Vision Statement

School of Humanities and Social Sciences at TCG CREST

I

With its location in Kolkata, this new School of Humanities and Social Sciences at TCG CREST is envisioning a revitalisation of the city's lineage of interdisciplinary research, teaching programmes and collaborative projects, by bringing in fresh energies and cutting-edge talents of senior and younger scholars from all over the country. It breaks new ground by moving away from traditional disciplinary silos and inaugurating a group of new thematic clusters of scholarship. Qualitative tools of analysis pulled from distinct disciplinary traditions,such as History, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science orLiterary Studies,will be brought to bear within these clusters to illuminate specific objects of analysis such as art, science, urban life, society, media and culture.
The School will be beginning with an integrated one-year M.A. leading to a four-year Ph.D. programme in the following broad clusters:

1. Art History and Visual Studies
This cluster will be studying the main methodological and conceptual shifts that have redefined the discipline of art history and the growth of the accompanying fields of visual culture and museum studies, as critical supplements to the older discipline. The cluster will offer compulsory courses in Research Methodologies and Vocabularies that will explore Art History's interface with the more traditional Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines as well as with newer fields of Cultural and Media Studies and Digital Humanities. A key area of interest will be to explore the interface of object and image worlds, juxtaposing the place of original sites and artworks with the work of collection, reproduction, dissemination and circulation. It will also develop optional courses with a focus on the themes of nationalism and modernity, religion and politics, global and local entanglements that have shaped the art-worlds and art-institutions of modern South Asia. Students will encouraged will develop a short research project bearing on these themes as part of the M.A. programme and first year of course work, before proceeding towards their larger four-year Ph.D. research.

2. History and Sociology of Science
Science is all around us: sometimes in spectacular events, like space missions, and sometimes in more mundane choices, like a stream to study in high school. In its protean forms, science also intersects with many different arenas of social existence to produce new forms of economic activity (think apps and gig economy), new forms of policing (forensics and digital surveillance), new forms of artistic expression (bio art), or new forms of family life and kinship (surrogacy, genetic ancestry). In the shadow of these self-conscious versions of science, there also thrives the humbler bodies of organized knowledge of carpenters, fishermen, cowherds or farmers, which too might be called subaltern sciences. This cluster seeks to study science in all its many forms but always in relations to the larger social, economic, cultural, and political entanglements through which it becomes part of our shared history. The M.A. programme or the first year of Ph.D. course work will expose students to a range of scholarship and methodologies from History of Science, Science and Technology Studies, and Medical Anthropology, and include a research project to hone the application of these tools to newer themes. The Ph.D. programme will initially be dedicated mainly to pursuing the histories of modern science in South Asia.

3. History and Anthropology

While the marriage of History & Anthropology has long been foretold, most extant iterations have either been anthropological inquiries with a short historical prelude, or historical research with an ethnographic postscript. This cluster will go beyond these limited unions and marshal critical methods from both disciplines to create a genuinely interdisciplinary toolkit to delve into issues of change and continuity in the everyday lives of people in South Asia and beyond, in the past and the present. It will undertake a critical look-back at the separate trajectories of these two disciplines and their shifting grounds of academic and professional practice over the 20th century, contrasting the Western scenario of the coming together of history, archaeology and anthropology, with the continuing institutional boundaries that hold them apart in the Indian context. Moreover, by studying the work of history itself ethnographically and the discipline of anthropology historically, the cluster will also relocate these preeminent academic disciplines as prominent sites for the complex interplay of knowledge and power. More generally, the cluster's emphasis will be on developing productive and critical ways of combining archival and ethnographic methods..

4. The Politics of Culture

Culture emerges in modern life at different levels. As an often-unstated set of values and worldviews, it mediates our senses of self and other. As distinct bodies of symbols, it informs the distinctiveness of historical contexts and situated rationalities. In commoditized forms, it becomes an artifact of economic activities. Rhetorically reframed, it becomes the lifeblood of politics. This cluster will take the close intermingling of culture and politics, in historical and contemporary times,as its key object of analysis. The analysis foregrounds the fundamentally political character of culture- insisting that while culture is pitched as a universal entity, its contours are always inchoate, and its articulations are inevitably charged by contested claims and multiple identities. This cluster intends to bring this approach to bear on different fields of cultural production, ranging from the realms of art, literature, cinema, performance or photography to multi-media communication and contemporary digital media. It will also engage the domain of the protean domain of the "folk", but do so while emphasizing the performative and historical nature of such productions.

5. Urban Sites, Spaces and Ecologies

This interdisciplinary cluster moves away from traditional urban studies to reengage urban phenomena through a lens of social justice and the operations of power. Drawing on traditions of urban history, it sees urban spaces as a palimpsest of historically evolving practices of living, adapting, regulating, and claiming spaces, facilities and resources.Based on the rich scholarship of critical urbanism, it will develop courses that will look closely into themes such as -architecture and built spaces;new forms of urban labour and work; histories of streets, slumsand, neighbourhoods; changing forms of commerce and consumption; contending rights to public spaces; and threats to environment and ecological sustainability.This cluster aims to develop a close focus around the city of Calcutta/Kolkata, encouraging new research and public projects on this city, while also expanding interests towards other cities of eastern and north easternIndia.

6. Archives and Public Histories

As critical practice and new technologies intersect, there emerges new objects and ways of archiving. The documentation of manuscripts and texts have now been joined by the digitization of still and moving images, music and sound, oral histories, popular print cultures and other kinds of

ephemera. Recently, even old websites have been archived, and efforts have now begun to find ways to archive performances or gestures by digital geometry. The classical tools of cataloging, indexing and preserving are cross-fertilizing with technologies of digitization and file sharing and even newer methods of digital tagging, visualization and text recognition - all of which now exist in an expanding toolkit of archiving. The task of archiving, once the preserve of hallowed institutions connected to the state, is now much more varied and taken up by a heterogeneous set of actors and communities. From individuals to companies and from hospitals to hobby groups, several people and institutions now collect, catalogue, and curate the diverse traces of the past. With this diversification has come a diversification of the audiences these collectors and collections serve. It is this intersection between a new and plural public history and archiving that will be the focus of this cluster. The cluster will both serve and study the communities of archivists, librarians, collectors, and others who participate in archiving and public history.

7. Digital Humanities and Culture

This cluster will study a history of the Humanities in an age of digital computing and cultural informatics, by critically looking at themes such as - Database as form and its function in knowledge, art and governance; Open Networks, Digital Commons and New Legalities; Ethics and the Digital Community, and the Representation of Knowledge. The key objectives of the courses it will offer are as follows: (i) Outlining multiple definitions of the digital humanities (ii) Exploring debates about the digital humanities within the emerging field (iii) Applying digital techniques to archiving and data analysis (iv) Analysing data from multiple sources (including social media) by applying a set digital tools and software (v) Understanding the applications of artificial intelligence (vi) Creating digital tools for data-mining and analysis. Some of the main modules to be taught are - Software Studies in Humanities; Digital Cartography; Scholarly Editions Online; Statistics for Digital Humanities; Digital Ethnography; Electronic Literature and Game Studies.

This choice of thematic clusters is open to change and regrouping as the School's programmes develop, depending on (i) the scholarly interests of the faculty and postdoctoral fellows who will be recruited, and (ii) the research profiles of the first group of Ph.D. students who are coming into the School.

II

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences will begin with developing **an integrated M. A.and Ph. D. programme in these different clusters, with the possibility of overlapping courses across some of the clusters. A year of intensive course work will result in an MA and an automatic progression onto a four-year PhD.** The programme will also offer an exit option with a MA in Research for those who do not wish to complete the full five-year duration. The MA thesis, in case of students seeking early exits, will be the final writing sample which will form the basis for them to get their Masters in Research degree. According to our current plans, the integrated M.A. and Ph.D. programmewill begin in late August 2026 in the clusters of Art History and Visual Studies and History and Sociology of Science, with programmes in the other clusters following suit.

III

1. Under the rubric of the Cluster in Art History and Visual Studies, the proposal is to also offer shorter (6-8 weeks) specialized professional courses at the Masters' level that will have a job market and public policy orientation. The following professional courses are being planned, some of which can be conducted by external experts – (i) Exhibition Research and Curation. This course can offer a tie-up and short internship with a museum or an art gallery (ii) Modern Craft and Design Histories. This course has potential of a tie-up and field surveys with organisations like the Crafts Council of India or Bangla Natak Dot Com. (iii) Family and Institutional Archiving. This course can reach out to families, institutions and corporate houses looking for archiving services and books or exhibitions to emerge from these archives. (iv) Heritage Studies. This course will equip students to work with specific sites, prepare detailed dossiers for conservation and protection, and collaborate with organisations working in the field of archaeological and architectural heritage and living traditions of craft and performance.

2. Under the rubric of the Programme in the History & Sociology of Science, the proposal is to also offer shorter (6-8 weeks) specialized professional courses at the Masters' level. The course will have two distinct goals. First, it will serve as a bridging course allowing students from all streams prepare for graduate research in the histories of science and medicine. Second, it will serve those working or intending to work in health-related non-profits. The course will be taught by a combination of standing faculty and international guest faculty.

IV

During 2026-2027, the School is also working on **a calendar of international conferences, smaller workshops, and public lectures by visiting scholars** at its new location at the building at DJ 2, Salt Lake, Sector II, Salt Lake - 700091