



Awards Asia 2026

Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Beaconhouse National University
Submission title or project name	Green Carry – turning waste into opportunity
Nominee / key personnel	Werdah Munib (assistant professor, School of Media and Mass Communication)
URL	https://www.instagram.com/greencarry.pk?igsh=emMyNGNnMjZjMmt6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-zoe8mbi14
Submission	Werdah Munib led Green Carry, a pioneering research project transforming plastic waste into purpose. In collaboration with WWF-Pakistan and three Beaconhouse National University schools (the School of Management Sciences, the School of Media and Mass Communication, and the School of Visual Arts and Design), the project trained 100 underprivileged women to upcycle discarded wrappers into durable eco-bags woven on traditional handlooms. The initiative addressed Pakistan's mounting plastic crisis while empowering women with income-generating skills and renewed dignity. Its preliminary phase produced an 18m sheet yielding 25 reusable bags, repurposing more than 1,000 wrappers. A digital campaign reached 3,000+ people, with 66 per cent expressing willingness to purchase upcycled products. More than a sustainability project, Green Carry stands as a women-led model of creative circular economy, where environmental research meets cultural renewal, proving that innovation and empathy can weave change together.



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Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Huachiew Chalermprakiet University
Submission title or project name	From heritage to livelihoods: a three-phase area-based study on cultural capital and inclusive community development
Nominee / key personnel	Uraipan Janvanichyanont (president and project adviser); Nick Soonthorndhai (dean of the Faculty of Law, director of the Arts and Culture Centre); Tanachai Suntonanantachai (assistant to the president)
URL	https://sustainability.hcu.ac.th/research-project/
Submission	Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (HCU) has implemented a longitudinal, three-phase cultural capital study that aligns with Thailand's national strategy to uplift grassroots communities, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. First, more than 150 cultural assets were documented in a "cultural capital mapping" project, from which communities selected elements to preserve. Next, products, services and enterprises were developed through participatory training and the "temple, school, community, entrepreneur" (TSCE) model, generating new income streams. Finally, the project expanded to include migrants, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups, promoting equity and intercultural exchange. The outcomes are significant: more than 20 cultural products and services, six enterprises and over 800 cultural successors have been established. Entrepreneurs' incomes grew by between 50 per cent and 327 per cent, while markets such as Srivaree Floating Market secured sustainability. With a social return on investment of 8.48 (phase two) and 4.96 (phase three), an ROI of 35.63, the project demonstrates how universities can revitalise heritage, uplift livelihoods and foster inclusive community resilience.



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Institution Name	Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)
Submission title or project name	Icons of devotion: Jain artefacts in the Lahore Museum
Nominee / key personnel	Nadhra Shahbaz Khan
URL	https://heritage.lums.edu.pk/jain-collection/
Submission	The Lahore Museum's Jain collection had long been ignored by scholars: neither local nor international scholars had ever studied it. To correct the oversight, in spring 2025, LUMS offered a unique undergraduate art history course connecting students with this collection. The enrolled eight students carried out extensive research and succeeded in correcting decades of misidentification and untangling the conflation of two different Jain heritage sites that had long been asserted by government departments. The course has transformed the collection – incorrect labels have been replaced by accurate new bilingual labels, six QR-linked videos bring mute objects to life, and Pakistan's first catalogue showcasing these artefacts has been published online and in print. The students gained expertise in archival research, object documentation and curatorial practices in a country where art history is still in its infancy. This collaboration between LUMS and the Lahore Museum has set a precedent for cultural education and heritage preservation in Pakistan that will lead to highlighting other ignored collections in museums across the country.



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Institution Name	Lovely Professional University
Submission title or project name	Kattunayakan cosmologies and epistemic pluralism on forest ecosystem services in Kerala, South India
Nominee / key personnel	Manish Gupta; PP Singh; Aswathy V K
URL	https://www.lpu.in/inst-performance/eco-cosmology.php
Submission	The Kattunayakan, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in Kerala's Wayanad and Nilambur forests, live by cosmologies that guide every interaction with nature. Concepts such as <i>kāḍu</i> (forest), along with taboos on over-harvesting honey or harming sacred species, act as living conservation ethics. Yet such wisdom is often marginalised in state-led conservation, which emphasises science and economics. This project bridged those worlds through epistemic pluralism valuing indigenous, experiential and scientific knowledge together. Using participatory ethnography, the study engaged 17,051 Kattunayakan individuals across 4,369 families, documenting oral histories, observing seasonal forest practices and working with the Keystone Foundation, the Forest Department and student interns from Lovely Professional University. Results showed that cosmologies align with ecological sustainability, value addition increased incomes, and participatory forums empowered community voices. Wider benefits included improved livelihoods, stronger cultural preservation and greater ecological resilience. The project also sparked new directions in microenterprises, digital heritage archiving and climate-linked ecological monitoring.



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Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University
Submission title or project name	Korat Learning City: from a global geopark to a city of learning, arts and creative economy based on innovation and technology
Nominee / key personnel	Worarit Kobsiripat; Kriangkrai Duangkrajorn; Duriwat Tathaisong; Chuttrapee Popitikul
URL	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560957897380
Submission	This research project aims to transform Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat) into a Learning City of Arts and Creative Economy under the UNESCO framework. It integrates the province's geological and cultural capital with artistic practices and digital innovation to establish a prototype learning ecosystem across five districts. The project developed the "Khorat Geopark Craft" learning kit, created learning sites and trained 50 facilitators as knowledge leaders. It also empowered marginalised, vulnerable and disability groups by engaging more than 250 participants through training and technology-driven platforms such as online lessons, social media and 3D exhibitions. Findings show that communities gained new skills, produced innovative products and tourism services, and raised household income, alongside growing visitor numbers. Collaboration with the Provincial Administrative Organisation, universities and local agencies laid the foundation for long-term growth. It represents a model of a sustainable Learning City, offering both economic and social benefits while serving as a transferable framework for others.



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Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Nazarbayev University
Submission title or project name	<i>Tamyr Reflections</i> and “Tolyk Adam”: reclaiming entrepreneurship as cultural identity and human flourishing
Nominee / key personnel	Shumaila Yousafzai (project lead, Nazarbayev University Research Centre for Entrepreneurship)
URL	https://nurce.kz/integratingabaisholistichumanphilosophyinentrepreneurialtrainin
Submission	What if entrepreneurship could help to restore lost languages, heal silenced histories and awaken ancestral wisdom? At Nazarbayev University Research Centre for Entrepreneurship, we asked this question and built an answer. Between 2022 and 2025, we published nine narrative books across central Asia that were co-created with entrepreneurs whose voices are often excluded. The book <i>Tamyr Reflections: 33 Narratives of Heritage and Entrepreneurship in Qazaqstan</i> is structured around 33 narratives offering unique perspectives on entrepreneurial journeys that blend tradition with modern innovation. We launched village exhibitions in yurts, blended visual ethnography with poetry, and transformed training into healing. In 2025, we introduced “Tolyk Adam”, a master trainer curriculum inspired by Abai Kunanbaev’s concept of the holistic human. Co-developed with philosophers, poets and marginalised entrepreneurs, including disabled individuals, former prisoners and recovering addicts, it roots learning in dignity and cultural pride. Our work is more than research. It is a movement: restoring humanity to development, imagination to policy and purpose to those long excluded.



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Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Ubon Ratchathani University
Submission title or project name	Strengthening community economy and local pride in Ubon Ratchathani Old Town through multicultural heritage
Nominee / key personnel	Tuantong Jutagate
URL	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gib0jOC20SJrZ_Ekf7qspwfUGludrKLE/view
Submission	The project “Revitalising the Old Town of Ubon Ratchathani through Multicultural Heritage and Creative Economy” showcases how arts and humanities research can drive inclusive development. Ubon’s Old Town, home to Thai-Isan, Chinese, Vietnamese, Sikh and Christian communities, faced rapid urban change and the risk of cultural loss. Researchers responded by documenting 62 cultural resources, training cultural leaders and entrepreneurs, and co-creating 18 innovative cultural products. Through creative festivals, policy collaborations and the establishment of cultural learning spaces, the project boosted local pride, preserved traditions and generated measurable economic growth – with household incomes rising by 13 per cent. More than 300 people directly benefited, while many more engaged through festivals, exhibitions and online platforms. This project demonstrates that cultural heritage, when linked to creative industries, can serve as a catalyst for social, cultural and economic transformation, offering a replicable model for multicultural cities across Asia.



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Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution Name	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
Submission title or project name	Community-based participatory research for sustainable tourism in Kampung Peros
Nominee / key personnel	Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts Service-Learning Malaysia (SULAM) team
URL	https://www.canva.com/design/DAGxC5VQ4kc/USTgDF_EYqwjes5LOxXTRA/view?utm_content=DAGxC5VQ4kc&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniquelinks&utlId=hdccfc72a3f5
Submission	Kampung Peros, a Bidayuh village in the Sarawak Delta Geopark, faced challenges in promoting tourism and preserving cultural knowledge owing to limited digital skills. Through community-based participatory research for sustainable tourism in Kampung Peros under the SULAM initiative, 90 students and seven lecturers from design technology, fine arts and cinematography worked with government agencies, industry partners and villagers to strengthen community capacity. Using a design thinking approach, they co-created social media platforms, promotional content, murals and short documentaries to promote the village and its natural attraction, Bung Podad. The project improved digital skills, boosted online engagement and increased tourist visits, leading to Kampung Peros being recognised as a Sarawak Delta Geopark partner. It also inspired follow-up initiatives such as keDIAMan and On Reciprocity Gotong-Royong, showing how art and design can empower rural communities sustainably.