

A'Sharqiyah University Policy

Student Enrolment and Retention Policy

Policy name	Student Enrolment and Retention Policy		
Policy number	AC0025		
Contact Person	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research		
Approval Authority	Board of Trustees		
Date first approved	23 March 2023	Last substantive review	23 March 2023
Policy Review Cycle	12 months from approval, then every 2 years	Next review	DD/MM/YY

1. Definitions

Terms / Abbreviations	Definition
ASU	A'Sharqiyah University
Retention Rate	Percentage of full-time students that are enrolled at the university the following academic year. Included in the calculation of Retention Rate are students who have postponed their studies.
Progression Rate	Percentage of full-time students that completes at least 30 credits by the following academic year with a GPA of at least 2.00.
Graduation Rate	Percentage of first-time full-time students that graduates within 150% of the published time for the program.

A'Sharqiyah University Policy

Student Enrolment and Retention Policy

2. Purpose

The University is committed to delivering the student retention, progression and graduation rates set out in the University Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy. This policy sets out relevant practical steps for the responsible colleges and departments to improve student enrolment and retention.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all colleges, academic and non-academic departments, students and staff.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The University will pursue the twin strategy of new program development and market penetration to increase its annual student enrolment. New programs developed will be based on thorough market research and labor market needs. New programs will aim to support the nation's economic diversification efforts, Oman Vision 2040, Oman's National Strategy for Education 2040 and the National Strategy for Innovation.
- 4.2 Consistent with the declared objectives of producing graduates with a Global Insight, the University will seek to internationalize its curriculum and attract international students.
- 4.3 A'Sharqiyah University will ensure that it is a marketing-oriented organization where all enquiries are allocated to relevant admissions representatives as matter of priority and aim to achieve the shortest lead response times possible. The University will continue benchmarking its processes with other Higher Education Institutions to enhance student enrolment and expectations for the future.
- 4.4 The University is committed to engaging, motivating and supporting all its students to enable them to complete their programs successfully.
- 4.5 Student enrolment and any other associated processes such as course registration impact on student experience and therefore these processes will be reviewed annually to propose mechanisms which drive improvements in student satisfaction.

5. Key Stakeholders

ASU colleges, academic and non-academic departments, students, and staff.

6. Procedures and Guidance

6.1. Practical Steps to increase Student Enrolment

- 6.1.1. The University will continuously undertake surveys to understand better why students choose A'Sharqiyah University. This will assist the University to create effective marketing campaigns and advertising messages. The University will be a source of motivation for potential students by using for example success stories and testimonies from current or past students.
- 6.1.2. The Department of Public Relations and Media will assist the University in identifying and defining the University's unique selling points in marketing messages. All colleges and departments in the University will work towards building and strengthening the University brand. The University will always seek to engage with its target audience so that potential students understand the University's values, infrastructure etc.
- 6.1.3. The University will keep its website up to date and well thought out in terms of structure, content, ease of loading pages and mobile responsiveness. The website is clearly the most impactful source of information for potential applicants. The University will use social media to effectively relay positive stories to all its stakeholders. Professional videos will be created for the University, colleges, students, and academic staff where regular activities, industrial or site visits, culture week or other special events will be captured and disseminated to raise the motivation of potential students and attract them to apply to the University.
- 6.1.4. Technology will be deployed to assist in providing automatic responses, analyzing the number and nature of enquiries and undertaking sampling surveys to gauge stakeholder opinion. This will inform implementation and regular review of the University's marketing strategy. Technology will also be employed to reach regional and international markets. The use of social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter, Mobile Apps etc. are examples of channels that will be used and will be effective provided the University communicates the right messages.
- 6.1.5. The University's website and application forms will be designed so that users can apply at any time and from any device. All communication channels used by the University will be compatible with mobile devices to ensure responsiveness and good user experience.
- 6.1.6. The University will employ enrolment analytics to map out what works best. This will ensure that the marketing budget is allocated appropriately and to activities that generate the highest enrolment rates.
- 6.1.7. The Information Technology Department will work to ensure search engine optimization so that when prospective students Google to look at Universities, A'Sharqiyah University appears top or amongst those at the top.
- 6.1.8. All Colleges and Departments will continuously review and improve all aspects of the operations that may impact on attracting and retaining students. These include the admissions process, enrolment, course registration, quality of teaching and learning, quality of campus life and services, overall student experience, etc.

6.2. Practical steps to Increase Student Retention

- 6.2.1 Colleges will identify critical courses in every semester for every major which must be completed successfully in the recommended semester. Students who do not complete such a course will have their subsequent registration put on hold until they have discussed their progress with their academic advisor. Discussions with the academic advisor will enquire into what exactly happened and a course of action on how to proceed will be agreed with the student. Part of the discussions with the student therefore will involve discussions about the students' strengths and the possibility of transferring to another major.
- 6.2.2 The University will bring the academic advising services closer to its students. In addition to office hours provided by academic staff, the University will organize drop-in sessions in areas such as the learning resources center, the student affairs building, and other areas where students assemble.
- 6.2.3 The University will be responsive to student needs to build trust and therefore encourages all those who may have any academic and non-academic grievances to invoke the relevant appeals procedures. The University shall ensure that any student concerns are addressed timeously, and relevant feedback is provided at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.2.4 The University will use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. and other automated communications system to contact students on a regular basis and let them know that the University is taking an interest in their progress. Names of students admitted to the Dean's honor role will be communicated to all members of the University community. A message of congratulations will be sent to all students that pass all the required credits and achieve a semester GPA of 2.0. Any student whose GPA declines by 10 percent will be asked if everything is okay or if they require any particular support. Counselling support will be provided to all students who are deemed to be at-risk.
- 6.2.5 The University will strengthen the peer-tutoring system where high achieving senior students provide academic and tutorial support to other students in an informal and friendly environment.
- 6.2.6 The University will extend the peer-tutoring system to halls of residence to promote the concept of a *living and learning* community. This Furthermore, for students who do not live in university accommodation, an annual calendar of sporting, social and cultural events will be planned by the Student Affairs Department to promote a greater sense of community and enhance their A'Sharqiyah University experience.
- 6.2.7 Colleges and Departments will monitor and evaluate all courses where the performance statistics fall outside the approved pre-defined course performance indicators stated in the Course Evaluation Reports. More sections will be offered for such courses particularly if they have high student enrolment numbers in order to reduce class sizes and encourage interaction between students and teaching staff during course delivery.

A'Sharqiyah University Policy

Student Enrolment and Retention Policy

- 6.2.8 The University will conduct exit interviews for all departing students where possible to understand why students choose to leave the University and put in place strategies to engage them and better meet their needs.
- 6.2.9 The Student Affairs Department will continue to work with the Students Advisory Council, student clubs and societies to provide a support network for students. These student organizations play an advocacy role which makes a contribution by bringing students together and promoting a sense of belonging for those who may otherwise feel disenfranchised.
- 6.2.10 The University will provide early support to all students with study skills workshops to include topics such as time management, reading, notetaking, report writing, and avoiding plagiarism. Other workshops will cover examination preparation and include managing examinations anxiety, and last-minute revisions and examinations preparation techniques. Science and engineering workshops will cover various topics such as problem-solving, mathematics, algebra, fractions and exponents. The University's leadership program will equip advanced level students with relevant skills in critical thinking, communications, and leadership.
- 6.2.11 Coaching is widely recognized in many spheres of life including sports, professional groups and senior management. The University will implement the system of coaching where senior students are paired with new students to learn important lessons about the efficacy of coaching in the context of higher education and its impact on student academic performance.
- 6.2.12 All Colleges and Departments will continuously review the activities and operations to drive improvements in student retention. These include the Learning Resources Centre, Admissions and Registration, Student Accommodation, Student Affairs and Counselling, etc. They are expected to play their part in enhancing the students' overall experience and thereby supporting student retention positively.

7. References

Mahsood Shah, Sally Kift and Liz Thomas (2021), *Student Retention and Success in Higher Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

8. 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.

9. Revision History

Version	Author/ Reviewer	Revision(s) made and justification	Date