THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC PLAN
2025-2028

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AKU ACADEMIC PLAN 2025–2028

1.0.   INTRODUCTION

On June 27, 2025, Aga Khan University convened its Academic Leadership Retreat, bringing together Provost & VP Academic, Vice Provosts, Deans, and Associate Vice Provosts from Pakistan, East Africa, Afghanistan, and the UK. The goal was to align entity-level strategic plans with **AKU Onwards (2024–2028)**—anchored in the IQRA principles of Impact, Quality, Relevance and Access—and to kick-start "One AKU" collaboration across five of seven strategic pillars of *AKU Onwards:* Quality and Breadth of Education, Knowledge Creation and Dissemination, Partnerships & Collaboration, Sustainability & Growth, and Leveraging Data Sciences & Technologies. See *Summary of AKU Academic Leadership Retreat, 2025* for a full accounting of discussions.

2.0. ENHANCING AKU'S IMPACT AND REPUTATION

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillars: (1) Quality and Breadth of Education and (2) Knowledge Creation and Dissemination

2.1. BACKGROUND – IMPACT AND REPUTATION

AKU is in a unique position to strengthen it academic standing and brand through:

- **Strategic leveraging of rankings:** Rankings and ratings shape reputation, recruitment, partnerships, and funding. Used wisely, they can amplify AKU's visibility, trust, and societal impact.
- **ailored ranking approach:** Focus on ranking frameworks aligned with AKU's mission (teaching, research, sustainability, social engagement) rather than blindly following Western models.
- **Regional and global lenses:** Balance participation in international systems with regional benchmarks (e.g., ICA standards) that reflect AKU's multi-campus footprint.
- **Thought leadership and branding:** A "Global Thought Leaders" lecture/webinar series could highlight AKU scholars, complementing its hospital reputation and positioning AKU as a leading academic voice.
- **Aspirational targets:** Setting ambitious yet realistic goals (e.g., "Top 50 universities under 50 years") can galvanize institutional focus across advocacy, data, research, and student/faculty engagement.
- **Data-driven storytelling:** Rankings should be used not only to track performance but also to craft compelling narratives linking AKU's success to real-world outcomes—employability, sustainability, innovation, and impact.
- **Rankings as a mirror, not an end-goal:** They highlight strengths and weaknesses, serving as tools for institutional learning, positioning, and strategy.

2.2. ACTIONS AND TIMELINES – IMPACT AND REPUTATION

OWNERS: Vice-Provost Research, Associate Vice-Provost & University Librarian, Registrar

2.2.1. *Establish a Cross-AKU Rankings & Ratings Working Group (Q4 2025)*
- *2.2.1.1.* Lead an institutional effort to coordinate data, advocacy, and branding around rankings (See Annex 1 for AKU Institutional Rankings Steering Committee (IRSC) Terms of Reference)

2.2.2. *Resource Allocation (Starting Q4 2025)*
- *2.2.2.1.* Dedicate funds and staff capacity to targeted ranking submissions, data collection, and communications.

2.2.3. *Conduct Baseline Analysis (Q1-Q2 2026)*
- *2.2.3.1.* Review all available rankings and ratings systems.
- *2.2.3.2.* Map AKU's current standing and identify which align best with its mission, values, and geographic footprint.

2.2.4. *Select Target Rankings (2–3 initially) (Q1-Q2 2026)*
- *2.2.4.1.* Prioritize systems where AKU can perform strongly (e.g., those measuring teaching, research intensity, social engagement, sustainability).

2.2.5. *Invest in Key Metrics (Q1-Q2 2026 for setup – ongoing refinement for term of Plan)*
- *2.2.5.1.* Strengthen both performance indicators (citations, faculty–student ratios, research funding) and perception indicators (academic reputation, partnerships, alumni engagement).
- *2.2.5.2.* Invest in development of AKU – Susutainable Development Goals (SDG) contributions landing page.

2.2.6. *Leverage Data for Institutional Positioning (Q1-Q4 2027)*
- *2.2.6.1.* Benchmark against peers and track performance gaps.
- *2.2.6.2.* Use ranking data in recruitment campaigns, stakeholder reports, donor briefings, and media outreach.

2.2.7. *Set Clear Institutional Targets (Q1-Q4 2027)*
- *2.2.7.1.* Define aspirational but measurable goals (e.g., entry into top-tier regional rankings within 3 years; top-50 under-50 globally within 5–10 years).

2.2.8. *Integrate Storytelling & Advocacy (Q3 2027)*
- *2.2.8.1.* Launch a "Global Thought Leaders" series to boost academic visibility.
- *2.2.8.2.* Frame ranking improvements as linked to tangible outcomes: student success, sustainability, and community impact across AKU's reports to stakeholders.

2.3. KPIS – IIMPACT AND REPUTATION

2.3.1. AKU Rankings & Ratings Working Group established with cross-AKU representation.

2.3.2. 2-3 International Rankings selected for AKU participation, with criteria evaluated and annual participation from 2026.

2.3.3. Annual data collection system established and website content developed, including SDG landing page.

2.3.4. 5% Improvement in ranking for each year of academic plan.

3.0. GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar (5) Sustainability and Growth

3.1. BACKGROUND – GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Governance of the academy needs to be supported by the following:
- **Rhythmic, Region-Aligned Meetings** - a rotating regional cadence for Academic Council and regional Senates, with at least 1 meeting per quarter focused on policy/process and strategic discussions.
- **Geographic Accountability** - each region takes ownership of its quarter, with local hosts and agendas tailored to regional context.
- **Dedicated Working Groups** – comprised of expanded membership and time-limited tasks, with clearly defined terms of reference to implement strategic priorites.
- **Process Streamlining** – based on maps of existing decision-making workflows to eliminate bottlenecks (e.g. duplicative approvals, overlapping mandates).
- **"Policy Assessment" as a Governance Pillar** - embed a formal policy-review quarter to audit, refresh, or sunset aging policies and ensure alignment with evolving priorities.
- **Student Involvement in Governance** - work towards greater student engagement in governance structures of the academy.

3.2. ACTIONS AND TIMELINES - GOVERNANCE

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Vice-Provost Research (for research policies)

3.2.1. *Formalize the Quarterly Governance Cycle (Q1 2026)*
   3.2.1.1. Draft and ratify a "Governance Calendar" that codifies the regional rotation and links it to deliverables (e.g. strategy updates, policy audits).

3.2.2. *Support Working Groups in Completing Tasks and Standup New Ones as Necessary (Q3 2025-Q4 2026)* Active as of Q4 2025 (See Annex 2 for template Terms of Reference):
   REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS TO DEVELOP REGIONAL STRATEGIES
   - *Tanzania*: including roadmap for academic programming and campuses
   - *Uganda*: academic rogramming for Kampala campus
   - *Syria/AKDN*: potential academic programming and partnerships with AKDN entities
   - *Northern Pakistan*: SONAM and IED initiatives

   ACADEMIC WORKING GROUPS
   - *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*
   - *Post Graduate Medical Education Programmes and Residents*
   - *Vocational Allied Health Programming*

   GOVERNANCE
   - *Policy and Procedures Reform*

   DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
   - *Digital Learning*: Professional Development to hybrid/online academic programming

- *AI and Digital Transformation Strategy*: based on mapping of activities within the academy
- *Website Redevelopment with Strategic Comms*

3.2.3. Optimize Decision Pathways

3.2.3.1. Over Years 2–3, conduct a process-mapping exercise to identify duplications; eliminate at least 30 percent of redundant steps and reduce approval cycles by 20%.

3.2.4. *Institutionalize Policy Health Checks*

3.2.4.1. Embed a dedicated "Policy Assessment Quarter" each year, with a rolling dashboard of policy-lifecycle metrics (age, usage, relevance) and sunset or revise at least 10 percent of policies annually.

3.2.5. *Develop and Implement a New Programme Approval and Evaluation Process* that focuses on financial and programmatic sustainability by end **Q1 2026**. (See Annex 3 for New Academic Programme and Evaluation Process)

3.2.6. *Increase Student Participation in AKU Academic Governance*

3.2.6.1. Align with regional requirements and best practices on student representation in governance.

3.2.6.2. Establish terms of reference for student engagement.

Target outcomes (by Q4 2026): 20% faster approvals; 30% fewer redundant steps; annual policy health-check running; student participation formalized.

3.3. KPIS – GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

3.3.1. Policies sunset/revised (≥10%/yr)

3.3.2. Student reps seated (100% seats filled)

3.3.3. New academic programme proposal and evaluation process implemented across all academic entities.

3.3.4. Satisfaction pulse of leadership with academic approval processes (≥4/5)

4.0. PEOPLE & TALENT (FACULTY & KEY STAFF)

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar (5) Sustainability and Growth

4.1. BACKGROUND – PEOPLE & TALENT

The key questions for people and talent in the Academy are:

- What are our talent needs and how do we create a process to develop a strategic hiring plan for an internal and external talent pipeline in 3 and 5-10 year timeframes.
- What does a research/education led talent strategy look like operationally, including: Organisation and committee structures; Performance evaluation and promotion based on objective standards; Infrastructure and start-up needs; Mentorship and support?

Key themes to address people and talent across the Academy are:
- Clear progression ladders and comprehensive development plans,
- Objective performance evaulations
- Strategic recruitment and leadership stability
- Support services and infrastructure
- Incentives and retention frameworks
- Strategic hiring plans that are linked to institutional priorities with clear coordination structures between the Provost's Office and academic entities. These need to address regional priorities and sensitivities, be inclusive in development; be flexible in forms of appointment and considerations of mobility; inclusive of considerations of retention, incentives and succession planning; and address infrastructure and other start-up needs
- Clear contractual terms , policies, and practices for faculty recruitment and retention, including clear workload definitions and protections, performance evaluation ecpectation and improved processes, retention incentives, and mentorship and support structures
- A faculty handbook, including policies and procedures.

The full summary of the discussion on People and Talent is provided in Annex 4.

4.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – PEOPLE & TALENT

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Academic Council (with Human Resources)

4.2.1. Joint Review Committee on Faculty Relations

4.2.1.1.   ***Establish a joint review committee between the Provost's Office and Human Resources, with regional and entity representation by end* Q1 2026** with terms of reference to review all policies and practices, including faculty appointments, recruitment, employment contracts, workload, performance evaluation, retention and discipline. Make recommendations for reform of policies and processes by **Q4 2026** for approvals and implementation by **Q2 2027**

4.2.2. Strategic Alignment, Contracts, & Academic Employee Relations

4.2.2.1.   ***Work with Academic Entities to Establish Hiring Plan Criteria that are Linked to AKU and Entity Strategies,*** including embedding research and education priorities into all recruitment plans. Establish 3- year hiring plan criteria by end **Q2 2026**.

4.2.2.2.   ***Best Practices and Guidelines for Faculty Contracts*** that reflect local markets, living conditions, housing stipends, and cost structures; as well as workload and research incentives such as protected time, start-up amounts and infrastructure. Develop template contracts with clear role definitions, protected onboarding time, start-up fund details, and benefits for adoption by end **Q2 2027**.

4.2.2.3.   ***Establish*** a **"Talent Governance Committee"** (Provost, Deans, HR) to review and conditionally approve all strategic hires, depending on budget, with Terms of Reference approved by end **Q1 2026**.

4.2.2.4.   ***Leverage Multi-Campus Postings and Joint Appointments*** for short-term and shared appointments across academic entities to optimize scarce talent

deployment, with a Pilot of 10 joint appointments by **Q4 2027.** Create clear policies and contracts for part-time, joint-appointment and visiting faculty roles by **Q3 2026**.

4.2.2.5.   ***Implement Staff Mobility Framework -*** Advertise and fund internal transfer opportunities across units/campuses with 10 mobility placements by **Q4 2027**.

4.2.3. Faculty Handbook

4.2.3.1.   ***Publish a Unified Faculty Handbook*** that consolidates all faculty policies (promotion timelines, discipline, dispute resolution, workload reviews, evaluation criteria) by **Q2 2027**.

4.2.4. Infrastructure Needs

4.2.4.1.   ***Prioritize and Tie Infrastructure Budgets to Hiring –*** *with Academic Entity heads* to secure lab space, offices and IT resources before extending offers to research-track recruits. New policy in place by **Q3 2026**.

4.2.5. Retention, Incentives & Succession Planning

4.2.5.1.   ***Succession & Career Ladders*** - Publish clear progression ladders for faculty and staff, including mid-level and senior teaching, research and leadership tracks by **Q3 2026**.

4.2.5.2.   ***Develop Post-Doctoral Fellowship Pathways -*** Allocate 5 postdoctoral fellowships with mentoring plans, reviewable for faculty conversion and fellowship program launched by **Q4 2026**.

4.2.5.3.   ***Mentorship Supports -*** Ensure academic entities have mentorship programmes for faculty and staff by **Q3 2026**.

4.2.6. *Performance Evaluation Improvements*

4.2.6.1.   *Convene inter-entity calibration committees and develop appraisal standards for use of new appraisal standards in* **2027 review cycle**.

4.2.7. *Application to Staff*

4.2.7.1.   *Extend Talent Strategy to Key Staff Roles* - Adapt career-ladder, evaluation, and retention frameworks to critical non-faculty positions (e.g., research coordinators, lab managers) with Staff-focused policies developed by **Q1 2026**.

4.3.   KPIS – PEOPLE & TALENT

4.3.1. unified contracts/handbook live by **Q4 2027**;

4.3.2. 3-yr hiring plans running by Q4 2026

4.3.3. % new research-track hires with startup packages (100% from 2027)

4.3.4. % entities running mentorship (100% by Q3 2026)

5.0. INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar: (2) Knowledge Creation and Dissemination

5.1. BACKGROUND

Since its founding, AKU's research enterprise has grown exponentially. Under the leadership of the Vice Provost Research, AKU developed a Research Strategic Plan 2024-2028 to align with *AKU Onwards*. This Academic Plan reaffirms the *Research Strategic Plan 2024-2028* and its 4 pillars: (1) Identiry and Cultivate Emerging Research Themes; (2) Improve Reseasrch Strengths, Coordination & Governance; (3) Establish a Supportive Environment for Next-Generation Researchers; and (4) Enhance AKU's Impact via Contextually Relevant Metrics and Dissemination. It support the Research Office's ambition to improve governance, research facilitation, compliance and capacity building.

5.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & INNOVATION

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Vice Provost Research; Academic Council (with Research Office)

In support of the Research Strategic Plan, this Academic Plan proposes the following deliverables and timelines:

5.2.1. *Establish Cross-Entity Research Governance & Events*
- 5.2.1.1. Convene a quarterly Research Forum of Associate Deans (Research) and Institute/Center Directors to define and track strategic targets by **Q3 2025**;
- 5.2.1.2. Host an annual AKU Research Summit to showcase interdisciplinary work and alignment with AKDN priorities by **Q3 2026** across campuses.

5.2.2. *Integrate Strategic Research into Talent Development* (aligned with timelines in People & Talent above)
- 5.2.2.1. Embed research-intensity metrics into a **3-year hiring plan**, ensuring all faculty roles include clear KPIs;
- 5.2.2.2. Offer standardized startup packages (value, lab/office space, PhD support) to every new research-track hire;
- 5.2.2.3. Expand PhD slots in under-served disciplines and launch 5 post-doctoral fellowships with structured mentoring.

5.2.3. *Modernize Evaluation & Recognition Framework*
- 5.2.3.1. Revise promotion guidelines to equally reward all peer-reviewed grants, interdisciplinary outputs, and translational impact; and
- 5.2.3.2. Provide **impact-story templates** so >50% of research faculty submit narratives in reviews of 2026 performance.

5.2.4. *Institutionalize Seed & Collaborative Funding Mechanisms*
    5.2.4.1.   Allocate funding for early-career seed grants (≥50% interdisciplinary); and
    5.2.4.2.   Establish a funding call for multi-entity grant applications with competition launched by **Q3 2025** and if successful, repeated annually if budget allows.

5.2.5. *Enable Faculty Mobility & Knowledge Translation*
    5.2.5.1.   Create a mobility fund for short-term, cross-campus research visits and mentoring in 2026 if budget allows
    5.2.5.2.   Support knowledge translation to convert outputs into guidelines, policy briefs or community programs in collaboration with library;
    5.2.5.3.   Partner with AKDN entities to co-design **"AKDN Grand Challenges"** 2026-2027.

5.3. KPIS – RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
5.3.1. See Research Strategic Plan

6.0. INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar: (4) Partnerships & Collaborations

6.1. BACKGROUND – PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

By consolidating strategic selectivity, regional strengths and pragmatic governance into a single framework—and following these targeted recommendations—AKU will forge select, high-value partnerships that drive sustainable impact across Pakistan, Afghanistan and East Africa..

6.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Vice Provost Research; Academic Council; Global Engagement Office

6.2.1. *Appoint Associate Vice-Provost (Global Engagement) in 2027.*

6.2.2. *Develop Partnerships Strategic Plan for the Academy* – by **end Q4 2025** that embeds IQRA principles and SDG priorites (The AKU Global Engagement Plan with Terms of Reference will be presented to Academic Council/Kenya and Uganda Senates in November 2025 and to ASAC and the regional Councils in **Q1 2026**.

6.2.3. *Conduct MoU Portfolio Audit -* Capture all active partnerships, status, funding, outputs by **end-Q4, 2025**.

6.2.4. *Establish International Advisory Committee on partnerships -* Establish a Partnerships IAC – See AKU Global Engagement Plan

6.2.5. *Define & Secure Tier-1 Anchor Partners* with regional expertise by end **Q1 2026**

6.2.6. *Stand up Cross-Regional Partnerships Working Groups with Academic Entity Representation* as per AKU Global Engagement Plan.

6.2.7. *Stand up Global Engagement Coordinating Committee* to ensure synergies between partnerships, bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements and advancement activities (See AKU Global Engagement Plan)

6.3. KPIS – PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

6.3.1. Active MoUs with KPIs (100% of Tier-1)
6.3.2. MoUs sunset after audit (≥15%)
6.3.3. Double the number of Institutional MOUs, including regional diversification
6.3.4. Joint outputs (papers, grants, programmes)

7.0. ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS FOR THE ACADEMY

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar: (5) Sustainability and Growth

7.1. BACKGROUND – ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

The University Advancement (UA) Office operates within a structured governance framework, anchored by the biannual Fundraising Priorities Committee (chaired by the President, Provost, VP Finance, and Chief Advancement Officer) and quarterly meetings with Deans and regional CEOs. This ensures fundraising goals—from endowments to capital campaigns and special projects—are aligned with the strategic plan and vetted by Finance and senior leadership.

Fundraising is positioned as a shared responsibility: Deans and the Provost act as ambassadors and identify new donors, while UA provides the technical and operational support (case development, prospect management, invoicing, stewardship reporting). Approval flows from faculty-generated priority requests through Finance endorsement to President and Provost sign-off.

Beyond securing gifts, UA focuses on cultivating long-term relationships through tailored "cases for support," regular stewardship reports, and clear post-pledge roles for Deans. Questions around the Dean's stewardship role and UA's capacity to involve entities in ongoing donor conversations highlight the need for clearer role definitions.

Endowments are central to the Academy's long-term health. With a target of USD 250 million in endowment assets (generating 6–7 % returns) and an annual funding gap of USD 40–45 million, there is an urgent need to revisit endowed professorship funding levels, distribution policies, and performance benchmarks. The Provost's oversight of over 100 strategic-plan goals underscores the importance of concentrating resources on high-impact priorities. UA has raised USD 23M in endowments over the past 2 years for the academic entities. With the support of deans, this could double and have significant impact.

With respect to alumni, there is broad consensus that engaging alumni early and continuously—especially young graduates—is critical. Current efforts (e.g., the IED-PK alumni engagement group) demonstrate the value of structured alumni networks in identifying projects and sustaining giving. However, gaps in communication and outreach persist,the target is to engage 5000 alumni back to the University by 2028. UA's hope is that the deans will play a critical role in encouraging alumni to give back during their alumni meetings regardless of the amount.

7.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Academic Council; University Advancement

Action on the following recommendations are the shared responsibility of the Provost, the Deans and leaders of other academic entities, and University Advancement (UA). Academic Council is a forum where priorities and reporting on KPIs can be conducted, with UA representatives invited.

7.2.1. *Refine Governance Processes*
    7.2.1.1. Formalize a transparent workflow between UA and Academic Entities for fundraising expectations, with clear timelines and documentation by end **Q1 2026**.
    7.2.1.2. Schedulemonthly UA-entity liaison calls to ensure early involvement in project scoping and funding discussions
    7.2.1.3. Integrate strategic-plan milestones into the Fundraising Priorities Committee's decision-making to ensure new initiatives can be swiftly incorporated when endorsed by the Provost.

7.2.2. *Clarify Roles in Stewardship*
    7.2.2.1. Continue to refine the "Stewardship Playbook" that outlines Dean responsibilities post-pledge, with templates for donor-thank-you communications and impact reports.
    7.2.2.2. Offer Dean-focused training sessions on donor relationship management in partnership with UA.

7.2.3. *Amplify Alumni Engagement*
    7.2.3.1. Launch segmented engagement campaigns (e.g., "Five-Year Reunion," "Mentor-in-Residence") to cultivate lifelong giving habits.
    7.2.3.2. Establish regional alumni advisory boards—especially in East Africa and Pakistan—to leverage local networks for project identification and corporate linkage.

7.2.4. *Optimize Endowment Structure*
    7.2.4.1. Standardize endowed professorship minimums and adopt multi-year pledge commitments to secure stable funding.

7.2.5. *Decentralize with Accountability*
    7.2.5.1. Pilot the feasibility of setting co-owned fundraising targets in each Dean's performance objectives, reviewed quarterly by UA and the Provost's Office.
    7.2.5.2. Mobilize volunteer ambassadors—distinguished alumni and industry leaders—to support targeted campaigns and mentorship initiatives.

7.2.6. Continued Engagement

    7.2.6.1.   Continue engagement between UA and the Deans for mutual support in advancement initiatives.

7.3. KPIS – ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

7.3.1. Decanal engagement in advancement activities

7.3.2. Decanal engagement in stewardship

7.3.3. Alumni engagement

8.0. DIGITAL LEARNING AND MICRO-CREDENTIALING

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillars: (1) Quality and Breadth of Education and (7) Leveraging Data Sciences & Technologies

8.1. BACKGROUND – DIGITAL LEARNING AND MICRO-CREDENTIALING

There is a need for a clear digital roadmap that builds out the LEADS platform as a high-quality, regulator-aligned, financially sustainable platform, buttressed with strong curriculum and QA processes; and backed with market intelligence, brand clarity, and partnerships that amplify AKU's convening power in digital learning and brand. Specifically, all AKU micro-credentials whould live on the unified LEADS platform, with clarity on centralization versus entity autobomy, the "ownership" of courses, and the sharing of any revenues generated. Eventually, micro-credentials could lead to stackable options and a pathway for diplomas and certifications aligned with needs of partners, including industry.

8.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – DIGITAL LEARNING AND MICRO-CREDENTIALING

OWNERS: Provost & Vice-President Academic; Academic Council; QTL_Net

8.2.1. ***Establish a LEADS Governance Committee*** inclusive of academic entity representatives, ICT and QTL_Net which will define clear rules for clourse-ownership, approve workflows and platform integrations. By **Q1 2026** Committee will have Terms of Reference, including to review pipelines, resolve conflicts, and approve new micro-credential proposals.

8.2.2. ***Build a Unified QA & Faculty Development Toolkit*** that includes a digital-learning checklist paried with short online faculty "train the trainer" modules on best practices in online pedagogy. Completion of these modules to be a pre-requisite for any LEADS-hosted programme by **Q4 2026**.

8.2.3. ***Design Stackable Credential Pathways***

    8.2.3.1.   Defined standards towards diplomas and with clear learning-outcome maps.

    8.2.3.2.   Document articulation agreements so learners and regulatory can understand how short courses feed into larger qualifications.

    8.2.3.3.   Pilot one stacked pathway before scaling in 2026 (e.g., midwifery).

8.2.4. Formalize a Sustainable Financial Model

    8.2.4.1.   Agree a transparent revenue-sharing formula (e.g., % to entity, % to central fund, % to platform maintenance).

    8.2.4.2.   Codify the USD 200K externally-generated fund rules—eligibility, carry-forward, faculty/staff access by Q1 2026 with Finance.

    8.2.4.3.   Set annual CPD revenue targets and review them alongside enrollment and cost data.

8.2.5. Undertake a Market Needs and Brand-Positioning Study

    8.2.5.1.   Commission a rapid market assessment—competitor scan, stakeholder interviews (AKDN, regulators, corporate partners).

    8.2.5.2.   Use findings to craft a unified LEADS brand architecture that leverages AKU's reputation while spotlighting each entity's niche.

    8.2.5.3.   Roll out a targeted marketing playbook (messaging, channels, sponsorship opportunities) to make AKU the "go-to" for high-value micro-credentials.

8.3.   KPIS – DIGITAL LEARNING AND MICRO-CREDENTIALING

8.3.1. Pilot micro-credential stacked pathway in 2026

8.3.2. % courses passing QA gate (>90%)

8.3.3. Complete rapid market assessment and financial sustainability model

8.3.4. Regulator compliance (0 exceptions)

9.0. STUDENT LIFE, HEALTH & WELLNESS

Linked to AKU ONWARDS strategic pillar: (4) Partnerships & Collaborations

9.1. BACKGROUND – PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

By consolidating strategic selectivity, regional strengths and pragmatic governance into a single framework—and following these targeted recommendations—AKU will forge select, high-value partnerships that drive sustainable impact across Pakistan, Afghanistan and East Africa..

9.2. ACTIONS & TIMELINES – PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

OWNERS: Vice Provost Students; Academic Council; Student Affairs; Registrar's Office

9.2.1. Phased, Multi-Stage Orientation

    9.2.1.1.   Transform one intensive week into a semester-long "Welcome Journey."

    9.2.1.2.   Deliver bite-sized orientation modules (online and in-person) at key points: arrival, mid-term, and pre-exams.

    9.2.1.3.   Host virtual "drop-in" office hours and create a centralized orientation hub on the student portal for easy access.

Formal Mentorship Framework

    9.2.1.4.   Establish a university-wide "AKU Mentors" program, pairing each student with a peer mentor and a faculty/alumni mentor.

9.2.1.5.   Define mentor expectations, training sessions, and meeting schedules.

9.2.1.6.   Track engagement and feedback via a simple digital dashboard so deans can monitor mentor capacity and effectiveness.

9.2.2. *Proactive Wellness Initiative*

9.2.2.1.   Publicize VPSO's workshops through coordinated email campaigns, digital signage, and student ambassadors.

9.2.2.2.   Recruit part-time counselors for surge periods (e.g., exams) and embed a full-time counselor in each region.

9.2.2.3.   Launch monthly "Wellness Moments"—short campus-wide events or virtual check-ins focusing on stress relief, mindfulness, or peer support.

9.2.3. *Strategic Investment in Student Housing*

9.2.3.1.   Conduct a housing audit to map current capacity, quality gaps, and future demand.

9.2.3.2.   Pilot a mixed-mode funding model: a capped surplus fund that reinvests in hostel upgrades and reserves spots for under-represented students.

9.2.3.3.   Partner with local developers or NGOs to plan purpose-built, community-oriented residence halls with shared study and social spaces.

9.2.4. *Unified Engagement & Communication Platform*

9.2.4.1.   Create a single "Student Life" calendar and portal where all entities post events, clubs, and wellness sessions.

9.2.4.2.   Charter a cross-campus Student Experience Council—Associate Deans plus VPSO and student reps—to coordinate programming and share best practices.

9.2.4.3.   Implement regular town-hall forums (virtual/in-person) so leadership, faculty, and students jointly plan priorities and troubleshoot issues.

9.3. KPIS – STUDENT LIFE, HEALTH, AND WELLNESS

9.3.1. Orientation completion (≥90%)

9.3.2. Mentor match rate (≥80%)

9.3.3. Counseling utilization with increase in positive satisfaction

9.3.4. Housing capacity vs. demand roadmap per campus completed

ANNEX 1: AKU INSTITUTIONAL RANKINGS STEERING COMMITTEE (IRSC) TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0. PREAMBLE

1.0. The Aga Khan University (AKU) recognizes the growing importance of global and thematic university rankings in shaping institutional reputation, attracting talent, and benchmarking performance. To strategically engage with relevant ranking systems and maximize institutional impact, AKU is establishing an Institutional Rankings Steering Committee (IRSC).

2.0. KEY OBJECTICES

2.0 The Committee will:

2.1.1 Assess and recommend which global, regional, and thematic ranking systems (e.g., Times Higher Education, QS, SDGs, subject-specific rankings) are most relevant and aligned with AKU's mission, vision, and strategic priorities.

2.1.2 Develop a strategy for participation in selected rankings, including timelines, data requirements, and responsible units.

2.1.3 Identify and mobilize resources (human, technical, and financial) necessary to support effective participation and continuous improvement in rankings.

2.1.4 Oversee data quality and integrity to ensure accurate and timely submissions to ranking agencies.

2.1.5 Guide internal and external dissemination of ranking outcomes, ensuring transparent communication with stakeholders and leveraging results for institutional advancement.

2.1.6 Monitor and review the impact of rankings participation, recommending adjustments as needed.

3.0. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

3.0 The Committee will be responsible for producing the following deliverables:

3.1.1 A comprehensive assessment proposal on relevant ranking systems, including recommendations for AKU's participation.

3.1.2 The proposal will include the following - Strategic plan outlining the approach, timelines, and resource requirements for rankings engagement.

3.1.3 Annual progress report summarizing activities, outcomes, and lessons learned.

3.1.4 Data submission protocols and guidelines to ensure accuracy and consistency in reporting.

3.1.5 Communication and dissemination plan for sharing ranking results with internal and external stakeholders.

3.1.6 Recommendations for continuous improvement based on analysis of ranking outcomes and feedback.

4.0.   MEMBERSHIP

4.0. The Committee will comprise:
- 4.1.1   Vice Provost, Research (Co-Chair)
- 4.1.2   Vice Provost & University Librarian (Co-Chair)
- 4.1.3   University Registrar
- 4.1.4   Director, Institutional Data, Analytics and Reporting
- 4.1.5   Director, Central Communications
- 4.1.6   Director, Research Office
- 4.1.7   Provost & Vice President Academic
- 4.1.8   Other members or subject matter experts may be invited as required.

4.2 Members may nominate a department representative in case they cannot attend the meeting.

4.3 There will be a meeting coordinator/scribe who reports to the Co-Chairs.

5.0.   MEETING FREQUENCY

5.1.   The Committee will meet quarterly or as required, with additional meetings convened at the discretion of the Chair.

5.2.   Meeting agendas and minutes will be recorded and circulated to members by the Secretary of the Committee.

6.0.   APPROVALS

6.1   These terms of reference have been approved by the Provost in consultation with the members of this committee.

7.0.   AMENDMENT OF TERMS

7.1.   These Terms of Reference may be amended by a majority decision of the Committee, subject to approval by the Provost.

8.0.   QUORUM

8.1.   quorum shall consist of at least 50% of the Committee's membership, including the Chair or their delegate.

ANNEX 2: TEMPLATE WORKING GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0. PREAMBLE
1.1. State the purpose of and background on the need for the Working Group.

2.0. KEY OBJECTICES
2.1. The Working Group will:
2.1.1. List objectives.

3.0. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES
3.1. The Woking Group will be responsible for producing the following deliverables:
3.1.1. List Deliverables and Timelines in Quarters/Year.

4.0. MEMBERSHIP
4.1. The Working Group will comprise:
4.1.1. List the Chairs (Co-Chairs) and standing members of the Working Group, ensuring stakeholder representation.
4.1.2. Other members or subject matter experts may be invited as required.
4.2. Members may nominate a department representative in case they cannot attend the meeting.
4.3. Identify the working Secretary of the Working Group who reports to the Co-Chairs.

5.0. MEETING FREQUENCY
5.1. Identify the meeting cadence, with additional meetings convened at the discretion of the Chair.
5.2. Meeting agendas and minutes will be recorded and circulated to members by the Secretary of the Working Group.

6.0. APPROVALS
6.2 These terms of reference have been approved by Academic Council/Kenya or Uganda Senates in consultation with the members of this committee.

7.0. AMENDMENT OF TERMS
7.1. These Terms of Reference may be amended by a majority decision of the Working Group, subject to approval by the Provost & Vice President Academic.

9.0. QUORUM
9.1. Quorum shall consist of at least 50% of the Working Group's membership, including the Chair or their delegate.
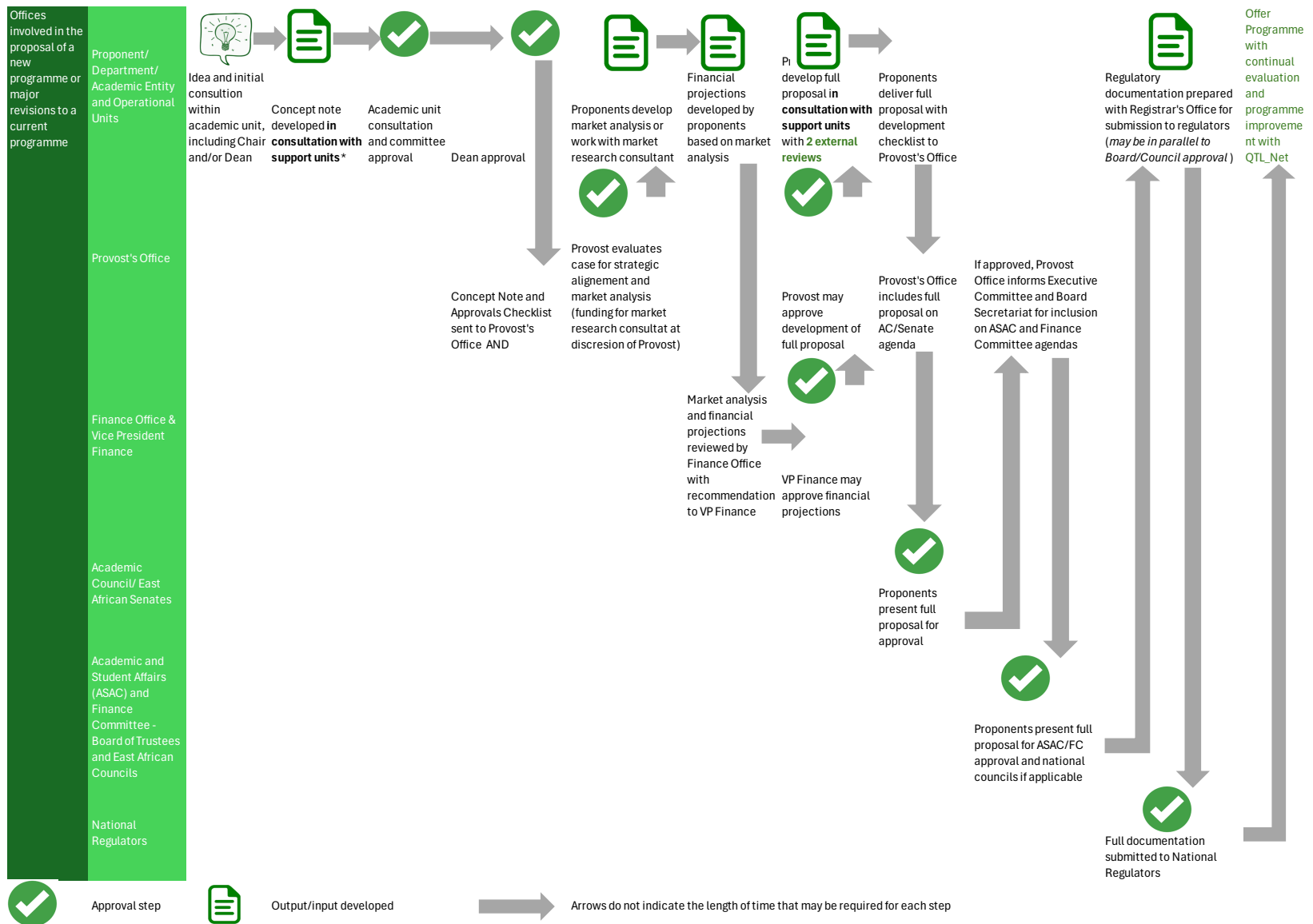
Approved by Academic Council, Kenya University Senate October 2025 and presented for information to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees and Kenya University Council in November 2025.

See OVER for TABLE 1: Steps for New Programme Approval or Major Modification to Current Programme (see accompanying flowchart for process summary).

Responsible Actor/Entity	Actions	Other Actors/entities to engage
Step 1. Ideation and Initial Consultation		
Proponents within an Academic Entity	The group of proponents (faculty members) discuss the idea with their academic entity heads, including Chairs and/or the Dean and/or Associate Dean and potentially consult with the appropriate academic entity-level committee. The proponents must be willing to do the work to develop the proposal.	Requests for a new programme may derive from knowledge of student demand, knowledge of offerings at other institutions, or from governments or other external stakeholders
Step 2. Concept Note Development		
Proponents take the lead in developing the Concept Note	Development of Concept Note, including: 1. Brief Overview of the Proposed Programme, including alignment with AKU Principles of Impact, Quality, Relevance and Impact based on the below analyses. 2. Strategic Alignment a. Alignment with AKU Strategic Plan b. Alignment with entity-level strategic plan c. Alignment with international or regional priorities for skills development/higher education, if relevant d. Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals, if relevant 3. Preliminary Evidence of Market Need a. Preliminary evidence of societal and labour market demand from publicly available surveys and trends – environmental scan 4. Preliminary Evidence of Student Demand a. Preliminary evidence of applicant pool from publicly available surveys and trends – environmental scan 5. Assessment of duplication or possible negative impact on existing programme offerings 6. Outline of proposed curriculum a. Goal of the programme b. Anticipated list of courses with brief descriptions c. Anticipated number of credits and duration of the programme d. Anticipated programme learning outcomes e. Anticipated modes of delivery f. Anticipated process to continuous quality improvement, monitoring and evaluation 7. Anticipated resources a. Anticipated faculty needs b. Anticipated staff needs c. Anticipated library resources d. Anticipated IT and other equipment needs e. Anticipated space needs f. Anticipated Hostel requirements	1. Ongoing consultation with academic entity heads. 2. Registrar's Office 3. QTL_Net 4. IT 5. Facilities/infrastructure 6. Library

Steps 3 & 4. Entity-Level Approvals		
	a. Approval by internal committees b. Approval by Dean	
Step 5. Approval of the Provost to Proceed with Market Analysis (decision on need for market research consultant)		
Provost Office and Provost	1. Evaluation of Concept Note and Entity-Level Approvals Checklist 2. Evaluation of case for AKU strategic alignment and need for external market analysis 3. Approval of funding for market research or return to entity for further proposal development	Market research firm Procurement of services
Step 6. Development of full market analysis (with market research consultant is approved)		

Proponents	1. Proponents take the lead of either developing a market analysis or working with a market research consultant in consultation with finance partner and Provost
	Market Analysis will Include quantitative and qualitative evidence from key stakeholders:
	   a. Evidence of Market Need - societal and labour market demand
	   b. Evidence of Student Demand - applicant pool
	   c. Competitive assessment - with analysis of justifiable overlap with other programmes at AKU and in the region
	   d. Evidence of competitor pricing and/or willingness to pay tuition fees
	2. SWOT Analysis, with responses and actions to identified risks
		Provost
		Finance
		Market Research Consultant as applicable
		Stakeholders include: current and prospective students, parents, potential employers, labour market

Step 7. Development of Financial Feasibility and Approval from Finance		

Proponents	1. Develop financial feasibility, including:
	   • Full cost of the programme
	   • Incremental cost of the programme
	2. Reaffirm approval from entity leadership (Chair and/or Dean)
	3. Seek approval from Provost
	4. Seek approval from Finance (VP Finance signoff)
	NB. The Dean, the Provost, and the VP Finance must sign the "Programme Budget Impact Form"
		Academic Entity Leadership
		Provost
		Finance

Step 8. Full Proposal Development and External Review		

Proponents	1. Executive Summary of the Proposed Programme, including alignment with AKU Principles of Impact, Quality, Relevance and Impact based on the below analyses.
	2. Strategic Alignment
	   a. Alignment with AKU Strategic Plan
	   b. Alignment with entity-level strategic plan
	   g. Alignment with international or regional priorities for skills development/higher education
		Ongoing consultation with:
		academic entity heads
		QTL_Net
		IT
		Facilities/ infrastructure
		Library
		2 External reviewers
		
		Registrar will ensure that

	h. Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals 3. Evidence of Market Need a. Analysis of societal and labour market' b. Analysis of student demand c. Analysis of applicant pool d. Competitive assessment of duplication or possible negative impact on existing programmes 4. Details of proposed curriculum a. Goal of the programme b. Level of the programme c. Admission standards and requirements d. Curriculum map e. Detailed courses outlines with learning outcomes and aligned assessment f. Number of credits hours g. Duration of the programme h. Modes of curricular delivery i. Thesis or major project expectations j. Work-integrated learning k. Graduation requirements l. Programme-exit competencies m. Process to continuous quality improvement, monitoring and evaluation 5. Anticipated resources a. Current faculty CVs of all faculty engaged in the programme delivery b. Faculty hiring – evidence of resources c. Staff needs, for example, internship coordinators d. Library resources e. IT and other equipment needs f. Space needs, e.g., laboratories, studios g. Hostel requirements	the course credit values awarded reflect the quality and standards of the University, fall within the requirements of the University's qualification frameworks for that academic level and comply with the requirements of the regional accreditation bodies.
Step 9. University Approvals		
Proponents	Presentation of full proposal and financial projections at Academic Council and/or East African University Senates for approval	Provost's Office
Step 10. Board of Trustee Approvals		
Proponents	Presentation of full proposal and financial projections at the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board with input from the Finance Committee for approval Presentation at East African University Councils for approval, if relevant	Provost's Office Board Secretariat
Step 11. Submission to National Regulators		
Proponents		Registrar's Office Provost Office
Step 12. Continuous Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Modifications		
Proponents		Programme QTL_Net

Offices involved in the proposal of a new programme or major revisions to a current programme

Office	Steps
Proponent/ Department/ Academic Entity and Operational Units	
Provost's Office	
Finance Office & Vice President Finance	
Academic Council/ East African Senates	
Academic and Student Affairs (ASAC) and Finance Committee - Board of Trustees and East African Councils	
National Regulators	

Idea and initial consultion within academic unit, including Chair and/or Dean

Concept note developed **in consultation with support units** *

Academic unit consultation and committee approval

Dean approval

Concept Note and Approvals Checklist sent to Provost's Office AND

Proponents develop market analysis or work with market research consultant

Provost evaluates case for strategic alignement and market analysis (funding for market research consultat at discresion of Provost)

Financial projections developed by proponents based on market analysis

Market analysis and financial projections reviewed by Finance Office with recommendation to VP Finance

VP Finance may approve financial projections

Pr develop full proposal **in consultation with support units** with **2 external reviews**

Provost may approve development of full proposal

Proponents deliver full proposal with development checklist to Provost's Office

Provost's Office includes full proposal on AC/Senate agenda

Proponents present full proposal for approval

If approved, Provost Office informs Executive Committee and Board Secretariat for inclusion on ASAC and Finance Committee agendas

Proponents present full proposal for ASAC/FC approval and national councils if applicable

Full documentation submitted to National Regulators

Regulatory documentation prepared with Registrar's Office for submission to regulators (*may be in parallel to Board/Council approval*)

Offer Programme with continual evaluation and programme improvement with QTL_Net

Legend:
- ✓ Approval step
- 📄 Output/input developed
- ➡ Arrows do not indicate the length of time that may be required for each step

* **Support Units** include the Registrar's Office and associated committees, QTL_Net, Information Technology, property, equipment and space planning, human resources, finance

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ANNEX 4: SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP RETREAT DISCUSSION ON PEOPLE & TALENT

The discussion addressed:

- What are our talent needs and how do we create a process to develop a strategic hiring plan for an internal and external talent pipeline in 3 and 5-10 year timeframes.
- What does a research/education led talent strategy look like operationally, including: Organisation and committee structures; Performance evaluation and promotion based on objective standards; Infrastructure and start-up needs; Mentorship and support?

Cross-cutting themes to address people and talent, whether for AKU faculty or staff were:

STRUCTURED TALENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- **Clear progression ladders** for both staff and faculty ("People Strategy"): defined stages, part-time teaching pathways, and programmes akin to MC's talent-development initiatives.
- **Comprehensive development plans** covering skills training, mentoring, and career-stage–appropriate support.

OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

- **Standardized benchmarks** to allay "fear of evaluation" and ensure fairness—especially for staff, where the need is greatest.
- **Transparent, measurable criteria** that apply equally across roles and regions.

STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT & LEADERSHIP STABILITY

- **Targeted hires** at senior, mid-, and early-career levels to secure strong mentors and signal organizational stability.
- **Identification of key non-faculty roles** critical to the academy's future.
- **Forward-looking models** for faculty affiliation (e.g. shared appointments, partnership-linked hiring).

FIT-FOR-PURPOSE SUPPORT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Dedicated academy vs. hospital support**—from pedagogy-focused services to IT and administrative backing.
- **Faculty housing solutions**, particularly in East Africa, to attract and retain top talent.

INCENTIVES & RETENTION FRAMEWORKS

- **Centralized retention strategy** with clear resource commitments.
- **Incentive schemes** (e.g. interdepartmental teaching allowances, market-aligned pay scales) to reward high performance and cross-unit collaboration.

Faculty recruitment/hiring and retention requires associated policies and practices that are flexible and context specific:

HIRING - HIRING PLAN

1. Strategic Alignment & Governance
- *Link hiring to institutional strategy:* recruitment plans must flow directly from AKU's strategic goals and close identified gaps (e.g., human resources "poaching").
- *Clear coordination structures:* establish formal channels between the Provost's Office, Deans, and department chairs to guide appointments, joint hires, and curriculum-driven recruitment.

2. Contextual Adaptation & Regional Sensitivity
- *Mindful of local realities:* regional differences in needs, labour markets, and living conditions require tailored solutions rather than one-size-fits-all policies.
- *Leverage AKU's geography:* use multi-campus strengths to support shared or short-term postings that respect each locale's context.

3. Integrated Staffing & Bottom-Up Engagement
- *Combine top-down and bottom-up approaches:* align executive-driven staffing targets with grassroots input on departmental needs and curriculum gaps.
- *Departmental voice:* empower chairs and line managers to articulate quality-of-life, protected-time, and service-needs for their faculty/staff, as applicable.

4. Flexibility, Mobility & Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- *Joint and short-term appointments:* build pathways for interdisciplinary staff, young PhD hires, and part-time teaching roles.
- *Staff mobility frameworks:* enable transfers across units/campuses with transparent, centrally advertised opportunities.

5. Retention, Incentives & Succession Planning
- *Retention rewards & protected time:* introduce incentive structures (e.g. recognition, time allocations) to keep top performers.
- *Employee-driven input:* solicit views on what incentives—beyond pay—will keep faculty, including new hires, engaged.
- *Succession planning:* map out clear career ladders for both faculty and staff, addressing competitive external markets and capped internal increments.
- Enhance pathways for postdoctoral and research fellows for potential recruitment as faculty.

6. Infrastructure Needs
- *Infrastructure funding tied to hiring plans for research intensive faculty:* Deans must confirm infrastructure budget lines for space (e.g., laboratories) and equipment, including information technology (IT) needs, before offers are made to candidates.
- *Balancing deficits vs. expansion:* prioritize critical builds or renovations linked to research strategic plans and anticipated graduate/research training programmes.

FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - CONTRACTUAL TERMS AND FACULTY HANDBOOK

The Provost Office, with input from the Deans, needs to work with HR to develop contractual templates for the hiring of faculty and to streamline the process and layers of approval. Templates will

complement HR's standard hiring checklists with faculty/department-level criteria. We need to ensure central HR/comms and academic units speak with one voice on contractual obligations and issues of workforce. Participants agreed that dedicated forums for Deans (and other senior leaders) are required to coordinate on staff/faculty development priorities.

With respect to contractual terms, the following should be included at a minimum:

1. **Clear Role Definition & Workload Protection**
   - *Explicit workload agreements:* specify teaching, research, and service expectations.
   - *Protected onboarding time:* for example, no teaching in year one for early-career faculty, to allow focused ramp-up for research or clinical service.
   - *Salary, Benefits and Incentives:* Clear understanding of what may be negotiated with respect to salary ranges and associated benefits and any further incentives, such as housing/mortgage assistance.
   - *Market Competitiveness:* Salary and Benefits *P*ackages should incorporate both external benchmarking (market input) and internal performance insights to keep AKU competitive and relevant.
   - *Start-up Research Fund and Infrastructure:* Start-up research amounts and timeline for expenditure and research infrastructure, for example, access to laboratory space and equipment only for core faculty hired to do research at the rank of Assistant Professor (or equivalent) and above.
   - *Professional Development Allowances and Opportunities:* embed clear professional-growth pathways (mentoring, training budgets) into contracts, while recognizing regional differences in retention needs which may require terms to be adjusted accordingly.
   - *Faculty Handbook:* See below, incorporated in hiring contract by reference.

2. **Faculty Handbook of Policies and Procedures**

In addition, a *Faculty Handbook* should be developed that pulls together all policies relevant to faculty. These need to be incorporated by reference into the employment contract. Faculty policies, which may require creation or updating, include:
   - *Timelines and Expectations:*
     - For promotion, including a mid-promotion review for Assistant Professors (e.g., at year 3)
     - Build in scheduled workload/benefits reviews with academic entity/department heads to adjust responsibilities or benefits as roles evolve.
   - *Discipline and Dispute Resolution*
     - Robust process for faculty discipline, including in student-related matters, inclusive of complaints and investigation process.
     - Appeals process.
     - Clear outcomes for disciplinary actions, from awareness/training to dismissal.
   - *Faculty Development and Retention Mechanisms* (see below)
   - *Performance Evaluation* (see below)
   - *Research and Innovation* (see below)

3. **Improvements in Performance Evaluation**
   - *Clear metrics & objectives:* articulated KPIs and outcome-based targets ensure everyone knows what "outstanding/excellent/good" (the bars) look like. Share samples of evaluation forms
   - *Harmonized tools:* update appraisal forms and adopt standard instruments (e.g. 260, 360 feedback) to bring consistency across units.
   - *360° reviews:* extend beyond individual self-assessment—include peers, direct reports, and periodic chair evaluations (e.g. at 3+2+3-year milestones), at least for promotion.
   - *Emotional intelligence metrics:* account for interpersonal skills and team-work in appraisals.
   - *IQRA alignment:* embed AKU's core values (Impact, Quality, Relevance, Access) into evaluation criteria alongside research and teaching outputs
   - *Cross-reporting & mapping:* address reporting overlaps by clarifying who reviews whom and how feedback is consolidated. This has been an issue for faculty appointed in an academic entity with a primary or secondary affiliation in a research institute/centre of excellence and for faculty with joint appointments.
   - *Calibration committees:* regular joint sessions (chaired by the Provost/VP) to review, justify, and normalize ratings across departments/academic entities.

4. **Retention and Incentives**
   - *Market-and-Internal Alignment:* Salary and Benefits Packages at promotion should incorporate both external benchmarking (market input) and internal performance insights to keep AKU competitive and relevant.
   - *Encouraging Uptake:* In the Medical Colleges, there is a need to motivate more faculty to initiate promotion applications, including by supporting the application package development.
   - *Maturing Governance Structures:* Promotion committees are newly established and still "growing." Investing in member training, clear terms of reference, and governance support will be critical to their long-term effectiveness.
   - *Flexibility & Transparency*: Reclassification processes should be more adaptable to diverse career pathways. At the same time, the entire promotion journey—including remuneration adjustments—must be fully transparent so candidates clearly understand criteria, timelines, and financial outcomes.
   - *Contextual perks:* offer benefits tailored to local realities—e.g. affordable housing loans, transport stipends, or tuition support.
   - *Recognition Mechanisms and Incentives:* rethink linking raises solely to annual reviews and standard percentage wage increases; explore other recognition mechanisms (e.g. awards, development opportunities) to boost engagement. Factor in non-monetary motivators— professional growth pathways, workload protection, and targeted support for high performers.
   - *Tuition support*: for internal degree programs as an added development incentive.

5. **Mentorship & Support**
   - *Structured Mentorship & Onboarding:* Develop formal mentorship programs—both peer-to-peer and departmental (internal and external)—to guide new and early-career staff – and provide a robust orientation for all new hires to accelerate integration and clarify expectations – including provision of the *Faculty Handbook*.

- *Exchange & Learning Opportunities:* Facilitate faculty/staff secondments or exchange programs with peer institutions (including Erasmus-style and internal university placements) to broaden skills and networks.
- *Leadership Pipeline:* Develop clear pathways to build "second-line" leaders through targeted mentoring and regular check-ins with Deans.
- *Dedicated Resources & Differentiated Policies:* Ring-fence a portion of budgets for entity-relevant faculty/staff development activities—from professional training to exchange travel.
- *Targeted Skills Training:* Collaborate with other entities to develop skills training workshops and other programmes, for example in financial and digital literacy and align training offerings with both individual career goals and the academy's strategic needs.

6. Application to Staff

It was noted that staff recruitment, retention, mentorship and support was as critical as for faculty, especially in strategically important positions. Many of the above discussion and options apply equally for staff, especially in developing a pipeline for leadership positions. The recommendation is to work closely with HR to develop strategies for key staffing in the academy.