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# **COVID-19 AND THE CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA**

*Present Status (23-March-2020 to 22-August-2021) and Way-Forward*



**Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge**  
**Chairman**  
**University Grants Commission**

# Higher Education Institutes in Sri Lanka

## 1. **University Grants Commission monitors the national universities:**

- *17 National Universities* with another *20 Institutes (Postgraduate Institutes)*

## 2. **Other universities established under different Parliament Acts:**

- The General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU)
- Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka
- Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka
- University of Vocational Technology
- Ocean University of Sri Lanka

## 3. **Other Government owned Higher Educational Institutes:**

- Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE), Institute of Surveying and Mapping, Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), National Institute of Education (NIE), National Institute of Business Management (NIBM), National Institute of Social Development (NISD) etc.

## 4. **Non State Sector**

- Approximately 42 identified non-state higher educational institutes
- Approximately 36,000 students studying in 21 non-state higher educational institutes as per information received by the UGC

# LEARN as a Entity Under UGC

- Formulated to establish Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN), the NREN (National Research and Education Network) of Sri Lanka, as a Limited Guarantee Company 2009 (LEARN is in existence since 1989).
- Membership



- The Operation of LEARN is Governed by the Articles of Association of LEARN (2009).
- Managed by the LEARN Board of Directors, one member each from the full member institutions.

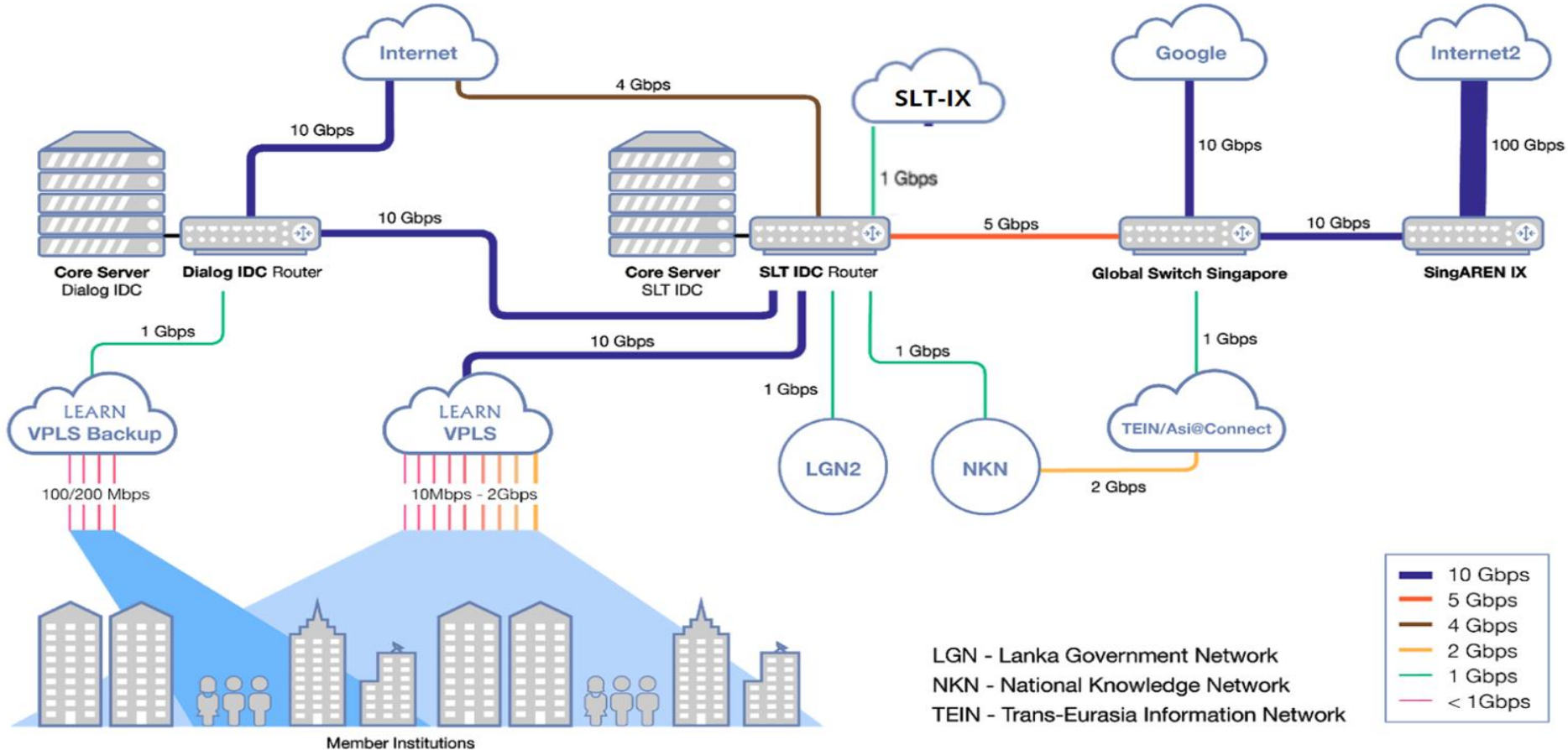
# LEARN – As an Internet Service Provider

Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRC, SL) License to Operate as an ISP. **LEARN** is a lot more than a regular ISP



- Connects both **physically** and **virtually** with the Regional and Global R&E network
- Access to projects, resources and training programs targeted for R&E networks
- Provides **our own** services such as **LEARN TAC**, and **LEARN VC**, **EduID**, **LIAF**, **eduroam**
- Provides **our own** training and experience sharing
- Gives us a collecting bargaining power with other service providers (the prices quoted to us are much lower than the commercial rates)

# LEARN – Network



# Backbone - District Wise

## Colombo District

- Advanced Technological Institute (SLIATE) - 250
- Arthur C Clark Centre for Modern Technologies - 100
- Buddhist and Pali University - 40
- General Sri John Kotalawala Defense University - 720
- Industrial Technology Institute - 260
- Institute for Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences - 40
- Institute of Biochemistry Molecular Biology and Biotechnology - 20
- Institute of Indigenous Medicine (IIM) - 100
- National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) - 40
- National Engineering Research and Development Centre (NERDC) - 40
- National Science Foundation (NFS) - 160
- Ocean University of Sri Lanka - 40
- Open University of Sri Lanka - 310
- Postgraduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM) - 200
- Sri Lanka Technological Campus (SLTC) - 100
- University of Colombo - 1400
- University of Moratuwa - 2,300
- University of Sri Jayawardenepura - 1620
- University of Visual & Performing Arts - 740
- University of Vocational Technology - 300

## Kandy District

- National Institute of Fundamental Studies - 100
- Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture - 40
- Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences - 40
- Postgraduate Institute of Science - 20
- University of Peradeniya - 2140

## Matara District

- University of Ruhuna - 1420

## Rathnapura District

- Sabaragamuwa University - 720

## Ampara District

- South Eastern University - 460

## Badulla District

- Uva Wellassa University - 600

## Kurunegala District

- Wayamba University - 610

## Kilinochchi District

- Sri Lankan-German Training Institute - 40

## Jaffna District

- University of Jaffna - 1340

## Batticaloa/Trincomalee Districts

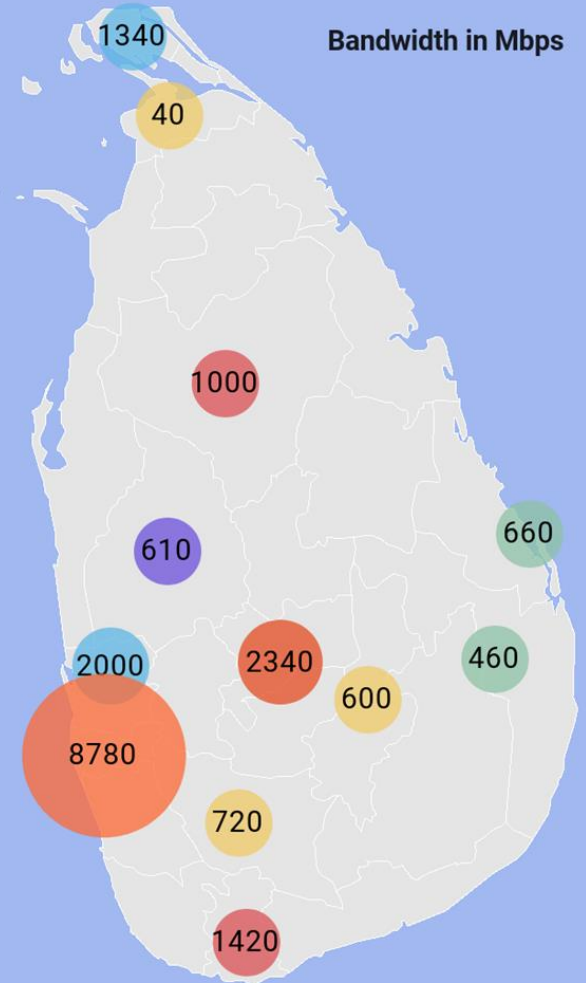
- Eastern University - 660

## Anuradhapura District

- Bhikshu University of Sri Lanka - 100
- Rajarata University - 900

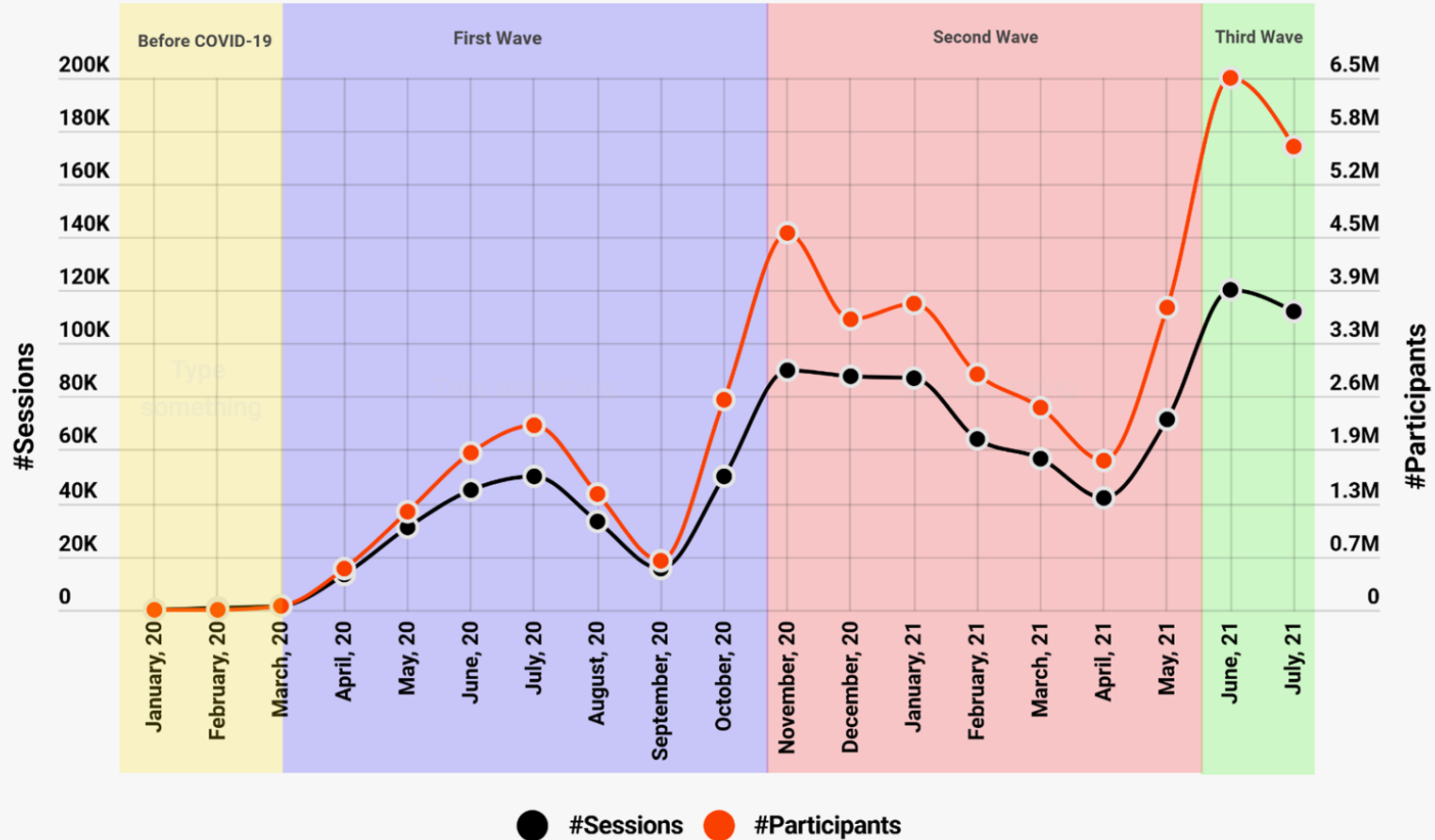
## Gampaha District

- University of Kelaniya - 1900
- Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute - 100



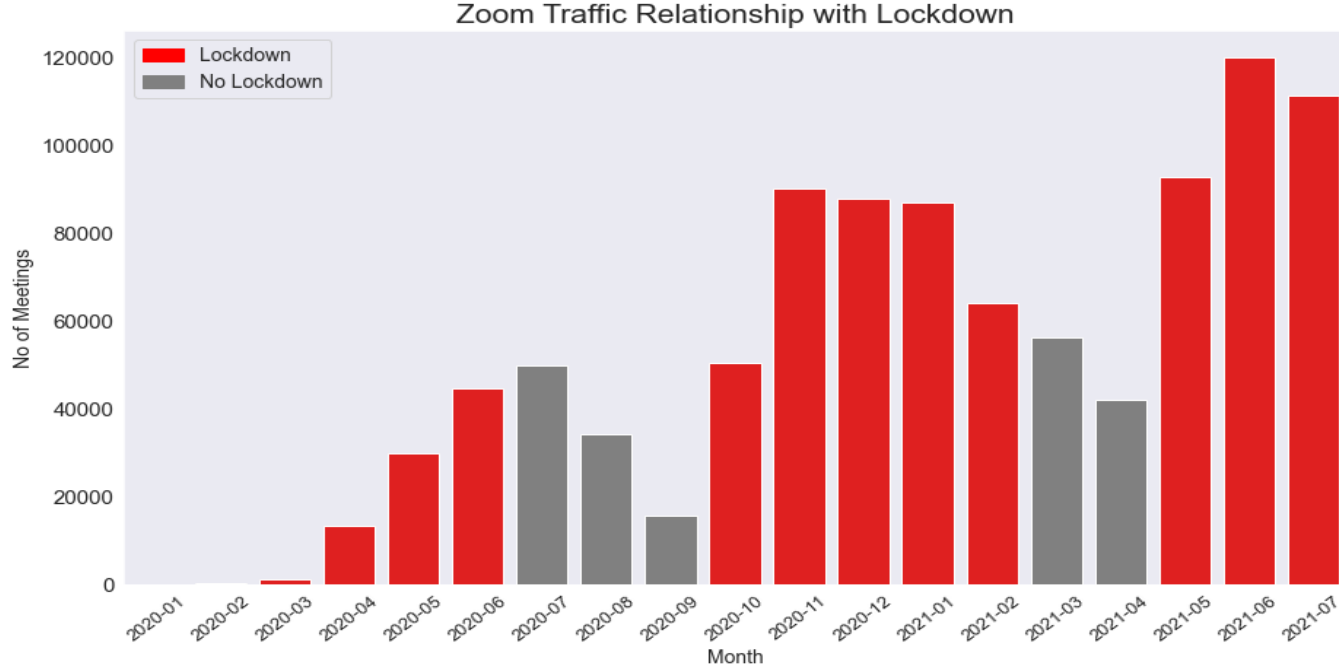
# Monthly Video Conferencing (LEARN.Zoom) Activities

January, 2020 - July, 2021



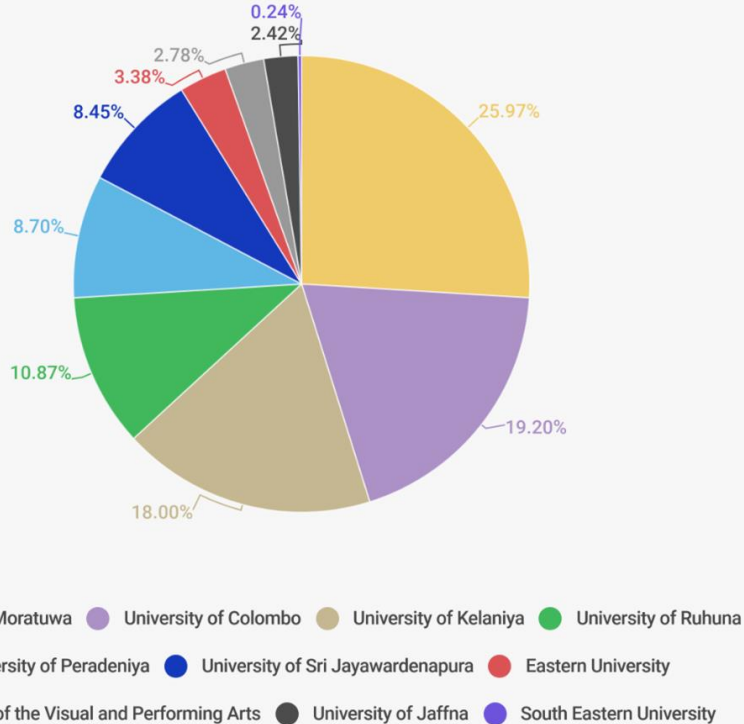
# LEARN.Zoom Consumers: Utilization Trend

- With the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown in March 2020 the zoom traffic and participants have increased significantly.
- The traffic and participants have been increasing with time though there are sudden drops with restriction releases.





## Top 10 State Universities Using LEARN.Zoom For March 2020

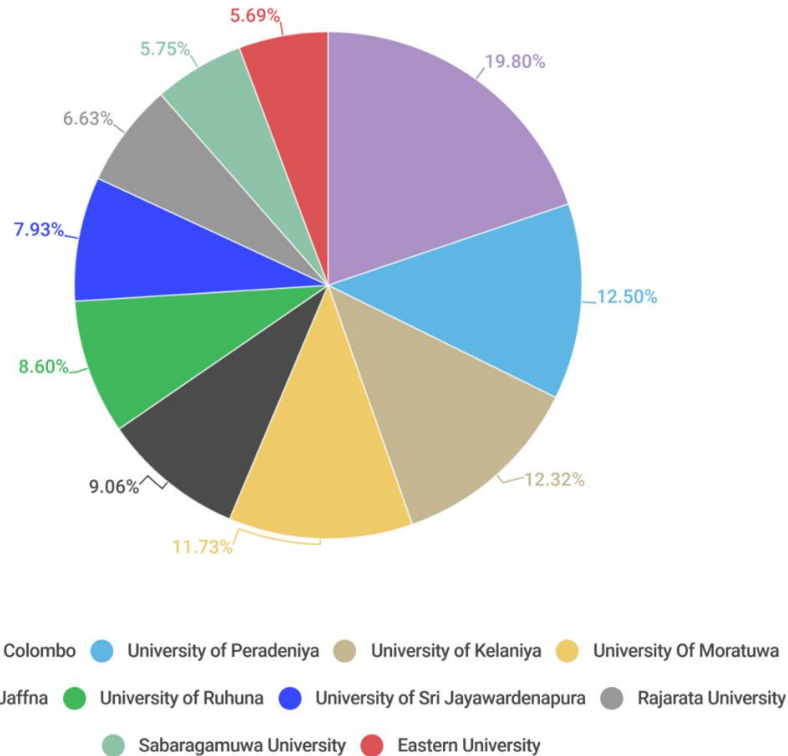


**Note:** The number of meetings has a correlation with the number of degree programmes and courses offered by each University. Therefore, direct correlation between the number of meetings and the utilization of online facilities of Universities might not depict the correct picture.

## User Behavior Pattern (Beginning)

- With the initial lockdown in March 2020, majority of the institutions were not using Zoom for online learning/ meeting purposes.
- The top users were contributing to the majority of the traffic while the rest of the consumers was using Zoom at a minimal level.
- University of Moratuwa, University of Colombo and University of Kelaniya has been the top contributors to March 2020 Zoom traffic and they have had 215, 159 and 149 meetings respectively.
- The least 3 users of Zoom for this month has been South Eastern University, Uva Wellassa University and University of Jaffna have had 2, 5 and 20 meetings respectively.

## Top 10 State Universities Using LEARN.Zoom For August 2021

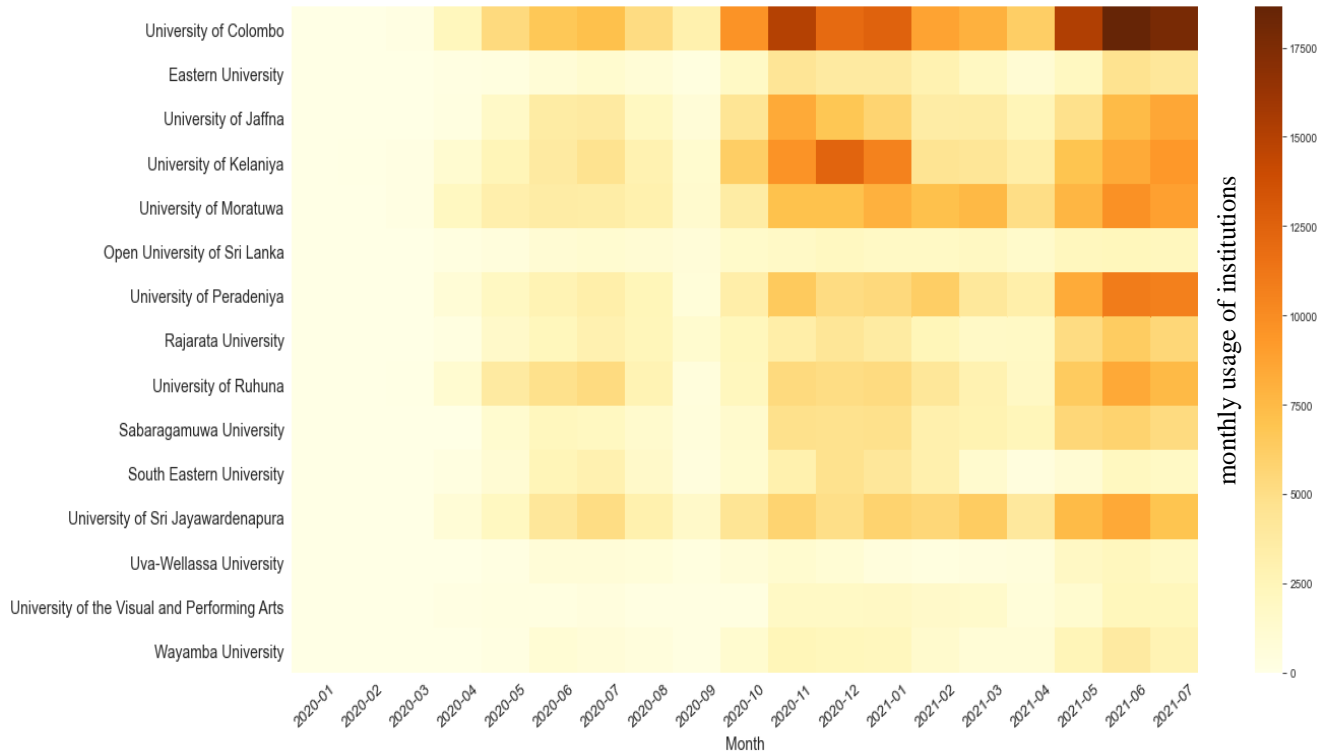


**Note:** The number of meetings has a correlation with the number of degree programmes and courses offered by each University. Therefore, direct correlation between the number of meetings and the utilization of online facilities of Universities might not depict the correct picture.

## User Behavior Pattern (Now)

- With 1 and ½ years into the Covid-19, all institutions have adopted online learning and have been contributing to the increase in the zoom traffic.
- Top 3 contributors are **University of Colombo**, **University of Peradeniya** and **University of Kelaniya** with **8168**, **5156** and **5083** meetings (during the first half of August 2021) respectively.
- The least contributors of the first half of August 2021 are **Uva Wellassa University**, **University of Visual and Performing Arts** and **Wayamba University** with **404**, **954** and **1346** meetings respectively.

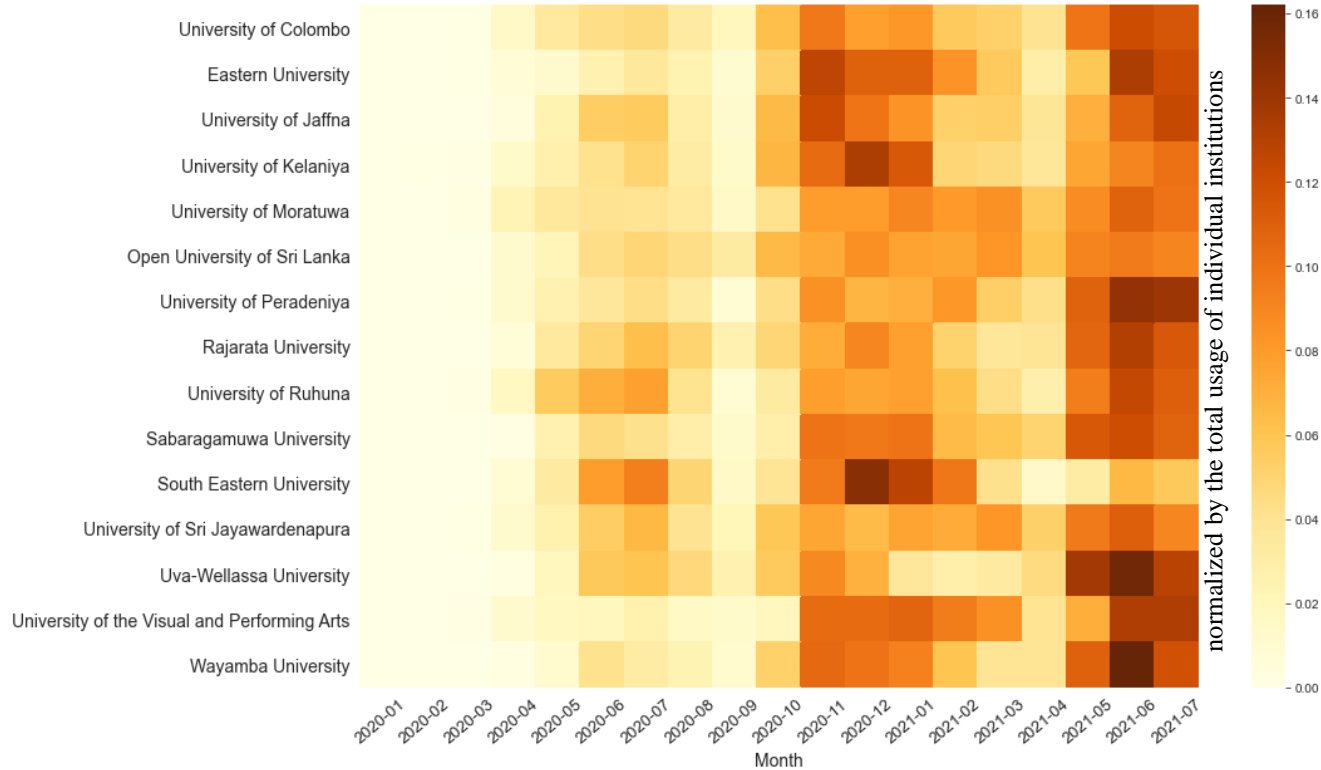
# Overall Trend - Comparison across Institutions Over Time



- University of Colombo has been the top contributor for Zoom traffic consistently with 162k meetings in total with the highest numbers of meeting recorded in month of June 2021.
- University of Kelaniya, University of Jaffna, University of Peradeniya and University of Moratuwa has also been contributing to the Zoom traffic throughout the time consistently.
- University of Sabaragamuwa, University of Rajarata, University of Ruhuna and University of Sri Jayawardenapura has also been using zoom in a moderate level.
- Remaining institutions have relatively lower usage of zoom throughout this time period.

Note: The number of meetings has a correlation with the number of degree programmes and courses offered by each University. Therefore, direct correlation between the number of meetings and the utilization of online facilities of Universities might not depict the correct picture.

# Individual Trend – Comparison within Institutions (normalized) Over Time



- The highest monthly traffic is reported in the month of **June 2021** with total number of **100k+** meetings.
- The highest traffic is reported in the 3rd lockdown with **270k+** meeting (100k- June 2021, 94k – July 2021 and 77k in May 2021)
- The second peak is on the 2nd lock down with **280k+** meeting from month of **Nov 2020 to Feb 2021**.
- 1st lock down has contributed to **77k** meetings from **March 2020 to Jun 2020**.
- Only **338** meeting were conducted prior to the lockdown (Jan 2020 & Feb 2020)

# Way-Forward: Considerations

- Issues, deficiencies and limitations identified in the IT infrastructure of State Universities and the “digital divide” among institutions
- Current requirements and requests for services from State Universities
- Vision for the state-of-the-art Research and Education in State Universities of Sri Lanka

# Vision: Three Pillars

## 1. **Equity for all:**

- *Equity goes beyond providing equal opportunity for all*
- Recognize that each institute, faculty, department, academic programme and person has different circumstances, and
- Allocate the exact resources and opportunities needed to *reach an equal outcome*.

## 2. **Providing more for less:**

- Mitigate the impact of institutional and individual financial considerations on *removing the systemic barriers* in order to
- Nurture the highest quality opportunities in research and education.

## 3. **Reimagining Research and Education:**

- Transform research and education in Sri Lanka to *engage at the global level*.

# Three Pillars: Objectives

## 1. Equity for all:

- Ensure every student at State Universities get best possible and fair opportunity to **learn, grow and thrive**
- Providing accessibility, resources and ubiquitous connectivity to ensure *Learning is everywhere all the time*

## 2. Providing more for less:

- Provide necessary services and resources to **cater to diverse needs** of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in different institutes, disciplines and environments
- **Remove** institutional **budgetary constraints and priorities** to ensure *equity for all*
- Exploit the **benefits of economies of scale** (e.g., reduce waste & increase reliability)

## 3. Reimagining Research and Education:

- Provide the maximum opportunity to **connect, communicate** and **collaborate** across the global Research and Education Network, for advancement in learning and innovation

# Proposals and Recommendations to Mitigate the impact of Covid-19

- Development Needs of Online/E-Learning/Distance Education Technologies for Teaching and Learning
- Development Needs of Online/E-Learning/Distance Education Technologies for Conduct of Examinations
- Development Needs of Technologies/Actions for Expeditious Enrolment
- Sustainability and Continuous Improvement Efforts



# Higher Education Beyond Covid-19

- Improve access to tertiary education
- Provide more flexibility and mobility within and among the three tiers/sub-sectors of HEIs
- Offer well delineated diverse education, training, and career paths
- Enhance standards, quality, and relevance of the types of education/training offered
- Promote postgraduate education, research, innovation, and commercialization
- Promote income generation and disbursement

# Higher Education Beyond Covid-19...contd

- **Goal 1:** Restructure the Higher Education System with appropriate Legislation
- **Goal 2:** Promote Efficiency in HEIs by Reforming Governance
- **Goal 3:** Harness Evolving Technological Potential to Provide Rewarding Teaching and Learning Experience through Online Learning
- **Goal 4:** Enhance the Relevance of Higher Education
- **Goal 5:** Expand the Services of the Open University of Sri Lanka
- **Goal 6:** Enhance the Competencies and Skills of non-STEM Graduates to Support Country's National Development and Growth
- **Goal 7:** Establish a Virtual University to increase access for higher education
- **Goal 8:** Expand the non-state sector of Higher Education
- **Goal 9:** Promote Research and Development, Innovation and Technology Transfer
- **Goal 10:** Ensure Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Thank You