



NICHE
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DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY

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NICHE Innovation and Startup Policy

Innovation and entrepreneurship need to emerge as focal points of our education system, and they are essential for the development of the Indian economy. This document outlines the Innovation Start-up Policy (ISP) of the Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education (NICHE). The policy was framed based on the Ministry of Education (MoE's) Innovation Cell guidelines for the active engagement of students and faculty in building, streamlining, and strengthening the innovation and start-up ecosystem in NICHE. Aspiring researchers and entrepreneur students are full of innovative ideas and often look for technical and business incubators to take their ideas to the next stage.

The incubator helps start-ups grow and supports them with the following: capital, funds, strategy, and a variety of other resources. NICHE has promoted the Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) to foster innovation and technology-based start-up ventures, address societal challenges using science and technological interventions by creating working prototypes and commercial products, and motivate a large group of students and faculty members to pursue entrepreneurship. It builds working relations with the government of India, the government of Tamil Nadu, Alumni start-ups, corporations, NGOs, industries, international bodies, and other academic and research institutions for a common goal of developing the innovation and start-up ecosystem.

Introduction

In November 2016, the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) released a start-up policy document addressing the need to inculcate innovation and entrepreneurial culture in HEIs. Inspired by the policy, the institute has designed and formulated the NICHE-ISP on different aspects by an eleven-member committee. It includes the following aspects: Intellectual property ownership, revenue sharing mechanisms, equity sharing mechanisms, motivates a large group of students and faculty members to pursue entrepreneurship and another thrust area of ISP, and it is also dedicated to promoting initiatives like hackathons, tech-fests, idea competition and start-up boot camps, etc.

Vision

The vision is to ensure the innovation and Start-up culture by integrating innovation and entrepreneurial activities to attain the Innovative Centre of Excellence.

Mission

The mission is to transform innovative ideas into product development and commercial exploitation, strengthening our nation's economic and intellectual growth by providing creative student aspirants and faculty members with various assistance, such as infrastructure, space, legal advice, technical expertise, operations, market linkage, and networking.

This document broadly details the following thrust areas:

1. Strategies and governance for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship
2. Start-up enabling institutional infrastructure
3. Nurturing innovations and start-ups
4. IPR evaluation
5. Organization capacity, HR & Incentives
6. Creating innovation pipeline and pathways
7. Norms for faculty start-ups
8. Pedagogy and learning interventions for entrepreneurship development
9. Collaboration, co-creation, business relationships, and knowledge exchange
10. Periodic impact assessment

I. Strategies and governance for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship

a. NICHE has established an Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) per MoE's Innovation Cell guidelines. The IIC guides the institution in conducting various innovation, start-ups, and entrepreneurship development activities.

b. NICHE has formulated a well-articulated vision and mission for the development of the Innovation and Entrepreneurial (I & E) ecosystem on the campus. The specific objectives of I & E activities are to support innovation, pre-incubation, and Incubation infrastructure facilities for students, faculty members, and others. NICHE has also formulated a performance measuring indicator of the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievement (ARIIA) to assess and monitor the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the organization.

c. The entrepreneurial agenda should be the responsibility of the Institution's head and the Institution's Innovation Council of NICHE. The heads of all departments and the IIC of NICHE shall work together to implement the entrepreneurship culture successfully.

d. Resource mobilization plan:

i. NICHE has defined a sustainable financial strategy for implementing its entrepreneurial agenda. It allocates 1% of its total annual budget to funding and supporting innovation and start-up-related activities.

ii. The IIC will also take measures to generate funds from various external sources, such as DST, DBT, MHRD, ATCTE, TDB, TIFAC, DSIR, CSIR, BIRAC, NSTEDB, NRDC, Start-up India, Invest India, MSDE, MSME, etc., and non-government sources.

iii. NICHE will also generate funds through sponsorships, donations from other agencies, and alumni networks to promote 'I& E'.

iv. IIC will approach private and corporate sectors to generate funds under Corporate Social Responsibility as per Section 135 of the Company Act 2013.

e. IIC and its team are empowered to expedite the decision-making, minimize hierarchical barriers, and promote individual autonomy and ownership of initiatives through individual autonomy and ownership of initiatives.

f. NICHE will promote and highlight the importance of innovation and entrepreneurial concepts by incorporating appropriate courses in its curricula and also by institutional programs such as conferences, workshops, etc.

g. Institute endeavours to develop and implement an 'I& E' strategy and policy for the entire institute in order to integrate the entrepreneurial activities across various centres, departments, and faculty within the institutes, thus breaking the silos.

h. IIC will plan its own strategy to achieve its long-term vision by implementing innovation and start-up policy objectives.

i. NICHE will act as the driving force in developing entrepreneurship culture in its vicinity at regional, social, and community levels and will extend its facilities to the needy outside start-ups.

j. NICHE develops strategic international partnerships and collaboration with national and international Universities, relevant organizations, colleges, and industries by

Exchange programs and internships through Memorandum of Understanding (Mai-) and form the international innovation clusters,

k. NICHE will invite its successful alumni entrepreneurs to share their success stories, start-up experiences, and operational and developmental procedures with students, staff, faculty members, and TIC on a regular basis to motivate the stakeholders.

2. Institutional Infrastructure

a. Infrastructure at NICHE will be developed to promote the start-up ecosystem.

b. The institution created a pre-incubation and incubation centre, and its facilities are accessible to students, faculty, alumni members, and potential entrepreneurs interested in start-up activities.

c. NICHE encourages its IICs to organize programs related to innovation, IPR, start-ups, and entrepreneurship development.

d. NICHE will create facilities for supporting pre-incubation {e. g., IICs per the guidelines by MoE's Innovation Cell, EDC, Innovation Cell, Start-up Cell, etc.) and Incubation by mobilizing internal and external resources.

e. Establishment of lab Makers' space in the Institute that will serve as a bridge between Innovators and Incubators and will be accessible 24 x 7 to students and faculty across the Institute.

f. Institution will offer mentoring and other relevant services through the Pre-incubation/ Incubation unit in return for nominal consultancy fees initially (decided from time to time by the Head of the Institution). Later, the services will be offered on an equity-sharing basis.

g. Fees, operation royalty, or rental will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending upon the nature of services and support offered through IIC.

3. Nurturing Innovations and Start-ups:

a. The IIC and Incubation Cell (IC) have established the processes and mechanisms for easily creating and nurturing start-up schemes with UG/PG/Ph.D. students and faculty members, including project staff. The IIC committee will monitor the progress of every start-up.

b. Student entrepreneurs will earn credits for working on innovative prototypes. The formal recommendations are tabulated below: UG/ PG Students

Particulars	Progress	Credits
Credits can be earned for progress made on innovative prototypes/business models, such as IPR. (As per the recommendation of the Review Committee)	Prototypes	Up to a maximum of 3 credits
	Business Models	Up to a maximum of 3 credits
	IPR	Up to a maximum of 3 credits

c. The curriculum and syllabus related to innovation, entrepreneurship development, venture development, and skill development courses are incorporated into UG and PG programs.

- d. Student inventors will be allowed to opt for start-up in place of their mini project, seminars, and summer training.
- e. The area in which the student wants to initiate a start-up may be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary
- f. Students can attend entrepreneurship training with no registration fee.
- g. Students who are under incubation but are pursuing some entrepreneurial ventures are allowed to use the institute address to register their company with due permission from the institution.
- h. Students registered with a pre-incubation or incubation centre (as certified by the in-charge) are considered for a 10% relaxation of attendance per semester with necessary permission from the head of the Institution.
- i Re-Exams can be permitted if students are requested to participate in every important 'I&E' activities.
- j. On duty for a period of up to 10 days per year will be given to faculty and students working in pre-incubation units, start-up activities, and Incubation Centres.
- k. Funding up to 1% of the Institute's total annual budget will be allotted to the student start-up venture activities, which will be managed by IIC.
- l. Based on their request, Students who have deferred their placement opportunity while starting their start-ups will be considered for another placement chance if their venture fails.
- m. NICHE will consider students' requests for a break in academic studies for a period of up to 12 months to work on their start-up company launched in the Incubation Centre or elsewhere and rejoin academics to complete the course.
- n. The institute will provide hostels or guest rooms for entrepreneurs on campus for some period of time.
- o. The incubator can access the institute's technology development, ideation, creativity, and other infrastructure facilities at a minimum or no charge, depending on the consumables and other material usage.
- p. Regular in-house and external expert mentorship will be provided to incubate.

- q. The Incubation Centre will provide linkages to banks, seed-fund providers/agency funds/venture funds / Govt. organizations. It is the responsibility of incubators to avail the required support as per the funding bodies' norms and regulations
- r. Faculty and staff are allowed to take a two-year sabbatical leave (unpaid) to work on start-ups and return.
- s. Faculty involved in start-ups and incubations do not spend more than 20% of office time. Hence, it will not affect their regular academic and administrative work and duties
- t. Institute has a policy to extend this start-up facility to alumni of the institute.
- u. Every faculty member is expected to encourage and motivate the student to carry out I&E activities
- v. The Incubatory should not, at any stage, damage or degrade the reputation of NICHE and its Incubator Centre on and after executing the contract.
- w. Start-up activity should not bring the institution into any liability at any condition.
- x. Contributions to start-ups will be considered for promotion while evaluating the faculty's annual performance, in addition to R&D projects, industrial consultancy, and management duties.
- y. The TIC committee and Progress will monitor each start-up's progress. At the end of every academic year, presentations will be conducted for each start-up.
- z. Institution will revise performance evaluation policies for faculty and staff.
- Aa. External Incubates will undertake an agreement to become incubators to utilize the Incubation Centre services.

4. Product Ownership Rights for Technologies Developed at NICHE:

- a. When NICHE facilities and funds are used substantially or when IPR is developed as a part of the curriculum or academic activity, IPR is to be jointly owned by inventors and the institute.
- b. Inventors and institutes could license the product or IPR together to any commercial organisation, with inventors having the primary say. License fees could be either a mix of:
 - 1. Upfront fees or one-time technology transfer fees
 - 2. Royalty as a percentage of the sale price
 - 3. Shares in the company licensing the product

c. Any revenue generated from IPR activities will be shared in the ratio of 70% to the Inventors and 30% to the NICHE.

d. On the other hand, if the product/ IPR developed by the innovators are not using the institute facilities and funds, outside office hours (for staff and faculty), or not as a part of the curriculum by the student, then the product/ IPR will be entirely owned by inventors in proportion to the contributions made by them. In this case, inventors can decide to license the technology to third parties or use the technology the way they deem fit.

e. If there is a dispute in ownership, a minimum five-member committee consisting of two faculty members (having developed sufficient IPR and translated it to commercialization), two of the institute's alumni/ industry experts (having experience in technology commercialization), and one legal advisor with experience in IPR will examine the issue after meeting the inventors and help them settle it.

The Institute IPR cell or the Incubator centre will only be a coordinator and facilitator for providing services to faculty, staff, and students. They will have no say in how the invention is carried out, patented, or licensed.

5. Organizational Capacity, Human Resources (BR) and Incentives:

a. Faculty members with strong industrial experience, innovation & entrepreneurship (I&E) skills will be deputed to train the students and promote I&E culture and institutional policy, achieving better staff engagement through constant upskilling.

b. Interdisciplinary departmental engagement, teaching, and research will be encouraged to maximise internal resources and knowledge utilisation.

c. External subject experts, entrepreneurs and industrial experts, guest lecturers, and Alumni will be invited to receive strategic guidance and share skills and knowledge to strengthen I&E activities.

d. Faculty and staff are to be encouraged to study courses related to 'I & E' on innovation, entrepreneurship management, and venture development.

e. Students involved in I&E activities will be considered for awards as 'Achievers' at University Day functions to motivate and recognize talented minds.

f. To attract and retain the right people, NICHE will honour the candidates with incentives, reduced teaching loads, awards, and training. It will also continuously develop strategies and reward mechanisms to reward all staff and stakeholders who actively contribute and support I&E activities.

6. Creating innovation pipeline and pathways

- a. NICHE will establish an institution-level mechanism to maximize students' exposure to innovation and pre-incubation activities at their early stage and support the pathway from ideation to innovation to market viability.
 - b. Students will be allowed to venture their start-up idea as their final year project, and it will be academically graded to qualify for the award of a degree.
 - c. NICHE will spread awareness among students, faculty, and staff about the value and importance of entrepreneurship and its role in career development or employability.
 - d. NICHE will link start-ups and companies with other entrepreneurial ecosystems, both In India and abroad through their participation in competitions. Networking events will be organized to create a platform for budding entrepreneurs to meet investors and pitch their ideas.
 - e. Connecting student entrepreneurs with real-life entrepreneurs will help the students in understanding real challenges, which will also increase the probability of success.
 - f. The students will be taught about 'I & E' mechanisms with a focus on marketing and It will be useful in solving the problems of society and consumers.
 - g. Students will be encouraged to develop an entrepreneurial mindset by routinely organizing periodic programs with experiential learning, such as idea and innovation competitions, workshops, seminars, conferences, exhibitions, and mentoring from experts, will be useful to alleviate real-life challenges and develop their cognitive skills (e.g. design thinking, critical thinking, etc.). NICHE will award and recognize talented minds through the above initiatives with the help of academic and industry experts.
 - h. Integration of education with enterprise-related activities will boost the creation of start-up ideas into reality.
 - i. NICHE will provide business incubation facilities such as laboratories, research facilities, IT services, training, mentoring, etc., at free of cost to access the new start-ups.
- NICHE will develop and publish ready- the reference Innovation Tool Kit on the homepage of its website to answer the doubts and queries of the innovators and enlist the facilities available at the institute with respect to 'I & E'
- k. Institute will acknowledge and guide the deserving faculty and students with ideas and innovations and support their entrepreneurial journey.

7. Norms for Faculty Start-ups at NICHE:

- a. NICHE will create norms for faculty start-ups to coordinate entrepreneurial activities better.
- b. Faculty roles may vary from owner, direct promoter, mentor, consultant, to on-board member of the start-up. NICHE will safeguard the conflict of interest to ensure that the faculty's regular duties don't suffer due to involvement in the start-up activities.
- c. NICHE will venture into a start-up with its faculty members, students, alumni, and other stakeholders. The stakeholders will be the students, staff members, faculty from another institute, and entrepreneurs.
- d. Faculty will not involve research staff or other staff in the activities of start-up or vice versa.
- e. Faculty start-ups will be selected from the existing innovation technologies that originated from the faculty research.
- f. NICHE will permit an outside national or international accelerator in the faculty start-up with a maximum leave of one semester or year, which will depend on the review committee's decision.
- g. The potential R&D activities of NICHE will be identified and supported for venturing into a start-up technology transfer or commercialization.
- h. NICHE will clearly separate and distinguish its ongoing research from the work conducted at the start-up.
- i Faculty and students will be allowed to do internships with eligible stakeholders based on their request. The internship will be considered for its appropriate academic grading.

Faculty will not accept gifts from the start-up and abide by the rules and regulations of NICHE.

8. Pedagogy and Learning Interventions for Entrepreneurship Development:

- a. NICHE will conduct an induction program about the importance of 'I& E' at the beginning of every academic session so that freshly inducted students are made aware of the entrepreneurial agenda of the institute and available support systems. Incubatee student or alumni entrepreneurs will be invited to share their experiences and motivate the juniors.

b. a diverse approach will be adopted to produce desirable learning outcomes, including cross-disciplinary learning using mentors, labs, case studies, games, etc., instead of traditional lecture-based delivery.

c. The teaching methodology will be based on case studies, business failure reports, and real-life experience reports by start-ups, which will sensitize students and help reduce the social stigma associated with it.

d. Student innovators, start-ups, and experts will be engaged in the dialogue process while developing the strategy so that it becomes need-based

e. Entrepreneurship education will be imparted to students, and the learning outcomes will be available.

The curriculum for entrepreneurship education will be continuously updated based on entrepreneurship research outcomes and will include case studies on failures.

g. Customized teaching and training materials will be developed for start-ups

h. External stakeholders' expertise in entrepreneurship education will be utilized to create a collaborative culture and engage with the external environment.

i. Industry personnel will be acquainted with conducting research and surveys on trends in technology, research, innovations, and market intelligence. Sensitization of students will be done for their understanding of expected learning outcomes.

j. Student clubs, professional societies, and teams will be created to organise competitions (like hackathons, ideation, conditions, marathons, etc.), boot camps, workshops, awards, exhibitions, and hands-on training to improve students' thinking and responding ability.

k. Innovation champions will be nominated from among the students, faculty, and staff for each department of study.

l. NICHE will start an annual "I&E award" to recognize outstanding ideas and successful enterprises and contribute to promoting innovation and the enterprise ecosystem in the institute.

m. The risk involved in entrepreneurship will be taught to everyone who wants to become an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is a leader who successfully converts an innovation into a product.

n. NICHE will tolerate failures, and they will be elaborately discussed and debated to realize that failure is a part of life and a part of its philosophy and culture. This will also help to reduce the social stigma associated with it.

o. A pedagogical review and update will be conducted to ensure that the maximum number of student projects and innovations are based on real-life challenges.

9. Collaboration, Co-creation, Business Relationships, and Knowledge Exchange:

a. IIC will function as a 'single point of contact' for the students, faculty, collaborators, partners, and other stakeholders to share, support, and expertise all activities, effectively absorb information and knowledge from the external ecosystem, and do knowledge management related to 'I & E'.

b. NICHE will collaborate with industries, government, NGOs, MHRD, and other bodies to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities.

c. NICHE encourages incubates to collaborate with the following stakeholders: potential partners, resource organizations, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, social enterprises, schools, alumni, entrepreneurs, and professional bodies to support entrepreneurship and co-design the programs.

d. Mutual exchange of knowledge will be achieved by involving the stakeholders in the academic process, such as guest lecturers, project evaluators, mentors, chair of technical sessions, symposia, etc. Internal faculty will be engaged as consultants, mentors, technical experts, and solution providers in industries.

e. NICHE will organize networking events to engage collaborators better and create opportunities for staff, faculty, and students to allow a constant bidirectional flow of ideas and knowledge through meetings, workshops, space for collaboration, lectures, etc. Faculty, staff, and students will be connected and accomplish cordial relationships with the stakeholders through formal and informal mechanisms such as internships, teaching and research exchange programmes, clubs, social gatherings, science parks, etc., to absorb information and experience from the external environment and ecosystem and ensure maximum exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

g. NICHE will frame policies and guidelines that will be useful for creating, managing, and exchanging knowledge through collaboration and fostering and coordinating these relationships with external stakeholders, including private industries.

10. Periodic Impact Assessment: NICHE entrepreneurial initiatives such as innovation, pre-incubation, incubation, and patent registrations will be measured regularly using the following evaluation parameters:

a. Quality and quantity of 'I&E' activities organized.

- b. Evaluation of teaching, learning and other academic activities related to 'I& E' through outcome assessments.
- c. Monitoring the sustained development and maintenance of infrastructure and other facilities that promote 'I& E' activities.
- d. Number of achievements, awards, recognition, funding, and other support received.
- e. Number of established ventures and registered start-ups with the support of the IIC and recognitions received.
- f. The number of support systems provided at the institutional level, participant satisfaction, and the creation of new business relationships.
- g. Number of collaborations with industries, alumni start-ups, NGOs, etc., related to 'I&E'.
- h. The number of intellectual property (IP) generation and commercialization, industry linkages, and exposure to the entrepreneurial ecosystem were obtained.

COMMERCIAL success will be the REAL measure in the long run




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