

Research at AUD: University vision and research imagination

Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) was set up in 2008 as a University for Social Sciences and Humanities. From the moment of its inception, Ambedkar University Delhi has been visualized as a space which combines research with teaching towards a vision of equity, social justice and excellence. In other words, the University envisages Humanities and Social Sciences as routes through which there is a role towards socially engaged knowledge production and transformation thereof. In this context, the vision of AUD has been to promote a perspective that imagines the researcher, not as a producer of abstract knowledge, but as an engaged practitioner reflecting upon the complexity of Indian realities. The process of research as AUD envisioned has never simply been about the collection of empirical facts but an empathetic and immersive understanding of people, communities, spaces or processes. The practice of research here is inherently linked to the imagination of a just and equitable society, while recognizing as well as interrogating the challenges that critical pedagogy confronts in a larger global landscape of declining importance of humanities and social sciences. It is in this reciprocity of relationship between research-researcher-society that AUD has imagined its research objective—to co-create new knowledge systems. The University strongly believes that no knowledge becomes socially productive unless it spreads across society, transcending barriers of caste, gender, creed and class. Only then can teaching and learning become liberating undertakings, contributing to the promotion of equality, social justice and excellence.

Interdisciplinarity and collaborative research, therefore, is inherent to such a model of research. It is with this in mind that AUD has specialized in offering Masters/Research degrees in several disciplines that have opened out relatively new areas of enquiry. These fields are inherently contemporary and interdisciplinary in their nature—development studies, gender studies, human ecology, global studies and education studies as examples. In today's polarised world, the study of these streams, will not only play a pivotal role in improving understanding amongst cultures but also transform human experiences into lessons for the future. Further, disciplines that might traditionally fall outside the realm of social sciences such as Social Design, Management and Social Entrepreneurship, Law and Governance, Creative Expressions have been brought under the umbrella of social sciences and humanities at AUD.

Some of the key principles that have guided the research ecology at AUD are:

1. Interconnectedness between research and pedagogic practices
2. Interrogating the binary between practice and knowledge
3. Immersion, Innovation, Action, Transformation as research objectives
4. Creating reflective practitioners, sensitive professionals and engaged scholars
5. Practice informing research, Research informing policy

Existing Institutional Structures to Facilitate research at AUD

This section presents various institutional structures and processes AUD has established to support faculty and student research. An effort here has been to highlight the various institutional structures and their broader objectives in facilitating and supporting research at AUD. It is worth noting that as a young University (completed 10 years of its establishment) and a majority of faculty members being in their early or middle career are working in research domains/areas that are emerging and still in their early stages of development. Some of these ideas got further shaped and strengthened by Centres at AUD, which are institutional spaces set up with the mandate to facilitate research and dissemination of knowledge in lesser known or till now neglected areas and special themes. Another very distinctive feature of research at AUD has been to envisage research not merely as a publication exercise but to engage and develop sustained transformation in the lives of the researcher and people/communities with whom questions are explored and locally effective solutions sought. The research, policy work, clinic, design studios, installations, conferences, focussed seminars and lectures organised by the centres (e.g. CECED, CUES, CPR, ACIIE, CCK) and Schools makes it exceedingly evident.

Institutional Structures to Facilitate Research at AUD

Objectives	Developing & Supporting Individual and Faculty Research	Developing & Supporting Student Research	Facilitating research on specific themes	Developing research capacities and training faculty and students	Informal & Collaborative Research Forums	Supporting Faculty and Student Publication
Institutional Structures	Travel Grants, Seed Money Grants	Scholarships, Paper presentations at AUD, Travel grants & Fee waivers Rohini Ghadiok Foundation research fund	CCK, CECED, CDP, CUES, CPR, CELE, ACIIE	CSSRM	North East Forum Queer collective, Urban tiffin, Childhood studies collective	Centre for Publishing
Indicative Activities	Friday Faculty Seminars, FACSAPP—Faculty Seminar and Paper Presentation	Student seminar, Curtain raiser (AUD Memorial Lecture etc.)	National Conferences and other initiatives on specific themes by CECED, CCK and CPR and other centres	Social Science Research Methods Festival, Workshops in collaboration with ICSSR	Film screening, Space for sharing developments in the emergent areas of research	10 years of AML, Utopia and Dystopia

Outcomes of Research Initiatives at AUD

The regular research *themes* repeatedly emerging from faculty research (themes constructed by going through Annual Report data):

1. Marginality and Inclusion
2. Space, Citizenship and Justice
3. Political Economy, Markets, Development
4. Culture, Community, Nation, Self
5. Crisis, Creation, Transformation
6. Ecology and Sustainability
7. Epistemology, Pedagogy, Practice
8. Ethics, Institutions, Governance

At AUD, there have been the following *forms* of research outcomes:

1. (knowledge) Production and Creation
2. Practice and Transformation
3. Policy and Governance
4. Ethics and Evaluation

These outcomes have been made effective through multiple modes of knowledge creation or sometimes by documenting practices. The connection between pedagogy and practice has been strong in AUD research. Much of the pedagogic experimentation that has happened needs documentation, since that has challenged the idea that research is always and only at the site of the unknown/external entity, called the field.

Products		Practices	
Monographs	Archiving	Government departments	Classroom
Peer reviewed journals	Installation	Industry/Companies	Clinic
Book chapters	Performance	Legal Institutions	Ecologies (Wetlands)
Creative genres-short stories, poetry, writing a script	Design-ing	NGOs and International monitoring organizations	Communities
Creating public opinion through newspapers/television/other social media	Exhibition	Museums	Incubating ideas towards socially relevant business enterprises
Pedagogic Text books	Translation	Neighbourhoods	Institutional practices
			(enabling) Campus

Future expectations to enhance research at AUD

1. Creation of institutional facilitative conditions:

- Need for more sustained and systematic co-ordination between centres and schools
- Earmarked University approved budget for Centres to conduct research
- Research grant for each faculty annually—UGC recommends start-up grants to all faculty members
- Availability of university sponsored research grants for faculty across schools to conduct collaborative research
- Institutional co-ordination with external research funding institutions (government and international), or tapping industry based research grants
- Newsletter circulation, web-based information (periodically) informing the wider AUD community on ongoing faculty and student research creating possibilities of creating future research clusters based on converging research ideas—Dean Research and Consultancy Division and Centre for Publishing can jointly take the responsibility
- Publishing Working Paper/Occasional Paper Series of faculty research through Centre for Publishing—there needs to be a call for this once a year, a peer-review process after the submission and publication
- University/School level journal with ISBN-ISSN numbers which invites research papers from scholars outside and within AUD—constituting an editorial board for the same, with distinguished international and national scholars
- As Delhi Government University some specific initiatives could be taken: a) Bi-annual report of/on Delhi—like a State Human Development Report (*Doori Nazar* Delhi's experience and experience of Delhi), b) Hosting an annual Delhi Fair with films, food, fiction reading on/about Delhi
- Rationalization of workload to the extent that a dedicated time is reserved for research in each semester
- Staff assistance for maintaining research project related administrative work
- Faculty recruitment to be increased and teaching assistants (through Fellows or JRF holders) to be created so that there is equal amount of time distributed among all faculty members to conduct research
- Sabbatical rules need to be adopted and implemented
- Teaching semester off once in three years
- Research programmes need to be initiated in all School level programmes—new emerging interdisciplinary areas like global studies, urban studies, public policy, public health, law and governance, cognitive sciences, mathematical applications, entrepreneurship will create newer horizons in knowledge production and innovative practices
- Need to formulate University level ethical research guidelines which needs to be adhered to before undertaking any research work
- Need to formulate rules/guidelines around patenting of products
- Need to formulate policies in Consultancy that faculty could be encouraged to provide to various external entities needing specialized/creative knowledge

2. Upgrading of Infrastructural Facilities

- Upgradation of physical infrastructure, library and other technological infrastructure
- Need for well functioning IT enabled classrooms
- Faculty seating arrangements of faculty need overhauling
- Adequate faculty room, reading rooms for students, separate space for research scholars, IT enabled seminar/meeting/committee rooms, appropriate informal spaces where faculty and research scholars can meet and brainstorm on collaborative research

3. Separate and specific benchmarking to recognize research

- Need to develop a list of journals that are not part of UGC ranking (and may not be eg: valuing practice based research, practitioner dependent collaborative research, design based social innovation ideas)
- Need for creating mechanisms to recognize and qualitatively evaluate multiple kinds of faculty research production

4. Facilitating Student Research

- Increase student research stipend at par with ICSSR/UGC doctoral fellowship
- Exploring possibilities of post doctoral fellowship through centres or collaborations with other institutions
- Dedicated space in the library and other areas for research scholars
- Creating avenues for student research paper publication through the university