



**Faculty of Health Sciences  
PhD Programme – Nursing  
Intra- Disciplinary Route**

**Admission Information  
2026 - 2027 Academic Year**

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## THE UNIVERSITY

The Aga Khan University is a pioneering institution of higher education and research that works to improve quality of life in the developing world and beyond. We educate leaders, generate life-saving knowledge, and set an example that raises standards in the societies in which we work. We empower women and the disadvantaged, strengthen pluralism and partner with world-renowned institutions to address problems that affect millions of people.

A not-for-profit institution, AKU was founded in 1983 by His Highness the Aga Khan. As Pakistan's first private university, we paved the way for the growth of the country's private higher education sector. In the early 2000s, the University expanded to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Afghanistan, and the United Kingdom.

At AKU, students flourish in a supportive environment that embraces diversity, demands excellence, and encourages leadership and direct engagement with real-world challenges. Our graduates go on to study and work at eminent universities and organizations around the world, and to make a difference in their home countries.

AKU is open to all, regardless of race, religion, gender, or geographic origin. Two-thirds of students and half of faculty members are women. Admission is based on merit, and our merit-based tuition waiver and needs sensitive financial assistance programme ensures that individuals from all income backgrounds are able to attend.

We do not discriminate on faith, gender, or national origin. Our selection process is rigorous which varies by academic programmes, but a common criterion includes fluency in English

## THE PHD PROGRAMME

- A PhD programme is the backbone of meaningful and scholarly engagements in any university. It is also crucial for the development of new generations of researchers, teachers, and leaders. The PhD programme in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programme with four specialities/streams including nursing: Biological Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Population and Public Health.

Details for each of these streams is available at

<https://www.aku.edu/admissions/Documents/admission-information-PhD-HS.pdf>

- The University's PhD Programme in Health Sciences is accredited by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan.
- In each PhD application cycle, projects will be available. Projects will vary depending on the opportunities for research at the time of admission. Students are advised to check details of available projects and other instructions on the AKU website [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs) at the time of applying to the programme.

**Nursing stream applicants may** suggest their own research topic and identify a potential supervisor from the list available on the website [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs), ensuring that their area of expertise remains aligned with the candidates proposed research topic.

Candidates must interact with the supervisor before writing a research intent to check the Supervisor's availability and interest.

## **PHD PROGRAMME: NURSING**

The focus of the nursing stream is to provide candidates with rigorous training in research that is offered through coursework and mentorship. The aim is to develop clinical scholars and faculty members capable of scientific inquiry for innovative practice and knowledge development for human health caring. Candidates will be required to produce an original piece of research that is important for human health from the perspective of nursing.

### **ADMISSION INFORMATION**

#### **APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – NURSING STREAM**

##### **ROUTE 1:**

##### **DIRECT ROUTE (APPLICATION DEADLINE WAS FEBRUARY 10, 2026)**

Candidates must have 18 years of education including a MS/MPhil in Nursing degree based on a minimum of 30 credits after 16-years of education.

A minimum CGPA 3.0 (out of 4.0 in the Semester System) or First Division – 60% (in the Annual System) in MS / MPhil / FCPS / FRCP / equivalent degree is required.

##### **ROUTE TWO (CURRENTLY OPEN FOR 2026 CYCLE)**

Applicants holding a Baccalaureate in Nursing (BScN/ Post RN) and a Master's degree from an HEC recognized institution in a discipline (other than Nursing) but relevant to nursing education, research, advanced practice, leadership, or health systems will be eligible to apply for admission to the PhD in Nursing programme.

A minimum CGPA 3.0 (out of 4.0 in the Semester System) or First Division – 60% (in the Annual System) in MS / MPhil / equivalent degree is required.

##### **\*\*Examples of Relevant Disciplines**

The following examples are illustrative and not exhaustive:

- Public Health; Epidemiology; Biostatistics; Health Professions Education, Education; Health Policy and Management; Healthcare Administration/Hospital Management; Information Technology; Sociology; Psychology; Bioethics; Early Childhood Development; Business Administration with Healthcare/ Leadership emphasis
- Applicants must meet all AKU admission requirements, including successful completion of the prescribed subject-specific admission test and interview.
- In addition, the admission Committee must be satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of the primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared them to undertake the doctoral programme. The admissions committee can mandate the students to take specific courses and credit requirements (6-9 credit hours of deficiency courses of level 7), prior to the start of the programme.

- In cases of ambiguity, applicants may be required to submit written justification explaining the relevance of their qualification to doctoral study in Nursing.

## **PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND DESIGN**

The PhD is based on a total of 18 credits of coursework to be covered in the initial phase of the programme and followed by a period of three to four years assigned for original research. Upon completion of the coursework, confirmation for PhD candidacy will be based on passing the comprehensive examination and successful defence of the research proposal (Synopsis defense).

The timelines and other details of the PhD programme for full-time students will be as follows:

### **Year 1 - 2**

- Compulsory eight credit hours for Core Courses.
- Six credit hours for Stream-specific courses and four credit hours for Electives.
- Course work of 18 credit hours preferably to be completed within 18 months and followed by a comprehensive examination (written and oral)/Resit examination and Synopsis defense for granting candidacy as a PhD researcher.
- Thesis synopsis approval leads to progression of full PhD candidacy.

### **Year 3 - 4**

- Completion of Research Work and Thesis, as per AKU policy.

### **Coursework**

The coursework will comprise of:

- i) **Compulsory Core Courses:*** These will be essential for all students. These includes but are not limited to are Scientific writing, Biostatistics in Health Care and Ethics in Healthcare Research.
- ii) **Stream-specific Courses:*** These courses are essential for all students in the particular discipline and constitute six credits hours.
- iii) **Elective courses:*** Different elective courses will be available to students from which they can choose the ones related to their interest/specialty and constitute ten credit hours.

### **Research Work**

The student will be expected to work towards their research Thesis in parallel with coursework. At the time of admission, the student will select a Principal Thesis Supervisor.

The University may request for additional documents to better understand and evaluate applicant's eligibility as per the University and regulatory body requirements.

## ADMISSION TEST

The test will be conducted onsite online at university arranged resources.

### All eligible candidates will be required to write the AKU Admission Test.

The Test comprises of three components:

- i. English Language: This tests language competency. It serves as a qualifier. The score for which will be determined by the University and may change each year.
- ii. Quantitative Reasoning: this assesses the applicants Arithmetic, Information Handling (including interpretation of graphs & tables) and Logical Reasoning (including application of algebra/geometry) skills.
- iii. Subject Specific component: this broadly assesses applicants' knowledge for the Nursing stream.

A minimum of 50% passing score is required in Quantitative Reasoning and Subject Specific component separately and a cumulative score of 60% is required to proceed further in the admission process.

A sample test paper for the Test is available on: [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs)

*The University does not provide any special preparation for the Admission Test, nor does it authorise any publication or preparatory classes for this purpose.*

## IDENTIFICATION OF SUPERVISOR AND THE RESEARCH PROJECT

### Selection Process

- i) Applicants will be required to submit a statement of purpose/research intent that is an integral part of the application. Each PhD applicant must identify a potential research project and a PhD supervisor from the **list of research projects** available on the AKU website [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs) depending on their research interests. Prior to submission of PhD application applicants **must** learn about the relevant projects prior to completing their application forms. Each candidate is required to submit a statement of purpose/research intent (500 – 700 words) which describes the reasons for the interest in the project and how the project meets with his/her career objectives. This is an integral part of the application.
- ii) The Admissions Committee shall use the information provided to ascertain the preparedness and interest of the applicant in pursuing doctoral studies. It will review applications and shortlist candidates based on the Admission Test scores, prior research experience, skills of the applicant must align with the scope and objectives of the research project applied for and must choose based on the availability of PhD Supervisors.
- iii) Applicants selected for interviews will be asked to present their proposed PhD research to a panel of assessors who will make a recommendation for admission.
- iv) The Admission Committee must be satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of the primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared them to undertake the doctoral programme. The admissions committee can mandate the students to take specific courses and credit requirements (6-9 credit hours of deficiency

- courses of level 7), prior to the start of the programme.
- v) Admission is finalized after the candidate satisfies all requirements of the Programme including completion of deficiency courses, and payment of fees, full commitment to the programme and feasibility of their proposed PhD study.

## **PROGRAMME TIMELINES**

The PhD in Health Sciences is offered as a full-time degree.

All PhD students must be enrolled continuously until the defense of their thesis, unless approval of temporary withdrawal (leave) has been obtained from the FHS-PhD Committee.

All applications from candidates holding employment need to be supported (in writing) by their Departmental Chair/Head at the time of application. Candidates who are taking long leave to undertake the PhD must provide support letters from their home institutions before their acceptance of the programme is finalized.

## **SCHEDULE OF SEMESTERS**

The programme will have two regular Semesters, each comprising of 17 weeks and an 8-week summer semester.

## **ADMISSION PROCESS SUMMARY**

Candidates are evaluated in stages:

<b>Stage I</b>	Online submission of application. Applications are reviewed and only eligible candidates are invited to write an AKU PhD Admission Test.
<b>Stage II</b>	Candidates will be shortlisted based on the Admission Test as per the shortlisting criteria. Shortlisted candidates will be asked to connect with potential PhD Supervisors and develop a research plan in their chosen area of interest, based on the current availability of PhD projects as per availability. To be shortlisted, candidates must submit all required documents and reference letters.
<b>Stage III</b>	Candidates who successfully match with potential PhD Supervisors will be interviewed and will present their selected research project.
<b>Stage IV</b>	Provisional selection based on an overall assessment of each candidate's dossier which is formally approved by the University's Admission Review Committee upon completion of specific courses and credit requirements (6-9 credit hours of deficiency courses of level 7), prior to the start of the programme).

[WWW.AKU.EDU/ADMISSIONS/DOCUMENTS/ADMISSION-PROCESS-SUMMARY.PDF](http://WWW.AKU.EDU/ADMISSIONS/DOCUMENTS/ADMISSION-PROCESS-SUMMARY.PDF)

## APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

Applications for admission will be accepted between **March 14 – 19, 2026**. Candidates must apply online by logging on to [www.aku.edu/apply-online](http://www.aku.edu/apply-online)

**Applications must be submitted via online process. Applications will only be accepted if a candidate completes the following:**

1. Submit the application form online. (*Candidate will receive a copy of the application form on their registered email as confirmation when the application is submitted successfully*)

*In the application form, please upload the following:*

- i. Upload the application fee on the online form.
  - ii. Upload the CNIC/NICOP both sides as one combined single pdf file or relevant Passport pages (for foreign nationals)
  - iii. Upload the Passport size coloured photograph with a plain white background; taken within the last one week to reflect your current appearance (*see photograph specification section*)
2. As a mandatory requirement:
    - a. Upload attested SSC / O Levels marksheet or equivalent qualification; Equivalence from IBCC, in case of foreign qualification.
    - b. Upload attested HSSC / A levels marksheet or equivalent qualification; Equivalence from IBCC, in case of foreign qualification.
    - c. HEC attested educational documents:
      - Undergraduate Degree & Transcript: Upload both sides of the degree certificate combined as a single pdf file. Upload all sides of the transcripts in sequential order, combined into a single pdf file.
      - Graduate Degree/s and Transcript/s: Upload all sides of the degree certificate combined as a single pdf file. Upload all sides of the transcripts in sequential order, combined into a single pdf file.
      - For unattested documents, upload HEC receipt as evidence.
    - d. 18-years of HEC equivalence, if applying with PostRN BScN degree or foreign degree.
    - e. Curriculum Vitae with list of publications (if any)
    - f. Write “Research Intent” as per the instructions given on page 8.

*Note: The photograph should be in JPEG format with 2 MB size, and all other documents should be in PDF format with 5 MB file each.*

**Application Fee:** - Applying from AKU residential countries\* is Rs. 9000/-  
- Applying from AKU non-residential countries is US \$ 160/-  
- (*See mode of payment section for details*)

**The application fee is non-refundable. Candidates must ensure eligibility before applying.**

*\*Afghanistan, Burundi, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda*

**Incomplete applications or submission of applications after the deadline are not accepted.**

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESEARCH INTENT

Please identify a potential research project of interest to you from the list of available projects on the AKU website [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs). Before the research intent, include the project title and the name of the primary supervisor.

Your statement of intent has a direct impact on the overall strength of your application to study for a research degree. The following advice may help you to improve the quality of your statement of intent. This is an integral part of the application.

- Clearly articulate your current understanding of the field and your ideas for a potential area of research that you would like to study.
- Conduct some initial research about the field or discipline you would like to study.
- Think about the impact you would like to achieve by researching in this area.
- Why do you want to do it? Who might benefit from your work? Why is it important?
- Demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm for the area of research!

Your statement of intent may vary in length and detail, but it is expected to be approximately 500 - 700 words. We will use your statement of intent to assess your broad understanding of your area of research interest.

## REFERENCE LETTERS

Three letters of recommendations /references: Referees should be individuals who are well-acquainted with your previous academic work and professional experience. Two letters of reference must be from individuals who are at **arm's length**\*. Please download reference form from [www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/phd-hs) These letters should be emailed directly by your referee to [postgrad.query@aku.edu](mailto:postgrad.query@aku.edu). The letters need to be from i) an academic referee from an institute where the individual has trained recently, ii) from a referee who is familiar with the work capacity of the candidate. should be current or not more than one-year-old.

### **\*Arm's length:**

- **No direct supervision:** *They haven't been your thesis advisor, supervisor, or mentor.*
- **No collaboration:** *They haven't co-authored papers or worked on joint research projects with you.*
- **No personal ties:** *They aren't family, close friends, or romantic partners.*

## NOTE FOR ALL CANDIDATES

Candidates are requested to ensure they meet application eligibility requirements before applying. These are listed in the programme brochure. Moreover, candidates are responsible to complete the application and other requirements according to the published instructions and time schedule.

Aga Khan University reserves the right to admission; to revoke admission and registration if an application is discovered to be inaccurate or incomplete, or if supporting documents are discovered to be fraudulent. Any candidate who presents a fraudulent document in support of an application for admission may be identified to other universities and colleges.

Candidates may apply for multiple programmes simultaneously. Candidates who are shortlisted for interviews in multiple programmes will be required to provide their order of preference. This information will remain confidential with the Admission Office, and the candidates must attend interviews for all shortlisted programmes. If the candidate is accepted in more than one programme, the preference order provided by the Candidate will be considered by the University, the University reserves the right in its absolute discretion to offer the programme, which it determines to be the most suitable for the Candidate and the decision made by the University will be final.

## ADMIT CARD

The admit card to allow you to write the test will be received by candidates who apply online on their portal and/or through an email.

In cases where the admit card is not received within 24 hours before the date of the test; candidates must email the Admission Office at [postgrad.query@aku.edu](mailto:postgrad.query@aku.edu) for the required information and application details.

If a candidate would like to write the test at a different test centre from the one originally noted in the application form, candidate must inform the admission office via email at least 72 hours before the test so that information can be sent to the Test Centre. Walk in candidates are not encouraged.

*Please Note: The University does not take responsibility to conduct the test for candidates who walk into a Test Centre without information.*

Please note: To be allowed into the Test Centre to write the Test, candidates must bring:

- A hard copy of the admit card issued by AKU AND
- A valid current photo ID card/original CNIC/college ID card/enrolment card for identification And

Without these documents, AKU reserves the right not to allow you to write the Test.

## **SHORT-LISTING AND INTERVIEWS**

Candidates will be shortlisted based on the Admission Test as per the shortlisting criteria as well as suitable matching with potential PhD Supervisors. As there may be a limited number of projects available, selection of candidates will be on a competitive basis, and the Supervisor may select the most qualified applicant as required.

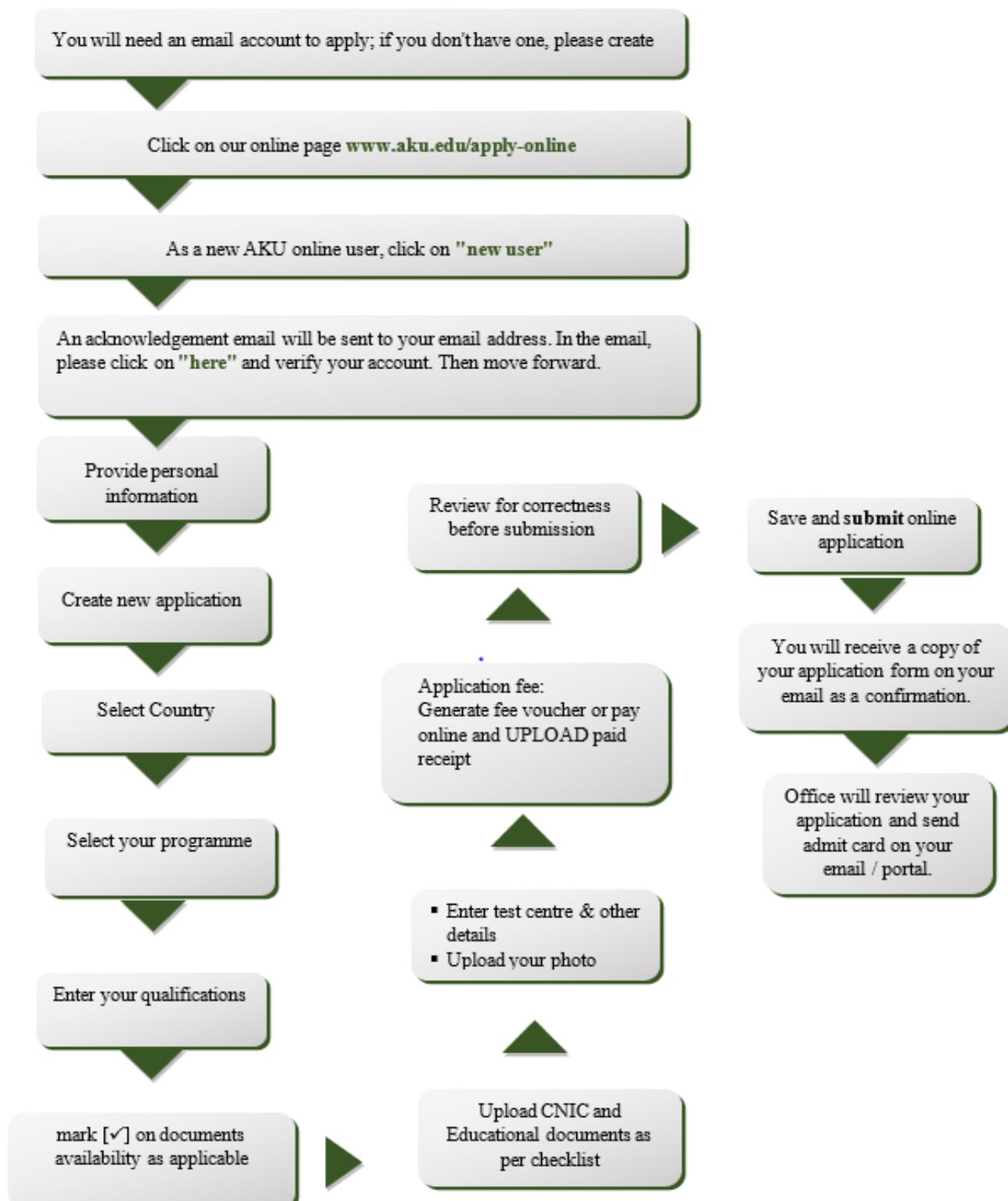
For Nursing candidates please see earlier section.

Interviews will be conducted for those shortlisted candidates whose applications are complete in terms of all the required documents and the reference letters. In addition to presenting the research intent, the purpose of the interview is to assess a variety of attributes, including integrity, motivation and interest in the programme, maturity, social and cultural awareness, knowledge of public health issues in developing nations and evidence of initiative and commitment to the programme.

Interviews are conducted in Karachi. For all candidates who reside outstation, overseas, interviews are conducted over Zoom.

## APPLY ONLINE

Follow the steps below to apply for an academic programme online:



## MODE OF PAYMENT

Candidates may pay the application fee through any of the following modes. *When the fee is paid, please upload the receipt on the online admission portal to complete the application.*

- **FEE VOUCHER (FOR PAKISTANI CURRENCY ONLY)**

Please follow these steps to pay the application fee through voucher:

1. On the application home page, please click on “Application Fee Information”
2. For **payment options**, select “Fee Voucher”
3. Click “Yes” to generate the voucher (*make sure that your pop ups aren’t blocked*)
4. Take the printed voucher to any branch of Habib Bank Ltd (HBL) and pay the fee. (**Please do not transfer online**)
5. Upload the paid voucher by clicking the “Upload Button” on the proof of fee payment section.

- **ONLINE PAYMENT THROUGH DEBIT/CREDIT CARD (PAKISTANI & US\$ CURRENCY)**

Follow these steps to pay application fee online through a debit / credit card:

1. On the application home page, please click on “Application Fee Information”
2. For **payment options**, select “Online Payment” and click yes (*make sure that your pop ups aren’t blocked*)
3. Complete your payment details on online web portal: <https://payonline.aku.edu/>
4. Upload the payment acknowledgement email or screenshot by clicking the “Upload Button” on the proof of fee payment section.

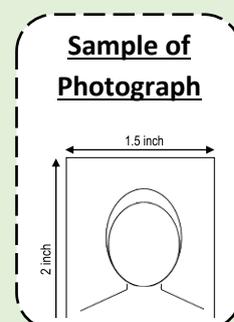
*In case you are unable to receive the payment acknowledgement, please notify the Finance Office by emailing your query along with tracking Id, name, and programme name at [student.finance@aku.edu](mailto:student.finance@aku.edu)*

## PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATION

Your photograph is a vital part of your application. Please follow these instructions carefully.

- Passport size coloured photograph with a plain background; taken within the last 1 week to reflect your current appearance.
- File size and format: 2 MB and JPEG format.
- The photo should show a clear front view, full face of the person.

**If your photograph does not reflect your current appearance, the University will not allow you to write the Admission Test.**



## CURRICULUM VITAE (CV) SPECIFICATION

### Your CV must include the following:

- qualifications with cGPA/grades/percentage and dates of attendance (admission date & completion date)
- other Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses (if any)
- list of publications (if any)
- other additional information to support your application

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Admissions to all the academic programmes at Aga Khan University are based on merit and are needs blind, i.e. without considering the financial background of the student.

AKU charges fees for all of its programmes. For financial information including student's fee-paying status and fee structure, please visit: [www.aku.edu/admissions/fees-and-funding](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/fees-and-funding).

The Aga Khan University will provide full sponsorship based on ACADEMIC MERIT to students admitted to each of the PhD programme streams. This would include tuition fee waiver and a monthly stipend. Tuition waiver consists of full tuition fees in addition to monthly stipend for the four-year period. These can be applied for upon meeting the PhD admission shortlist. *Accommodation costs are not provided as part of tuition support.*

Students who are sponsored or supported by an employer or other Institution will be required to pay the tuition and find monthly stipend support.

All students will be required to pay the other costs of education as provided in the fee schedule.

All students will receive start up research funds for their PhD studies. Details are available with the respective Stream Directors.

## STUDENTS ON SPONSORSHIP FROM EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Students expecting to receive sponsorships or scholarships from external agencies to complete the programme are requested to submit the relevant documents and approval letter from the relevant external agency when accepting the offer of admission.

For more details, please contact Graduate Programme Admission Office, Aga Khan University, Stadium Road, Karachi 74800, Pakistan, Phone: +92-21 3486 5456 / 5173.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Accommodation for outstation students is arranged in the hostels managed by the University. These are shared, non-air-conditioned, furnished accommodation. Hostel space is restricted to students from outside Karachi only.

A fee is charged for all accommodation. For accommodation charges, visit: [www.aku.edu/admissions/fees-and-funding](http://www.aku.edu/admissions/fees-and-funding). Meals may be purchased separately from the University's cafeteria.

All students living in the university hostels are expected to conform to rules and regulations. Residence is conditional upon proper use and care of the property, considerate behaviour and periodic reappraisal of the student's need for such accommodation.

## **CONTESTED DECISIONS**

In all matters pertaining to the selection of students, fees, grants, evaluation of scholastic performance, discipline and student affairs, the decision of the University shall be final. Appeals in matters of student selection will be considered within 15 days of the announcement of the new class only if the appeal cites circumstances suggesting that the University has violated provisions of its Charter or that there has been failure to comply with the admissions procedure as described in this document.

### KEY DATES FOR 2026 - 2027 ADMISSIONS

<b><u>Admission Open</u></b>	<b>March 14 – 19, 2026</b>	
<b>Saturday, March 28</b>	<b><i>AKU Admission Test -Pakistan</i></b>	<b>Test Centres</b>  Karachi, Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral
<b><i>Please note: Timings and address for the venue will be stated on the admit card. In case of a change, candidates will be notified through email.</i></b>		
<b>May/June</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	

## **DISCLAIMER**

This booklet contains information about the programme offered by the Aga Khan University, Pakistan, for the academic year 2026 - 27. The information provided is subject to change over time. Candidates aiming to apply for programmes in any other academic year are requested to get updated information about minimum eligibility requirements, application, and admission process from the University Admission Office.

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