St. PETER'S
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY u/s 3 OF THE UGC ACT 1956)
Accredited by NAAC with A+ Grade, AICTE Approved and
ISO 9001: 2015 Certified.
Avadi, Chennai – 600 054, Tamil Nadu.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

5 GENDER EQUALITY

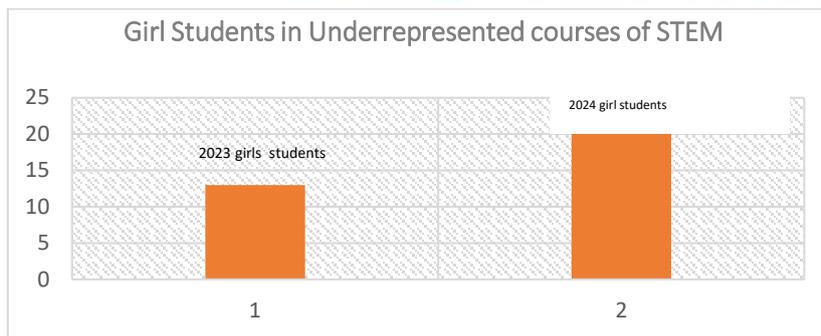Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.3.4 Encouraging Women's Applications in Underrepresented Fields at St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research

At St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research (SPIHER), we believe that diversity and inclusion are essential drivers of innovation, creativity, and academic excellence. Recognizing the persistent underrepresentation of women in fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), as well as in emerging areas like Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Mechanical Engineering, the Institute is actively working to encourage and support women to pursue studies and careers in these disciplines.

Underrepresented STEM Courses Girl Students

In the STEM Courses, we maintain a list of students who come from underrepresented backgrounds. This helps us understand who may need extra support, encouragement, or guidance during their course of study. These students may include those from economically weaker sections, first-generation learners, rural backgrounds, or those who face social or personal challenges that may affect their learning.

The purpose of keeping this list is not to label students, but to ensure that no one is left behind. By identifying underrepresented students early, the department can reach out and provide timely help whether through mentoring, counselling, bridge courses, or additional academic support. This also helps teachers stay aware of the students who may need more attention or motivation. Tracking underrepresented students also gives the department a clearer picture of diversity within the programme. It helps us plan activities, create supportive learning environments, and improve student participation. Most importantly, it ensures that every student, regardless of their background, has an equal chance to grow, succeed, and feel included during their time in the STEM programme.

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"Increase in admission of under-represented female students in STEM courses during the year 2024, reflecting SPIHER's focused efforts to promote gender diversity"

In 2024, we saw a small but positive increase in the number of underrepresented STEM students. This improvement happened mainly because we spent more time mentoring these students and also supported them with scholarships. These efforts made them feel more confident and encouraged them to continue their studies without financial worries.

Empowering Women Through Education

SPIHER has launched targeted initiatives aimed at empowering women students to break barriers and enter fields traditionally dominated by men. Through specialized **scholarships, mentorship programs, and research assistantships**, the Institute ensures that financial constraints and lack of guidance never stand in the way of a woman's academic ambitions.

St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research (SPIHER) is pleased to announce a hands-on digital literacy workshop designed to empower school students with essential technological skills for their academic and personal growth. As digital competence becomes increasingly vital in today's learning environment, this workshop aims to introduce students to two fundamental tools: Microsoft Excel and Gmail. Through interactive sessions, participants will learn how to navigate Microsoft Excel, understand its interface, and apply basic functions for data entry, organization, and simple analysis. These skills will help students build confidence in handling numerical information and completing school projects more efficiently.

In addition, the workshop will guide students through the process of creating and managing a Gmail account. This segment will cover email communication essentials, inbox organization, security practices, and responsible online behaviour—ensuring that students gain

a strong foundation in digital communication. By combining practical exercises with guided instruction, the program aims to make learning engaging and accessible for young learners.

This initiative is part of SPIHER's ongoing extension activities, designed not only to support school communities but also to build early awareness about the institution's commitment to quality education. Such outreach programs help students experience SPIHER's learning environment firsthand, while also serving as an opportunity for the institute to strengthen its admission outreach efforts.

School students participating in a hands-on workshop on Microsoft Excel and Gmail account creation, hosted by the Department of Computer Science and Applications on 23 January 2024.

Other Provisions for Girl Students at SPIHER

SPIHER offers several helpful facilities to make life easier and safer for girl students. Along with mentoring and scholarships, the institution provides a separate girls' hostel where students can stay comfortably. The hostel is safe, clean, and has all the basic amenities they need, so parents and students can feel at ease.

The college also provides dedicated transport facilities for girl students. Buses run on different routes, making it convenient and safe for them to travel to and from the campus every day.

Apart from this, SPIHER has common rooms for girls, proper sanitary facilities, a sick room, and access to counselling whenever they need support. These extra provisions help create a friendly and secure environment where girl students can study with confidence and peace of mind.

"One Week Skill Development Workshop (25.03.2024 – 02.04.2024) organised by the Centre for Skill Development, SPIHER, promoting SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth."

The Centre for Skill Development at St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research organized a One Week Workshop on Skill Development from 25th March 2024 to 2nd April 2024, conducted from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Room No. 403, Main Block. This initiative was aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal SDG 5, Gender

Equality, emphasizing the empowerment of women and girls through skill enhancement and opportunities for self-reliance. The workshop focused on nurturing creative, entrepreneurial, and culturally meaningful skills that help participants especially young women build confidence, economic independence, and leadership in everyday life and professional spaces. The event featured a series of practical, hands-on sessions delivered by both faculty members and talented student trainers:

Skill Development Programs for Girl Students at SPIHER

"A serene moment showcasing creativity, skill, and traditional cultural practices like Mehendi designing and beads threading."

"Students taking part in a saree draping activity conducted as part of a skill development program, gaining hands-on practice while peers observe and learn."

"Students taking part in a ICT training activity conducted as part of a skill development program, gaining hands-on practice while peers observe and learn."

EXTENSION ACTIVITY FOR BANAVEDUTHOTTAM VILLAGE SILK THREAD JEWELLERY MAKING ON 15.02.2024

The Silk Thread Jewellery Making Workshop was a significant step towards empowering the women of Banaveduthottam Village. By equipping them with practical skills, the workshop not only provided a means of income but also instilled a sense of pride and independence. This initiative highlights the potential of skill development programs in transforming lives and fostering community growth.

"Silk Thread Jewellery Making Workshop conducted on 15.02.2024, empowering the women of Banaveduthottam Village with income-generating skills and fostering confidence and community growth."

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By building on the success of this workshop, future activities can continue to support and empower the women of Banaveduthottam Village, contributing to their overall well-being and economic stability.

Dr. S. Gomathi, Assistant Professor Department of Physics served as a Resource Person for the Post Graduate Teacher Recruitment Board (PG TRB) Online course organized by Semmozhi IAS Academy in the scenic Nilgiris District. In this role, Dr. Gomathi delivered insightful lectures and interactive sessions designed to equip new aspirants with the necessary skills and knowledge on Solid State Physics. The course was offered free of charge, reflecting the academy's commitment to supporting aspiring educators in their professional development.
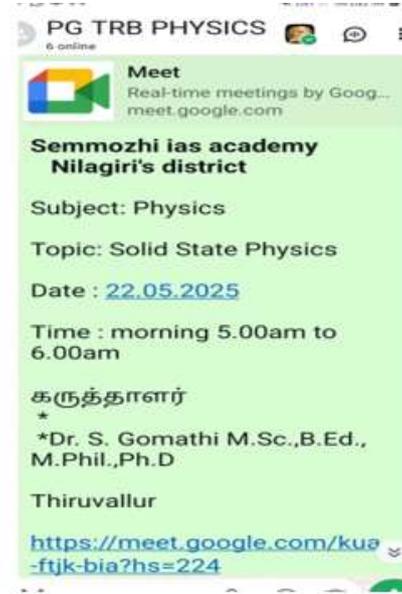
"Dr. S. Gomathi, Assistant Professor Department of Physics, served as a distinguished Resource Person for the PG TRB Online Course organized by Semmozhi IAS Academy, Nilgiris.

Ajmal Hussain-Project Coordinator, ICT Academy, Dr. R. Rani Hemamalini-Director (IQAC), SPIHER, Dr.S. Pushpa-ICT Academy Coordinator,SPIHER, Dr. L. Mahesh Kumar-Registrar, SPIHER, Dr. P. Dananjayan-Vice Chancellor, SPIHER, Mr. V.Poorna Prakash-State Head, ICT Academy, Tamil Nadu,Dr. M. Palaniswamy-Dean (PDA),SPIHER,Dr. E. N. Ganesh,Director(R&D),SPIHER, Dr. V. SubbiahBharathi-Director, SPIHER, Mr. S. Anand-Relationship Manager, ICT Academy)

SPIHER conducts student skilling programme

Chennai, Mar 13: St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research, Avadi, Chennai-54 has organized student enablement program, Centerof Excellence for Youth Empowerment, a CSR initiative of PayPal, implemented by ICT academy.

Duration of the program is 140 hours, that includes 40 hours of soft skills training and 100 hours of technical training in Microsoft Azure and Power BI platform.

Around 110 students from the department of Computer Science and Applications, Computer Science and Engineering, Information Technology and Electronics and Communication Engineering has participated in the event and gained knowledge in these technologies.

Inauguration of the event was held on the 12th March, 2024 where the functionaries, HoDs, faculty and students of SPIHER and functionaries of ICT academy participated.

St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research (SPIHER) is committed to promoting equity, dignity, and academic continuity for all women students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, including first-generation learners, students from rural or economically disadvantaged families, and those facing social challenges. In line with SDG 5 – Gender Equality, the institution adopts the following maternity support policy:

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Maternity Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this Maternity Policy is to provide a supportive and enabling environment for women faculty, staff, and students of St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research (SPIHER) by ensuring equitable opportunities for work-life balance and promoting the active participation of women in academic and professional settings. This policy is designed to address the needs of pregnant employees, mothers, and those returning to work after maternity leave, as well as provide guidance on the Institute's commitment to ensuring a supportive and non-discriminatory environment for women.

Objectives of the Policy

- To provide sufficient leave and workplace support for female employees and students during and after pregnancy.
- To create an environment where women can continue their professional and academic careers without being disadvantaged by their role as mothers.
- To ensure that pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity leave do not affect women's opportunities for career advancement, academic success, or workplace participation.

Implementations of the Policy

This policy applies to all female employees and women students who are enrolled full-time in degree programs at SPIHER. Maternity leave is available to women who have worked at SPIHER for a minimum of 12 months prior to the birth of their child. Maternity leave will be granted for a period of 26 weeks (6 months) in total. Flexible leave arrangements are also available for the faculty (12 weeks before the delivery and 14 weeks after) if mutually agreed upon with their department head or supervisor. The Institute also permits extension of maternity leave if a faculty requires additional time to care for her newborn, maternity leave may be extended upon submission of a medical certificate from a registered healthcare provider. Faculty who adopt a child under the age of 3 years or use surrogacy services will also be entitled to the same maternity leave as natural mothers.

The Institute provides flexible working hours during pregnancy to help accommodate medical appointments or to alleviate physical discomfort including access to more comfortable seating, reducing physical strain, or limiting exposure to harmful substances. Depending on the need, the faculty can also work online if it is more comfortable for them.

The Institute also supports in returning to work in a phased manner with part-time working hours, flexible work arrangements or a reduction in duties for a couple of months.

Female students who are enrolled in degree programs and are expecting a child are entitled to maternity leave for up to 6 months without affecting their academic schedule and any arrangements needed for exams, assignments, or practical courses. The students can request academic flexibility, including extensions for assignments, rescheduled exams, or additional leave during the maternity period. The Institute also provides alternative learning opportunities or deferred assessments to the students. Academic advisors and counselors assist the student in adjusting to their coursework after their return. The Institute also offers additional tutoring, counseling, or online resources to help students catch up with missed coursework.

The Institute also ensures that no faculty or student will be discriminated against or subjected to unfair treatment due to pregnancy or maternity leave including Job status, educational progress and will be entitled to return to their previous position or an equivalent position with the same terms and conditions of employment. The Institute ensures a zero-tolerance policy toward harassment or discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity status.

The Institute is committed to promoting a supportive and inclusive environment where women can fully participate in academic, professional, and campus life, regardless of maternity or family responsibilities. This policy reflects the commitment of the Institute towards gender equality, supporting the well-being of women, and enabling their continued success in both their careers and academic pursuits.

01.02.2024   **REGISTRAR**

Registrar
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"SPIHER's Childcare Facility: Supporting our staff with a nurturing environment for their children."

Conclusion

St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research (SPIHER) demonstrates a strong and sustained commitment to promoting gender equity, expanding women's participation in underrepresented disciplines, and fostering an inclusive academic environment. Through targeted efforts such as tracking underrepresented girl students in the STEM Courses, offering specialized scholarships, mentoring programs, digital literacy workshops, and skill development initiatives the institution ensures that every woman has the opportunity, support, and confidence needed to excel.

The steady increase in female admissions to traditionally male-dominated programs, particularly in STEM, reflects SPIHER's strategic outreach, personalized counselling, and student-centered interventions. By identifying students from economically weaker sections, rural backgrounds, and first-generation learners, the university provides timely academic and emotional support, preventing dropout risks and strengthening retention.

Skill development programs including the One Week Skill Development Workshop, ICT training, cultural skill sessions, and the Silk Thread Jewellery Making Workshop at Banaveduthottam Village further equip women and girls with practical skills for economic independence, leadership, and self-reliance. These initiatives not only empower women within the campus but also extend SPIHER's impact into the wider community.

Additionally, the institution upholds equity and dignity through robust support systems such as safe hostel facilities, transport services, counselling access, and updated policies like the revised Maternity Support Policy (2024), ensuring continued educational and professional stability for women.

Together, these integrated efforts align with UN SDG 5, Gender Equality and reflect SPIHER's vision of creating a transformative educational environment where women are encouraged, empowered, and enabled to break barriers, pursue excellence, and emerge as capable leaders in their respective fields. Through continuous monitoring, innovative practices, and community outreach, SPIHER remains committed to fostering a culture of inclusion, opportunity, and lifelong empowerment for all women learners.