

جامعة الشرقية
A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY



**University Learning, Teaching and
Student Achievement Strategy
2022-23 to 2024-25**

AC0020



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

Approvals

This document has been approved by

Name	Date
Board of Trustees	23 March 2023

Implementation and Responsibility

Document owner	Contact person	Date of Implementation
Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research (DVCAAR)	DVCAAR	2022-23 to 2024-25

General provisions

- Anything that is not stated in this policy or strategy is subject to the Law and internal rules and regulations of the University.
- Any infringement or breach of any of the terms of this policy or strategy may result in the offender being held responsible under the provisions of the Law and the University's internal rules and regulations.
- Any exception from this policy or strategy, up on implementation, shall not have any effect against the University or third parties unless it has been endorsed by the Vice Chancellor of the University and approved by the Board of Directors and/or the Board of Trustees, as the case may be.

Revision history

Version	Author/Reviewer	Revision(s) made	Date
II	DVCAAR	Amended to ensure alignment with the strategic plan 2020-25.	9 May 2021
III	DVCAAR	A section on student engagement with research was added. The change was approved by the University Academic Board (UAB).	22 May 2022
IV	DVCAAR	The Strategy has been revised for the academic period 2022-23 to 2024-25 in line with the University Strategic Plan 2020-25 and considering the achievements of this Strategy for last three academic years i.e., 2019-20 to 2021-22. The following has been revised in the Strategy:	22 Feb 2023



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategy has been amended for the academic period 2022-23 to 2024-25. • The missing strategic plan initiative under commitment 3.2 has been added to the ULTSA Strategy. • Missing policies and their purposes have been added to the Strategy. • The KPIs have been amended and updated with the new targets for the academic years 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 in line with the ASU Strategic Plan 2022-25 and the achievements of ULTSA KPIs for last three academic years. • Other relevant minor modifications like adding information about CLFS, moving the Vision statement top of the Mission statement, removal of AC0015 Student Complaints and Grievances Procedures which are now part of Student Affairs Manual etc. have been done. 	
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A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

Introduction

A' Sharqiyah University (ASU) received formal approval of establishment in 2009 and admitted its first batch of students in Fall of 2010 with 211 registered students. By 2022 the student population at ASU had exceeded 5,700 students. The University has high aspirations for the future as articulated in its vision and mission. The University currently has five Colleges, specifically:

- College of Applied and Health Sciences
- College of Arts and Humanities
- College of Business Administration
- College of Engineering
- College of Law

In addition, the University has a Centre for Language and Foundation Studies which provides preparatory training for students in Mathematics, English Language, and Information Technology before joining the Colleges.

The University moved to its new campus in September 2017. The new Campus development has the capacity to accommodate up to 7,100 students.

Vision

ASU aspires to be a leading higher education institution in Oman that promotes authentic values, innovation, and social economic development.

Mission

ASU Advances knowledge through innovative learning and applied research that will contribute to the economic and social development of the region by providing a conducive environment enhanced by international collaboration.

Strategic Context

The University's Teaching and Learning Strategy underpins the University's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 [1] and makes explicit its provisions in relation to Teaching and Learning. The Strategy reflects the University's values and commitment to Learning and Teaching. It aligns with other strategies including the University's Research Strategy, and the Industry and Community Engagement Strategy.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment are core activities in the University. They bring students and staff together to create, share, apply and test knowledge. Delivery of an effective curriculum requires an understanding of how students learn. Teaching and Learning take place in a variety of settings including: Lectures, Tutorials, Workshops, Industrial Placements, Laboratories, Online, Studios, Dormitories, the Community etc. Awareness of the students' learning styles enables academic staff to plan class delivery so as to ensure effective student engagement with the course materials.

In the Strategic plan 2020-2025, the University will deliver the following strategic commitments by implementing the strategic initiatives below:



COMMITMENT 3.1. To develop and maintain an attractive curriculum for the University's programs

- *We will implement the innovation framework to guide and encourage innovative initiatives to the curriculum.*
- *We will respond to results from the survey questionnaires and other sources of information (feedback) targeting our graduates, industries and potential employers of ASU graduates in particular.*

COMMITMENT 3.2. To improve quality of teaching & learning

- *We will implement the benchmarking framework for our academic performance.*
- *We will actively work to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.*
- *We will invest in our e-learning capacity to deliver quality.*
- *We will develop the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and provide professional development programs for academic staff.*

The University has in place various enablers to facilitate delivery of this strategy. The University seeks to ensure that its Learning, Teaching and Assessment practices are of the highest quality and that they are informed by self-reflection, feedback and evaluation by our students, external examiners, professional bodies, statutory and regulatory bodies, industrial partners and employers.

The University has an excellent campus, first class teaching and learning infrastructure and student services all of which are enhanced by an excellent library, audio-visual media, online learning technologies, and other learning resources.

A'Sharqiyah University endeavors to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all its students, staff and other stakeholders. Each member of academic staff, student, visitor or contractor has a primary responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others who are likely to be affected by their actions. All line managers must provide for the health and safety of all those under their responsibility. The University insists on strict compliance with all legislative requirements governing occupational safety, health and environmental protection.

The University shall continue to celebrate and recognize excellence in Teaching practice annually through the University Best Teacher Awards. Student excellence and achievement shall also be recognized and celebrated regularly through the Deans' Honor roll and also on University Day.

The University is committed to hiring high quality research-active staff who are acknowledged experts in their fields and who are passionate about sharing their knowledge with students and enhancing their teaching practices. University academic staff are also empowered to innovate and to develop new ways of teaching and assessment to enthuse their students and to foster active learning.

The University is committed to ensuring that frequent and meaningful discussions between



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

students and staff do take place to enable a tripartite understanding of the approach to learning, teaching and assessment so that students understand their responsibilities to engage with the learning opportunities on offer and to shape their learning experience.

University Academic Policies

Since its inception in 2009, the University has developed several policies, regulations and processes to guide its Teaching and Learning activities. These policies shall continue to be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they remain current and guide the effectiveness of staff teaching practices and enhancement of student learning opportunities. The full list of current policies is shown in table 2 below with a brief description of the purpose of each policy.



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

Title	Policy No.	Purpose
Academic Advising and At-Risk Students	AC0001	This policy sets out the responsibilities of all the key stakeholders to the academic advising process. The policy also outlines the procedures for identifying students who may be at risk of dropping out of University and providing them with the necessary academic support and counselling.
Academic Regulations for Undergraduate Students	AC0002	This document details the academic regulations governing Undergraduate studies in areas such as admissions and transfer, registration and postponement, withdrawal and graduation, attendance, equivalences, academic status, and the grading system used in the University.
Payment for Repeating Failed Students.	AC0003	This Policy aims to support students who are repeating a course or courses at ASU. The University provides the financial help by giving discounts to those students who have the potential to complete their program successfully.
Invigilation of Examinations	AC0004	This policy aims to ensure the fair and orderly conduct of examinations and to safeguard the integrity of the examination process. The policy also provides guidance on invigilators responsibilities and seeks to address questions that they may have.
Course Coding System	AC0005	This policy describes the principles underpinning the coding system for courses. Its purpose is to ensure that course codes are established within the context of the college and program so that its meaningful use will assist students in selecting appropriate courses in accordance with program requirements.
College Assessment Review Committee	AC0006	The overall purpose of the College Assessment Review Committee is to evaluate student performance, approve students' final grades in any given semester, discuss and make recommendations on any borderline grades and to recommend diploma/degree awards for graduating students.
Academic Assessment and Moderation	AC0007	This policy document sets out clearly the purposes of academic assessment and the moderation process at the University and the principles on which academic assessment is founded. The policy further aims to ensure that internal moderation procedures are fair and open and that accurate and detailed records are kept of internal moderation decisions.
Academic Promotions	AC0008	The overall objective of this policy is to provide clear criteria of eligibility for academic promotion and consistent processes for consideration and approval of candidates for academic promotion.
Academic Integrity	AC0009	The purpose of this policy is to uphold academic integrity at ASU. The policy sets out procedures for preventing, detecting and addressing all forms of academic misconduct by students and staff. The policy also seeks to instill an organizational culture of academic integrity among its students and staff. The policy enables University staff and students to take a proactive



		approach away from detecting and punishing academic misconduct to prevention through good academic practices.
Learning Resource Centre	AC0010	The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for LRC staff to manage the information sources and facilities and provide effective and efficient services to fulfill the information and curricular needs of the ASU community (students, faculty, staff, alumni and local community members). It also provides guidelines for LRC staff to manage the information sources and facilities and provide effective and efficient services to fulfill the information and curricular needs of the ASU community (students, faculty, staff, alumni and local community members).
Visiting and Honorary Appointments	AC0011	This policy sets out the purpose and criteria for making visiting and honorary appointments to the University. Visiting appointees may be full-time employees of the University. Honorary appointees are not full-time members of academic staff.
Observation of Teaching	AC0012	This policy provides the rationale for teaching observations, explains the observation activity in detail describes the approaches and deployment of observations in order for feedback from formative, summative and evaluative observational contexts to improve the quality of teaching delivery in the University.
Policy and Procedures for Study Abroad Program	AC0013	This policy lays out the policies and procedures that A' Sharqiyah University follows with regard to Study Abroad Programs.
Academic Appeals Procedures	AC0014	The purpose of Academic Appeals Procedures is to ensure that each student in the University is treated with fairness and to provide guidelines on the criteria and circumstances in which a student may appeal against marks or grades.
Archiving of Assessed Students' Work	AC0016	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the University methodically retains assessed students' work for quality assurance purposes. The policy also ensures that the University discharges its obligations to retain evidence of its academic assessments for a required period of time and to dispose it in a confidential manner.
Support for Special Needs Students	AC0017	This purpose of this policy is to establish a system that deals with students with special learning support needs in order to facilitate their learning and help improve their student experience.
External Moderation Policy	AC0018	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that external examiners are given the opportunity to provide independent and impartial evaluation of course and program content and the student assessment processes at the University. External examiners play a key role in ensuring that academic assessments at the University are rigorous, fair, valid, reliable, and consistent.



		External examiners also play a role in sharing best practice between institutions and in benchmarking against comparable programs.
Student Affairs Manual	AC0019	The purpose of this manual is to preserve and document the policies and procedures related to the Student Affairs and make students aware of their general rights and duties as university students.
Student Feedback Policy	AC0021	The policy clarifies the principles of good feedback practice and sets out the responsibilities of academic staff and students in relation to feedback at A'Sharqiyah University.
eLearning	AC0023	The purpose of this policy is to set the rules and regulations that govern the University eLearning presence. It defines procedures, roles, and responsibilities to all involved parties to ensure that the most conducive, effective, and efficient implementation of ASU eLearning environment allows students and academics to enjoy and benefit from the eLearning services provided by ASU.
Online Examination	AC0024	The purpose of this policy is to ensure the integrity of online examinations and assessments. It dictates the delivery of ASU exams over the University Learning Management System (LMS).
Student Enrolment and Retention	AC0000	This policy sets out relevant practical steps for the responsible colleges and departments to improve student enrolment and retention.
Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy	AC0000	This policy regulates open educational resources at ASU in line with the eLearning Policy and Academic Integrity Policy. It applies to all open educational resources used by ASU faculty members and students during their teaching and learning of courses in a way that guarantees the rights of use in accordance with the license of the resource used

Table 2: University Academic Policies relating to Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

The University seeks to improve further the quality of its Learning, Teaching and Assessment activities. This will help the University to attract more students and to generate more funds for investment. This will also help in raising the University's position in the national and international league tables [2]. The SWOT analysis in the Appendix of this Strategy provides a snapshot of ASU's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to Teaching and Learning.

**University Teaching and Learning Strategy 2022-23 to 2024-25**

The University in pursuit of continuous improvement seeks to enhance further the students' learning experience. The University has an unwavering commitment to improve the students' engagement with learning and assessment opportunities and to raise the students' academic attainment. In addition, the University aims to improve its retention, progression and graduation rates. Furthermore, the University is committed to increasing the student's overall satisfaction with teaching and assessment. The University seeks to develop its students to become independent autonomous learners with critical thinking skills so as to enable them to secure good employability opportunities or higher level studies.

This strategy has been developed based on the University Strategic Plan and the Business Plan [3]. The strategy sets out the achievements that we seek to deliver over the above period and proposes how we will achieve those objectives. Over the planning period 2022-23 to 2024-25, the University will pursue the following strategic priorities:

To Resource and Maintain Teaching and Learning Infrastructure

The University will resource and maintain to the highest standards possible the academic and student teaching and learning infrastructure which includes: learning resources, IT services, teaching space, laboratories and computer laboratories.

To Provide Safe, Secure and Healthy Work Environment

A'Sharqiyah University shall endeavor to provide a safe, secure and healthy work environment for all its students, staff and other stakeholders. Each member of academic staff, student, visitor or contractor has a primary responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others who are likely to be affected by their actions. All line managers in the University shall provide for the health and safety of all those under their responsibility. The University insists on and shall adhere to strict compliance with all legislative requirements governing occupational safety, health and environmental protection.

To Recruit Qualified Academic Staff from Top 500 Universities

The University will prioritize PhD graduates from the top 500 Universities in the world for short-listing, interview and eventual selection. Academic promotion opportunities at the University shall also take into account excellence and leadership in teaching as well as learning-related research. The University shall aim to maintain the proportion of PhD qualified academic staff well above the minimum level of 75 percent mandated by the government.

To Set-up Centre of Learning and Teaching

The University will set up a Centre for Learning and Teaching to provide leadership and support for innovative approaches to Learning and Teaching. The Centre will facilitate experimentation and innovation with modes of teaching that enhance professional practice and to develop reflective learning techniques. The Centre will support all academic staff with induction, mentoring and continuing professional development so as to equip them with the skills required to enhance their teaching and assessment practices.



To Provide Professional Development Opportunities to Staff

The University shall provide opportunities for academic staff to pursue personal professional development in areas linked to their professional discipline and in learning, teaching and assessment. Topics for staff professional development shall be identified through peer review of teaching, teaching annual performance appraisals, staff surveys and discussions at departmental and college academic boards.

To Provide Student Induction

Colleges and departments shall provide induction every year for every academic program that is delivered in the University. All students of the University including undergraduate or postgraduate, full time, part-time and evening students shall be accorded the opportunity to take part in an induction program. Ideally, induction shall be scheduled to take place before or during the first week of teaching. The induction program is an opportunity for students to find out more about their program, get to know their lecturers and professors, other students on the program and to settle into University life. Returning students must also be provided with a re-orientation.

To Use Online Technology

All University teaching staff shall move beyond using Moodle primarily as a repository of information. The University shall promote technology supported learning. All academic staff and students will be supported to make effective use of technology in their learning and teaching. All academic staff will be trained to improve their digital literacy and to make effective use of Moodle and other technologies in online discussions, to obtain student feedback and in the assessment of students.

To Adopt Innovative Assessment Approaches

Within the context of the Academic Assessment and Moderation Policy and the External Moderation Policy, the University will encourage all academic staff to pilot innovative assessments for learning. Approaches such as open-book examinations, reflective journals, peer assessments, role playing, making models etc. should be trialed where possible.

To Ensure Research-Teaching Nexus

All academic staff shall ensure that they integrate their research and scholarly activities into their teaching so that students understand the benefits of research. Integrating and applying research outputs in teaching will also assist in generating students' interest in research. The research outputs used in teaching may relate to one's area of specialization or related to learning, teaching or assessment.

To Provide Internships

Internships enable students to blend theory through practice and to make sense of what they have learnt. Internships also help students to reflect on their learning. Internships will remain a key feature of the academic curriculum at the University. Students will be supported and provided with learning opportunities to develop subject knowledge and the University's defined graduate attributes and skills through internships, work placements, volunteering, etc. to equip them for the world of work. The university will identify industrial partners and sign memoranda of co-operation with leading companies that agree to provide internship opportunities for our students.



To Develop International Partnerships and Collaboration

Developing international partnerships with other Universities will assist the University in furthering its staff and student exchange programs; and international reputation. International partnerships also provide students with international perspectives in their learning and promoting understanding and cultural diversity. Partnerships with international Universities and Companies will assist students to prepare for leading roles in government and business both nationally and internationally. The University shall pursue opportunities for partnerships with companies and Universities Internationally.

To Provide Support Mechanisms for Students at Risk

The Department of Admissions and Registration, Heads of Department and Lecturers shall be responsible for identifying all students who are at-risk of dropping out of University and ensuring that such students are provided with all necessary support to enable them to succeed in their studies. The various support mechanisms available in the University are detailed in the University's Academic Advising and At-Risk Students Policy.

To Provide Students with Feedback for Effective Learning

Students must be provided with all information relating to academic assessment tasks including weighting of the various components of assessment on a course, the intended learning outcomes, marking criteria, arrangements for all other assessments on the course plus marking processes. All academic staff in the University shall encourage a shift in the balance of feedback to students so that emphasis is placed on feed-forward and formative feedback rather than just summative feedback. Formative feedback has the potential of helping students to improve their future performance more than summative feedback. All feedback must be timely, constructive and tailored to meet the learning needs of each individual student. Feedback must be designed to enable each student to monitor their academic performance and to understand what they need to do to improve their learning.

To Provide Opportunities for Student Engagement

Academic staff shall make all students aware of the learning responsibilities. All students shall be supported to learn to think critically, to master knowledge in their academic discipline and to develop transferable skills. All teaching and assessment approaches that encourage a student to memorize facts so that they can repeat them in very much the same way are strongly discouraged. The University shall provide opportunities for engagement of the student voice in teaching planning, assessment, quality improvement and institutional governance.

To Promote Student Engagement with Research

Consistent with the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040 [4] which includes the need to produce competitive graduates for a knowledge-based economy, the curriculum taught at A'Sharqiyah University shall be informed by research. All staff shall ensure that students participate in the creation of new knowledge and dissemination of research results. All staff shall inculcate and support a culture of active and engaged students. They shall provide students with opportunities for independent study and student-led learning. All new programs will be designed to provide opportunities for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake research as part of their degree program. This will enable students to



engage in the discovery of new ideas under the supervision of an active researcher.

Implementation of this Strategy

College Deans are responsible for the implementation of this Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy. College operational plans shall be prepared annually taking into account this strategy. Operational plans prepared by Heads of Departments, and Individuals must also take account of College Operational Plans and the University Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy. All plans shall be monitored annually.

At the end of each academic year, the Deputy Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs and Research shall evaluate the University's performance in Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement and prepare a report to the University Academic Board on progress taking into account the Key Performance Indicators and targets in the table below.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The following table lists out the Key performance Indicators (KPIs) for the University Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy 2022-23 to 2024-25. The targets of the KPIs are based on the Baseline i.e., the average KPI achievements of the University Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy during the academic years 2019-20 to 2021-22 and are in line with the University Strategic Plan 2020-25:



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

No.	Key Performance Indicator	Baseline (Average achievement of last three academic years)	Target for 2022/23	Target for 2023/24	Target for 2024/25
1	Percentage of Faculty holding a PhD as a percentage of the total academic staff (excluding CLFS)	72%	75%	75%	75%
2	Academic Staff Attrition Rate The number academic staff who leave the University expressed as a percentage of the total number of full-time academics in year – 1.	11%	10%	8%	5%
3	Annual average rate of growth in student numbers throughout the University	15%	16%	17%	18%
4	Student-Staff Ratio Ratio of FTE students to FTE academic Staff This ratio will be calculated based on full-time students and staff only.	40	30	30	30
5	Proportion of Students Participating in Internship/ Total number of students in the final year	90%	90%	93%	95%
6	Proportion of Courses on which there is a clearly evidenced teaching-research nexus.	14%	15%	18%	20%
7	Graduates' overall satisfaction with quality of their education, quality of teaching methods used and overall quality of facilities available in the University	64%	75%	80%	80%
8	Employer overall satisfaction with the quality of graduates and services from the University	75%	85%	85%	85%
9	Graduate Employment rate Percentage of number of graduates employed within 1-12 months of graduation/total number of graduates.	29%	33%	35%	38%
10	Graduation Rate The percentage of first-time full-time students that graduate within 150% of the published time for the program.	79%	85%	90%	90%
11	Student Retention Rate The percentage of full-time students that are enrolled at the university the following academic year (Included in calculating the retention rate are students who have postponed Studies).	92%	94%	95%	95%
12	Transfer Rate I The percentage of first-time full-time students that transfer to another Institution within 150% of the published time for the program.	2.2%	2%	2%	2%



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

13	Progression Rate I Progression Rate I is the percentage of full-time students that successfully complete at least 30 credit hours of studies by the following academic year.	26.5%	30%	35%	38%
14	Progression Rate II Progression Rate II is the percentage of full-time students that successfully complete at least 30 credit hours of studies by the following academic year with a GPA of at least 2.0	26.3%	28%	33%	35%
15	Students' overall satisfaction with the quality of their education and quality of teaching methods used.	84.9%	85%	85%	85%
16	Students' overall satisfaction with quality of facilities available in the University.	65.6%	80%	85%	85%
17	Students' overall satisfaction with use of e-learning resources	81.4%	85%	85%	85%
18	Number of faculty development programs provided	18	20	22	25
19	Number of exchange programs offered successfully with other Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)	0	1	2	3
20	Number of innovative initiatives in teaching and learning delivery	9	10	12	15

Bibliography

- [1] ASU's 5 Year Strategic Plan (2020 – 2025).
- [2] Oman Higher Education Institutions Ranking Manual (Draft 2, December 2018).
- [3] ASU's Business Plan (2018-2023)
- [4] Oman Vision 2040, available at www.2040.om accessed on 29th November 2022.



A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY
AC0020 University Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement Strategy

APPENDIX

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Executive Management support for Teaching and Learning. • Well-qualified and experienced national and international academic staff. • Excellent academic infrastructure. • Bilingual academic staff. • Good policy framework that guides, learning, teaching and assessment activities • A College of Arts and Humanities with academic faculty specializing in Education who can provide pedagogic support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High teaching workload compared to research intensive Universities. • Difficulty of finding well qualified and experienced part-time faculty locally. • Financial constraints limit the numbers of world class Professors that can be hired at ASU. • Low position in the national and international University league tables compared to its competitors. • Low levels of graduate employability
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to improve the University's ranking in the national and international league tables. • Opportunity to collaborate with national and international Universities in research relating to Learning, Teaching, and Assessment. • Opportunity to attract more Omani and International students to the University. • Opportunity to develop students to think critically. • Opportunity to support the students' individual personal development. • Opportunity to develop student's capacity for teamwork. • Opportunity to prepare students for the world of work and to raise the level of graduate employability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to meet the OAAA standard on Teaching and Learning. • Failure to retain or attract high quality Teaching staff. • Failure to improve its ranking in the national and international league tables.