

Annual Report – Azim Premji University 18-November-2024

Note: This report pertains to the Academic Year July 2023 to June 2024 and, where relevant, updated information up to November 2024 is given.

Introduction

Azim Premji University is a not-for-profit private University, established under the Azim Premji University Act, 2010 of Government of Karnataka, offering postgraduate and undergraduate programmes focused on education and other domains of human development. Azim Premji Foundation, the sponsoring body of the University, works across the country in school education, public health, livelihood and other domains of human development. This strong ground connect helps to enrich the University's teaching programmes, research and student engagement.

Goals of the University

Azim Premji University has an explicit purpose to contribute to capacity development and research for the social sector and to be an exemplar higher education institution – with high quality and inclusive practices.

The University offers undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes in important areas of human development and social action, such as education, development and climate change. The University's student body is very diverse, from across 29 states and varied socio-economic backgrounds.

The University offers a range of programmes in critical areas like early childhood education, inclusive education, disability, assessment, educational leadership, social sector leadership, and local democracy, for professionals working in the social sector, including many government bodies.

The research programmes are designed for direct contribution to matters of policy and practice, through dedicated research centres on Employment, Climate Change and Local Democracy (Panchayats) as well as individual faculty research. From time to time, the University also funds external research in specific topics of interest.

The University produces a large collection of teaching-learning material for free public use. These include magazines in school subjects, development case studies, online textbooks, and translations of higher education material.

The University also supports neighbouring panchayats with initiatives focusing on panchayat libraries, youth engagement, economic opportunities for self-help groups and farmers, and solid waste management.

Azim Premji University, Bangalore

1. Campus:

The state-of-the-art campus in Bangalore is built with all modern classroom and laboratory facilities and extensive features for sustainability like water conservation, energy efficiency, solar, and biodiverse landscaping. It has residential facilities for students, members of our university and guests.

Last year, the transition from external hostels to the Universal hostel -1 with 40 floors, capacity of 2,500 students was completed smoothly.

There are around 1700 students and 15 members using the residence facility. The residences are equipped with advanced security features, including biometric access, over 500 CCTV cameras, smoke detectors, and fire hydrants, ensuring a safe and secure environment.

Construction of the second phase that includes a second hostel, employee residences, campus commons and school started in January 2024.

In the last year, we have commissioned the following 4 facilities on campus:

- a. 1,800 seat open air amphitheatre
- b. Weather station
- c. Environment Science laboratory
- d. 1.4 million litre capacity lake for rainwater storage

2. Academic Programmes:

- a. The first batch of the 4-year Undergraduate programme (in line with the National Education Policy, 2020) joined in August 2023. We have designed a unique interdisciplinary curriculum with the possibility of students doing an 'Occupational Track' (in addition to the subject Majors) in areas relevant to our social purpose. We have nine occupational tracks including Climate Studies, Music Education, Data and Democracy, Media and Journalism, Sports and Fitness, and Technology for Social good.
- b. We added two new programmes, B.Sc. (Information Sciences) and B.A. (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) as part of the Undergraduate studies starting July 2024. All required approvals are in place.

- c. We completed a ten-year review of the M.A. Development programme through an exercise involving multiple stakeholders from students, faculty, potential employers, and alumni. The revised curriculum based on this review was launched in July 2024. Some of the key changes are the introduction of new mandatory courses “Understanding development realities through data” and “Project management for development action”. Calendarized workshops on data analysis, visualization and presentation has also been introduced as part of the curriculum.
- d. The UGC had announced a new NHEQF (National Higher Education Qualification framework) and a curricular framework for UG, PG and Diploma programmes. We have aligned all our programmes to these frameworks. All our Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes are now aligned with the NHEQF credit requirements. The necessary changes in the curriculum and programme structures are done.

3. Student numbers:

- a. In the 2023-24 academic year (starting July 2023), the University admitted 397 students to the Postgraduate programmes (M.A. in Development, M.A. in Education, LL.M. in Law and Development and M.A. in Economics) and 442 students to the Undergraduate programmes (B.A. in Economics, History, English, Philosophy, Social Science and B.Sc. in Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science & Sustainability, Physics, Mathematics and BSc BEd). In the year 2024, we dropped the LLM programme from our offerings.
- b. In the 2024-25 academic year (starting July 2024), we admitted 401 students in postgraduate and 438 students in the undergraduate programmes.

4. Student support:

- a. Bridge Programme: We launched an intensive 6 months to 1 year training programme to help enrol students from disadvantaged communities. The bridge programmes are now being offered at Hosapete (Karnataka), Dhar (Madhya Pradesh) and Gumla (Jharkhand). This will be expanded ten more locations in the coming years.
- b. The Academic Resource Centre (ARC) supports students in foundational and advanced academic learning, and addresses learning challenges faced by students from diverse educational and social backgrounds. The Centre offers courses in English and Mathematics and in other areas like academic reading and writing, data analysis, time management, note taking, and concept mapping. The ARC is staffed with dedicated resources.
- c. Disability and Inclusion: We started a dedicated initiative to provide a teaching and learning environment suitable for all our students. We provide reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities or differently abled,

students with learning disabilities, and neurodiverse students. The academic accommodations include adjustments within the learning spaces, within and outside the classroom, availability of course content in multiple formats and in assessment design. Students with physical disabilities are provided with audio / visual support to have a seamless learning experience. The campus is designed to be barrier free with safe access to students with motor skills disabilities.

- d. **Student Grievance Redressal:** We have set up the Student Grievance Redressal Committee to address student grievances regarding non-compliance to our stated policies and timelines.
- e. **Anti-Discrimination:** We have formulated an Anti-Discrimination Policy to protect the dignity of and provide equal opportunities to those belonging to marginalised groups. The Anti-Discrimination Cell which is responsible for implementing the policy has conducted multiple awareness sessions and events to the students and members.
- f. **Mental Health Policy:** A Mental Health policy has been developed to support students who need assistance on mental health concerns. The Karnataka High Court in one of its recent judgements has referred to this policy and directed other educational institutions to formulate similar policy.

5. Placements:

In 2024, more than 120 social sector and research organizations participated in campus placements at the University. 96% students who registered for placements got placed. Among the types of organizations who hire our graduates, not-for-profits remain the highest and schools are the second highest.

Out of the 3,300 postgraduate alumni over the years, most are working at the grassroot levels across 550 districts.

6. Convocation:

The convocation for the 2023 graduating batch was held on campus on August 5, 2023, for the undergraduate and September 10, 2023, for the postgraduate programmes. 170 undergraduate and 350 postgraduate students received their degrees.

7. Continuing education:

The focus on continuing education in the domains of education, development and professional development continues. Some key points from the year are:

- a. Delivered 120 short programmes/workshops reaching 6,100 practitioners. Includes programmes on Early Childhood Education, Foundational Literacy and

Numeracy, English language, senior educational functionaries training, educational assessments.

- b. Deep work continues in the North-east states, working with a range of stakeholders like District Institutes of Education & Training (DIET) faculty / State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT)/ other senior education functionaries.
- c. In Tamil Nadu, we reached almost all education functionaries (Block Education Officers to CEOs and DIET principals) through our programmes.
- d. Extensive work with school examination boards like the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), Karnataka examination authority, Assam Board on board examination reforms. This will enable school boards to revise their question papers to move away from tests that only test for rote learning.
- e. Responded to many other requests from multiple state governments for support – Karnataka Grade 11 and 12 Science teachers, Andhra Pradesh on curriculum development for secondary teachers, textbook writing for Punjab state, Madhya Pradesh tribal welfare schools.
- f. Groundwork for extending large scale 'English language enrichment' programmes for schoolteachers in Karnataka and Odisha.

8. Events on Campus:

- a. As part of our Nature Festivals series, we hosted the "Forests of Life" festival on campus in October 2023. The event was primarily for school children to help them get awareness and understanding about our Forests. The event was a huge success with almost 20,000 school children from Bangalore and nearby cities attending. Sections of the exhibits were also sent to Yadagiri, Kalaburagi, Bhopal and Dhamtari for exhibition. In 2024, a similar engagement with school children is planned, with a focus on "Mountains of Life".
- b. The second edition of the 'Annual Research Conclave' and 'Students Research Conclave' on campus showcasing research work of our faculty and students. There were over 150 posters, 50 papers presented in these conferences We intend to continue this in the future.
- c. We hosted the 'Science Undergraduate Research Conference', an event open to all undergraduate students from various institutions across the country for showcasing their research. The conference ran over two days and included nearly 130 undergraduate and postgraduate students from 23 institutions across the country. Total of 55+ posters were presented in the conference.

- d. We launched two important initiatives for the first time on campus. These were the “Constitutional Quiz” attended by 350+ participants and the “Climate Quiz” attended by 130+ participants. We intend to continue this in the coming years.
- e. We organized a National Conference on Local Democracy at Ranchi. This three-day national conference was a reflection on the 30-year journey of local democracy in India in the forms of Panchayati Raj, PESA, FRA, and other enabling provisions. It acted as a forum to enable collaborations between practitioners, academics, policy thinkers, public representatives, and the media. Over 300 academics, practitioners and elected panchayat leaders from around the country attended.
- f. We saw significant expansion in our community engagement work, in 9 panchayats surrounding University campus – the works extends around solid waste management, agricultural intervention, local governance, public health, women’s collectives, panchayat libraries, youth engagement, English training, board exam support for children, hosting a local vegetable market on campus, enabling access to various entitlement for 1,700 people etc. More than 100 students and several members of the University are actively involved.
- g. As part of our conscious efforts to reach out to the grassroots, both for capacity building of frontline civil society workers and to learn from them, we conducted several programmes. Two key ones are:
 - “Capacity Development for Youth leaders” a programme for young girls from rural India in the 16-18 age group, who are working for change and development in their communities.
 - “Demystifying Economics”, a programme for civil society organisations helping them understand basics of economics.
- h. Students’ Council Constitution Version 3.0 was adopted in May 2024. Student elections in the Bangalore campus was successfully completed in September.

9. Research:

- a. Our faculty member Vikas Kumar won the prestigious Elizabeth Adiseshiah award, which is awarded for “Distinguished Contribution to Development Studies”.
- b. The Centre for Sustainable Employment released the “The ‘State of Working India 2023’ in September 2023. As in the past, the report received wide coverage. This is one of the most cited research reports in the field.
- c. We developed ‘Surverypura’ an innovative tool to train students in conducting community surveys. The tool uses simulation and modelling to demonstrate surveying techniques.

- d. We made 15 grants to external organizations for research in public health.
- e. Our “Centre for Local Democracy” has significantly expanded work with capacity enhancement programmes for elected panchayat representatives, government officials and NGO’s working in the domain.
- f. We completed the research work on a report titled ‘*India at the Abyss: Fine-Scale Climate Change Forecasting for 2020-2040*’ on the state of climate crisis at the district level. The report will be released on November 17, 2024.
- g. Our faculty have secured 2 research grants from the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- h. We have collaborated with two Finnish universities for research, primarily in school education.

10. Support to Bhopal and Ranchi campus:

With more than twelve years of experience managing a university in Bangalore, our administrative processes are seamlessly coordinated across multiple locations with localized support. Key functional processes in Finance, Procurement, IT and People Development are consistently replicated across all campuses.

11. Five-year review by KSHEC:

We underwent a periodic 5-year review by Karnataka State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) in June 2024. The visiting committee appreciated the vision and achievements in the past 12 years and rated as one of the best Universities they have visited.

Future Prospects:

- a. We plan to launch the following degree programmes from the academic year 2025-26.
 - i. B.Sc. Honours in Psychology
 - ii. M.A. in Early Childhood Care and Education
- b. UGC (University Grants Commission) has notified 1-year post graduate programmes. We think it is a good opportunity for the University to offer these in critical areas. The following areas are under consideration.
 - i. Climate change and sustainability
 - ii. Technology for social good
 - iii. Educational leadership
 - iv. Management in the development sector

- c. We will be supporting all the North-East states in implementing the National Curricular Framework through capacity building and material development.
 - d. We will be collaborating with Department of Higher Education, Government of Karnataka for providing training for 6,000+ faculty members of degree colleges of Karnataka for developing their perspectives and content enrichment.
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