

Pera Uni's Postgrad Institute of Science celebrates 30th anniversary

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When the Peradeniya University's Postgraduate Institute of Science was established in 1996, it marked a significant national step in strengthening postgraduate scientific education, expanding the research capacity, and preparing Sri Lanka to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world. As the PGIS approaches its 30th anniversary this year (in 2026), it stands as a respected centre for postgraduate education, research, innovation, and professional development, with a strong record of national leadership and growing international engagement.

Founded under the Higher Education Ministry, the PGIS was envisioned as a national hub for advancing scientific knowledge and developing high-level human capital. Over three decades, this vision has grown into a dynamic academic environment shaped by rigorous teaching, interdisciplinary research, quality assurance, modern infrastructure, and strong links with the society and the industry. Its contribution is reflected not only in the qualifications that it awards, but also in the scientific culture that it has nurtured across the country.

From a national milestone to multidisciplinary excellence

The establishment of the PGIS in 1996 marked a major milestone in Sri Lanka's higher education sector. With 10 Boards of Study established and postgraduate programmes transferred from the Science Faculty to a dedicated Institute, advanced scientific training came under a more focused and nationally responsive framework. In the same year, the PGIS enrolled its first Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students and launched Master of Science (MSc) programmes in Medical Physics and Gemology and Industrial Minerals.

The Institute expanded rapidly in its early years, introducing programmes in Environmental Science, Analytical Chemistry, Industrial Chemistry, Applied Statistics, and Science Education between 1997 and 1998. In 1999, the PGIS recorded another landmark with the completion of the first PhD registered entirely within the Institute, strengthening its role in national research capacity building.

Through the 2000s, the PGIS responded to emerging scientific and societal needs by introducing areas such as Computer Science, Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing, Disaster Management, Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, and Biotechnology. Its interdisciplinary strength grew further in 2018 with Biomedical Sciences becoming the 11th Board of Study. More recently, the PGIS



embraced global technological change through MSc programmes in Data Science in 2020 and Data Science and Artificial Intelligence in 2021, along with advanced programmes in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and Information and Communications Technology-based Science Education.

An Institute with growing international reach

Internationalisation has become a defining feature of the present phase of the PGIS' development. In 2023, the Institute formalised global collaboration through a memorandum of understanding with the Tomorrow Technology Education Service Centre (TTESEC), opening new pathways for postgraduate education for international students. In 2024, the first cohort of international students successfully completed their MSc Education degrees, marking a significant milestone in offshore programme delivery and demonstrating the PGIS's capacity to extend its academic influence beyond national borders.

Research, innovation, and quality at the centre

Research excellence remains central to the mission of the PGIS. Over the years, the Institute has strengthened a vibrant research culture through initiatives that promote inquiry, innovation, and dissemination. The PGIS Research Congress (RESCON), established in 2014, has become a flagship annual event for postgraduate students and academics to present research and engage with the wider scholarly communities. The Young Researchers' Forum, initiated in 2006,



has encouraged early-career scientists to develop confidence and purpose in research. Together with publication incentive schemes and competitive PGIS Research Grants, these initiatives have enhanced the quality, visibility, and impact of interdisciplinary research, positioning the PGIS as a national leader in postgraduate research training.

Infrastructure and digital transformation

The PGIS has invested significantly in infrastructure to support advanced scientific training and research. Its analytical and laboratory facilities include Powder X-Ray Diffractometer and X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy systems, Microwave Plasma Atomic Emission Spectroscopy, Gas Chromatography, Polymerase Chain Reaction-based molecular analysis systems, Ultra-Violet-Visible Spectrophotometers, and electrochemical instrumentation. These resources strengthen experimental work, enhance graduate competitiveness, and support research relevant to the academia and the industry. The PGIS has also advanced digital

transformation through the Moodle-based Learning Management System, introduced in 2020, which ensured academic continuity and improved student engagement. Management Information Systems have further enhanced administrative efficiency, transparency, and data-driven decision-making, aligning the PGIS with modern postgraduate education.

Governance, quality assurance, and institutional integrity

Institutional quality has been another important pillar in the development of the PGIS. The establishment of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell in 2021 strengthened governance, compliance, and continuous improvement within the Institute. The PGIS also contributed to the University's Grade A achievement at the 2023 Institutional Review, a recognition that reflects the wider quality culture within the University and the Institute's own commitment to academic standards. The consistent receipt of unqualified audit opinions further demonstrates financial and administrative integrity. For a Postgraduate Institute that serves students, researchers, funding bodies, national agencies, and international partners, such integrity is essential. It reinforces public trust and supports the Institute's ability to grow responsibly while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Science for society and sustainable development

The relevance of the PGIS extends beyond the classroom and the laboratory. The Institute continues to align its mission with global priorities, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, by promoting interdisciplinary research that addresses environmental, technological, and societal challenges. Its academic programmes, research initiatives, and industry engagements are designed to enhance graduate employability, encourage professional development, and connect scientific knowledge with real-world needs. The launch of the International Journal on Environmental Issues in 2023 further illustrates the Institute's commitment to disseminating high-quality research on a global platform.

Open Day 2026: Uncovering potential

To commemorate three decades of excellence, the PGIS will host the Open Day 2026 from 12 to 14 June, from 8.30 a.m. onwards, under the theme "Uncover Your Potential". The event will welcome prospective students, researchers, professionals, industry stakeholders, alumni, and the wider public to explore the Institute's

academic and research environment. Highlights include an inaugural ceremony, keynote addresses, career preparation sessions, programme spotlights, Board of Study booths, open exhibitions, research poster displays, and presentations by the PGIS grant holders. A special panel discussion, "The Research Path" will highlight postgraduate research journeys and career prospects, while an industry-science roundtable will promote consultancy services and collaborative research.

A platform for partnerships and alumni engagement

The Open Day 2026 will strengthen collaboration by inviting industry partners to support future scientists through sponsorship and meaningful engagement with the PGIS. Such partnerships will enhance visibility, foster academia-industry links, and connect postgraduate training and research more closely with national development. The PGIS also invites its global alumni to reconnect during this milestone year. Their achievements across the academia, the industry, education, the public service, and international sectors reflect the Institute's lasting impact and will inspire future generations of postgraduate students.

Looking ahead to Vision 2030

As the PGIS enters its fourth decade, its Strategic Plan 2026–2030 sets a clear path for growth through global partnerships, offshore programme delivery, stronger quality assurance, good governance, interdisciplinary research, innovation, digital transformation, and sustainability. These priorities affirm the Institute's continuing commitment to scientific excellence while preparing it for emerging national and global challenges. The 30th anniversary is therefore not only a celebration of past achievements, but also a forward-looking moment. From its establishment in 1996 to its present standing, the PGIS continues to advance postgraduate science education, develop human capital, support innovation, serve society, and inspire future scientific excellence.

Further information is available at www.pgis.pdn.ac.lk.

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