Geography.



The duration of each project housed in the Centre shall be for a period of one year and could be renewed upon successful submission of the progress report. The first Annual report is expected to be published at the end of the 5th year, compiling the findings gathered from the formative inquiries.

3. Technical Challenges

One of the important challenges is to recruit faculty who have expertise in the field of Environmental Sociology, Environmental Anthropology, Climate Change Policy, Labour Studies, and Political Ecology. The Centre would benefit hugely from having a cohort of highly skilled and committed faculty who can provide research support to materialize the goals and missions proposed here.

4. Executional Feasibility

The Centre aims to launch research projects in collaboration with grassroots movements in Kerala on issues pertaining to environmental rights, distribution of burdens, and resource access. The projects will be spread across various districts of the state, trying to map the various resource struggles ongoing in the state and the nature and dynamics of such struggles. Hence, extensive networking with existing initiatives in this regard is important. Projects will have extensive ethnographic field components and trained staff will engage with the communities following all ethical considerations.

5. Outcomes

The Centre will produce various publications, produce path-breaking research, and will work as a knowledge production site on environmental politics and critical geography. Seminars and workshops will also ensure the participation of the local community so as to chalk out interventionist projects to battle climate change. Thus, the Centre aims to combine research and praxis.

1 st year	Refining the objectives, and goals of the Centre. Recruiting Research Staff and organizing training workshops
2 nd year	Designing research projects Organizing workshops and seminars on " <i>Kerala During the times of Anthropocene</i> " Mapping distributions conflicts in the state Inviting research proposals in the thrust areas of Political Ecology, Labour-Environmental relations and Climate Change
3 rd year	Qualitative Field Research (Ethnography, document analysis, Focus group discussions)
4 th year	Compiling and analyzing primary and secondary data collected for various projects



	under the Centre
5 th year	<p>Launching the first Annual Report: <i>Environment and Society in Kerala</i></p> <p>(1) exploring the nature and dynamics of environmental politics in Kerala</p> <p>(2) mapping the social dimensions of climate change and vulnerability in the state</p>
6 th -20 th year	Centre operating in full capacity, undertaking research projects on Kerala ecology, labour-environmental relations, labour studies and society

Project B: Centre for Queer Studies

The School plans to start a Centre that can facilitate critical dialogue, research and praxis on issues and discourses surrounding the queer community in Kerala. As an umbrella term to signify gender and sexual minorities, the term queer as used here highlights its commitment towards creating a safe and inclusive space for engaging in research, teaching and a process of knowledge creation that is grounded in and informed by queer standpoints and methods. The Centre also envisages organizing training and certifications specifically for members of the transgender community so that they can pursue higher education and be economically independent through job placements. The Centre will strive to provide visibility to queer students and researchers in Kerala and to challenge a heteropatriarchal structure by supporting initiatives that challenge heteronormativity and the idea of gender as a binary.

More than just gathering experiences from community members, the Centre will aim to provide a workspace for queer researchers, opportunities for pursuing higher education, and offer a platform for converging various research and outreach activities of community members in Kerala. The Centre also aims at providing research skills to members and organizations working amongst the community to integrate the lived experiences of the members into academic research from their own standpoints. The Centre will offer courses in critical gender studies, queer studies, and feminist methodologies. The larger goal is to translate the centre as a hub of learning, dialogue, and knowledge repository on queer community in Kerala including organizational histories, activist biographies, LGBTQIA movements in the state, experiences of gender minorities in the state in terms their access to various institutions etc.

Apart from the research dimension the School also aims to design the center as a platform that can facilitate the empowerment of members of the transgender community by engaging in teaching and extension activities. In this regard, the Centre will offer certificate courses, conduct workshops and short-term training programmes on gender sensitization with a focus on the importance of understanding gender as a fluid concept. The Centre will also offer training programmes for skill development leading to the placement of transgender persons and will also organize extension activities to identify means to empower themselves and to lead a dignified life. In five years, the project will try to locate transgender persons in Kerala, document their



socio-economic profile; collect personal narratives of selected persons and also study different modes and processes of gendering and transgendering in the specific context of Kerala. The Centre intends to collaborate with experts in the field of gender and transgender studies, activists and talented transgender candidates to execute the programmes and realize the intended goals. The knowledge produced and training imparted to the transgender will be advantageous for both the formal academic world and to the policy planners, people's representatives, journalists, social activists, and NGOs.

2. Financial

Head/Item	Amount (Rs. In lakh)
Contractual Services	
Permanent Faculty (PhD) Rs. 57,700 basic p. per month for 5 years (No. 2)	69.24
Research Assistants (M.A) Rs. 25,000/- per month for 3 years (No. 2)	18.00
Trainers and Training Programmes	
Employment Trainers Rs. 30,000/- per month for four years (No. 3)	32.40
Workshops (2 workshops per year) (2x5)	10.00
Certificate Course on skill development (1x5)	15.00
Operational Expenses	
Consumables/Documentation/Publications/Purchase of Books/Binding Charges/electronic gadget/recorder/camera	6.00
Miscellaneous	3.00
TOTAL	153.64

Total Outlay: Rupees One Crore Fifty-Three Lakhs Sixty-Four Thousand only.

Justification: As mentioned above, the proposed Centre is perhaps the first-of its-kind in the domain of gender studies in India. There is a need to produce knowledge about transgender in relation to the specific socio-cultural situations in which they live. The Centre will fulfill such a task in the specific case of Kerala. The skill development training sessions that the Centre plans to impart to the members of the transgender community will assist the later to be self-reliant.



2. Durational

Duration-5 years (2023-24 to 2028-2029)

3. Technical Challenges and Executional Feasibility

Here again, one of the important challenges is recruiting faculty and research assistants with expertise in the field of gender and queer studies.

6. Outcomes

1. It will become a premier centre for Queer studies and empowerment.
2. Certificate courses, workshops and training programmes will make the transgender self-reliant and imbibed of new perspectives to understand the contemporary society and gender hierarchies.
3. The transgender persons will be equipped to conduct studies about themselves and about the society so as to critically intervene to develop a new perspective towards social life.

Project C: Academic Writing Centre

The proposed writing centre will train students to evolve as excellent writers in their respective fields. The intention is not to work as a place where students could come and correct their dissertations or assignments. Instead, the writing centre shall enable the students to write effectively through various interactive sessions with the faculty who will train the students by enhancing their capabilities in writing. In this context we could think of providing academic support to writing in both English and Malayalam.

3. Financial

Sl. No	Item	I year In Rs	II year In Rs	III year In Rs	IV Year In Rs	V year In Rs
1	Personnel a. General Coordinator@25000/P M	25000x1x12 =300,000	26250x12=3 1,5000	27563x12=33 0756	28941x12x 1=347292	30388x12x1 =364656
	b. Five tutors @30000 /PM	30000x5x12 =18,00000	31,500x5x12 =1890000	33075x5x12= 1984500	34729x5x1 2=2083740	36465x5x12 =2187900
2	Equipment a. Computers(Desktop1,	1,00,000,	-	-	-	-



	Laptop2)	50,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	-
	b.Audio Recorders	12,000	-	-	-	-
	c. Digital Scanner	8,000	-	-	-	-
	d.Printer	8,000	-	-	-	-
	e.ExternalStorage Device	20,000	-	-	-	-
3	Travel, accommodation, & hiring vehicles	2,00,000	2,00,000	2,00,000	2,00,000	3,00,000
4	Seminars & Workshops	100,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	2,00,000
5	Books & Journals	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	1,00,000	50,000
6	Data Processing & Publication	50,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	1,00,000
7	Contingency Grant	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
8	Overhead Charges (10%)	3,22,300	27,40,00	285025	296603	322755
9	Total	3545300	3014000	3135281	3262635	3550311
	GRAND TOTAL	Rs. 16507527 Rupees One core Sixty-five lakhs Seven thousand five hundred and twenty seven only.				

4. Duration

The Centre is proposed for 10 years.

Time frame	Tasks
1 st 6 months	Setting up the centre with faculty and tutors. It will also start interactive sessions with the students to improve their writing skills.
2 nd 6 months	Regular writing workshops.
3 rd 6 months	Continuing with regular workshops and daily support for the registered students who seek the support of the academic writing Centre.
4 th 6 months	Continuing with regular workshops and daily support for the registered students who seek the support of the academic writing Centre
5 th 6 months	Continuing with regular workshops and daily support for the registered students who seek the support of the academic writing centre.
6 th 6 months	Regular writing workshops
7 th 6 months	Regular writing workshops
8 th 6 months	Regular writing workshops



9 th 6 months	Regular writing workshops
10 th 6 months	Regular writing workshops

5. Technical

The proposed writing Centre is conceived as an institution that will cater to the requirements of students through regular writing workshops and other programmes where they get a chance to learn academic writing formally. The proposed Centre at the Mahatma Gandhi University shall work along with experts from Kannur and Calicut Universities as we have already had two writing workshops for the students of the School. We intend to develop this into a formal writing centre that will enable researchers to become effective writers.

6. Executional Feasibility

The Centre will have an approach involving **continuous training of students and researchers in improving their writing skills**. We shall have regular sessions where students interact with the faculty and tutors of the writing centre with their writings. We shall also have regular workshops where in students are trained in academic writings. Such workshops shall be residential in nature with core faculty and invited faculty who will interact with the participants in developing their academic writing skills. The participants in such workshops shall come their written pieces and work on them during the workshop. The centre shall be equipped with a state-of-the-art library and computer and lab facilities. The writing centre shall encourage the interacting students to publish their research articles and theses.

7. Outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of the quality of the research writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the academic skills of the Students of Mahatma Gandhi University as well as the scholars participating in the programmes of the Centre from other parts of Kerala as well as India.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodical and scientific teaching of language skills by the experts in the field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the resources and skills of the students of Mahatma Gandhi University.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the infrastructure of the academic writing centre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling students in critical thinking through the training workshops of the Centre

