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**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**

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**CONVOCATION AND PARCHMENTS POLICY & PROCEDURES**

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Policy #	: A005	Pages	: 14
Issue #	:	Effective Date	: 25 May, 2026
Revision #	:	Revision Date	: 2025

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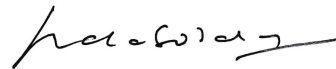
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Convocation is the formal ceremony at which the Aga Khan University (AKU) publicly recognises student achievement and confers degrees, diplomas and other academic awards. It is also the principal occasion on which Honorary Degrees and University Awards, approved by the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor, are presented. Convocation ceremonies are important academic, ceremonial and public events for AKU, its graduands, their families and the wider community.
- 1.2 This consolidated policy brings together and supersedes prior standalone policies on Convocation ceremonies, names on parchments, provisional certificates and the posthumous awarding of degrees and diplomas. It provides a single coherent framework

to govern Convocation, the conferral of qualifications and the production of degree, diploma and certificate parchments across all AKU campuses.

## **2.0 PURPOSE**

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- 2.1.1 Define the principles governing AKU Convocation ceremonies, including the annual calendar and locations;
- 2.1.2 Establish common standards for eligibility to participate in Convocation and for the conferral of degrees, diplomas and certificates, including non-ceremonial award dates;
- 2.1.3 Set out expectations and requirements for the production of degree, diploma and certificate parchments, including the format and use of official names;
- 2.1.4 Regulate the posthumous awarding of degrees and diplomas;
- 2.1.5 Govern the issuance of Provisional Certificates in advance of Convocation, where justified; and
- 2.1.6 Clarify the roles and responsibilities of university offices and academic units in relation to Convocation and the associated awarding of qualifications.

## **3.0 SCOPE AND JURISDICTION**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Convocation ceremonies of the Aga Khan University, regardless of country or campus, and to all AKU-awarded degrees, diplomas and certificates at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all students and graduands, Academic Entities and Programmes, the Office of the Registrar, and any other AKU offices involved in organising Convocation or in preparing and issuing parchments or Provisional Certificates.

## **4.0 PART 1: CONVOCATION**

### **Convocation Ceremonies**

- 4.1 The primary purpose of Convocation is to recognise and celebrate student achievement and to confer degrees, diplomas and other qualifications in a dignified and inclusive manner.
- 4.2 Subject to preserving this primary purpose, Convocation is also an occasion for AKU to project its academic mission and values, engage with alumni, donors and partners, and reinforce its reputation in the wider community.
- 4.3 AKU will normally conduct Convocation ceremonies annually in Karachi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Nairobi and London, but exact dates will vary from year to year.
- 4.4 The annual Convocation calendar for all campuses will be approved by the President, on the recommendation of the University Registrar, and communicated in a timely manner to academic entities and students.

### **Eligibility to Participate**

- 4.5 All students who have successfully completed an approved degree or diploma programme and whose completion has been endorsed by Academic Council are eligible to participate in the appropriate Convocation ceremony.
- 4.6 Students whose programme completion is delayed by more than a semester for academic or administrative reasons will normally be required to wait until the next relevant Convocation ceremony to receive their parchment, unless they qualify for the September 1 non-ceremonial award date as described in Section 5.4 and Annex B.

- 4.7 Students who are delayed by less than 5 months are eligible to receive their parchment at a variable date close to the completion of their studies.
- 4.8 Students with outstanding financial obligations to AKU may be permitted to attend Convocation but will not receive their parchment until all outstanding accounts have been settled, in accordance with the applicable AKU policy.

#### **Presiding Officer**

- 4.9 AKU's Chancellor, or the Chancellor's designated representative, will preside at Convocation.
- 4.10 The order of proceedings, including any processional, national anthems, invocations and official addresses, will be approved by the President and coordinated by the Office of the Registrar.

#### **Multiple Convocation Ceremonies in One Day**

- 4.11 Where circumstances warrant, the President may authorise more than one Convocation ceremony (for example, morning and afternoon ceremonies) on the same day for a given campus.
- 4.12 The principles and detailed guidelines for conducting two Convocation ceremonies in one day are set out in Annex E. These include the timing of ceremonies, allocation of graduands by academic entity, the treatment of official openings and closings of Convocation, and arrangements for invited guests and faculty.

### **5.0 AWARD AND CONFERRAL OF DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES**

#### **Academic Authority**

- 5.1 Degrees, diplomas and certificates are awarded by AKU upon successful completion of an approved programme of study and endorsement of completion by Academic Council.

#### **Convocation as the Primary Conferral Event**

- 5.2 Degrees, diplomas and certificates are normally conferred at Convocation. Parchments are prepared under the authority of the University Registrar and presented at the ceremony to attending graduands (See Annex B).
- 5.3 Graduates who do not attend Convocation may collect their parchments from the Office of the Registrar after the ceremony or request delivery in accordance with procedures issued by the Registrar.

#### **Non-Ceremonial Award Date (September 1)**

- 5.4 Where a student has completed an approved programme of study and Academic Council endorsement has been obtained, but the next Convocation ceremony is more than five months away, the degree or diploma may be formally awarded with the September 1 date following the *Convocation and Parchment Procedures* (Annex B). For added clarity, this provision does not apply to certificates.

### **6.0 NAMES ON DEGREE, DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATE PARCHMENTS**

#### **Official Name of Record**

- 6.1 The Office of the Registrar maintains the official name of record for each student.
- 6.2 The name that appears on a degree, diploma or certificate parchment will normally be identical to the official name recorded by the Office of the Registrar, subject to any formatting required by national regulatory bodies.

### **Permitted and Non-Permitted Elements**

- 6.3 Parchments will normally display first name, middle name(s) and last name (or family name) or other formats as required by national regulations.
- 6.4 Honorifics (for example, Father, Brother, Sister, Doctor, Major, General), nicknames and other titles or designations will not appear on parchments.
- 6.5 Students are responsible for reviewing and, where necessary, updating the spelling and format of their names (including hyphens, spaces, lower/upper case letters and accents) in the Registrar's records within timelines prescribed by the Office of the Registrar.

### **National Regulatory Requirements**

- 6.6 Where national regulatory bodies (for example, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) set specific requirements for the way names are to be displayed on parchments, AKU will comply with such requirements.
- 6.7 Programme-specific or country-specific naming conventions, such as the use of "son/daughter of" notation for single-name students in Pakistan, will be adopted where required by regulation. Examples for Pakistan are provided in Annex E.

### **7.0 REPLACEMENT PARCHMENTS AND NAME CHANGES**

- 7.1 AKU will normally issue only one original parchment per degree, diploma or certificate, unless a replacement is required because the original parchment has been lost, damaged or otherwise qualifies for replacement under the applicable replacement parchment procedure (See Annex C).
- 7.2 Requests for changes to the name appearing on a parchment after its issuance will only be considered in accordance with AKU's Degree, Diploma and Certificate Parchment Replacement Procedures (Annex C) and any applicable regulatory requirements.

### **8.0 PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATES**

- 8.1 Provisional Certificate is an official document issued by AKU to confirm that a student has completed all requirements for a degree or diploma programme and is awaiting formal Conferral of the qualification at Convocation.

#### **Conditions for issuance**

- 8.2 A student, or the head of an academic entity acting on behalf of a student or group of students, may request a Provisional Certificate where official confirmation of programme completion is required in advance of Convocation (for example, for employment, licensure or further study) (See Annex B for procedures)
- 8.3 Provisional Certificates do not replace or duplicate the degree or diploma parchment and are valid only until the qualification is formally conferred at Convocation.

### **9.0 POSTHUMOUS AWARDING OF DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS**

#### **Eligibility**

- 9.1 From time to time, AKU may receive a request for a degree or diploma to be awarded posthumously to a student who passes away before completing all programme requirements, following Procedures in Annex B. For added clarity, this provision does not apply to certificates
- 9.2 For undergraduate programmes, AKU will normally consider a posthumous award where the student has successfully completed at least 75% of the programme's coursework requirements.

- 9.3 For graduate programmes requiring completion of a research project, thesis or dissertation, a posthumous award will only be considered where the project is substantially complete and a draft thesis or dissertation has been submitted.

#### **Treatment at Convocation**

- 9.4 The name of a student receiving a posthumous award will appear in the appropriate Convocation booklet with an indication that the degree or diploma has been awarded posthumously.
- 9.5 The student's name will not normally be read aloud during the Convocation ceremony.
- 9.6 If the family wishes, the parchment for a posthumous award will be presented in a private ceremony, normally held immediately after the Convocation ceremony, with the presentation made by the President and/or Provost and the Dean of the student's Academic Entity.

#### **10.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 10.1 The Academic Council/Senate approves this policy and any substantive amendments.
- 10.2 The Academic Council is responsible for endorsing the successful completion of approved programmes of study.
- 10.3 Upon the recommendation of the Provost, the President approves the awarding of University Awards of distinction.
- 10.4 Upon recommendation of the Provost and the President, the Chancellor approves the awarding of Honorary Degrees.
- 10.5 President and Senior Leadership
- 10.5.1 Approve the annual Convocation calendar and any decisions to hold multiple ceremonies in a single day;
  - 10.5.2 Approve the order of proceedings for Convocation ceremonies; and
  - 10.5.3 Represent the University at Convocation in accordance with assigned roles.
- 10.6 The University Registrar:
- 10.6.1 Oversees the planning and conduct of Convocation ceremonies in collaboration with academic entities and central offices;
  - 10.6.2 Maintains the official register of student names and academic awards;
  - 10.6.3 Ensures the preparation, security and issuance of degree, diploma and certificate parchments and Provisional Certificates;
  - 10.6.4 Maintains and updates detailed administrative procedures and technical specifications associated with this policy.
- 10.7 Deans and Academic Entity heads:
- 10.7.1 Confirm the completion of programme requirements and provide accurate lists of graduands by stipulated deadlines;
  - 10.7.2 Initiate requests for posthumous awards where appropriate;
  - 10.7.3 Support students to comply with timelines and requirements related to Convocation and Provisional Certificates.
- 10.8 Students and graduands:
- 10.8.1 Ensure that personal and name information held by the Office of the Registrar is accurate and up to date;
  - 10.8.2 Comply with published deadlines and procedures related to Convocation, including registration to attend ceremonies; and
  - 10.8.3 Settle any outstanding financial obligations to AKU in accordance with AKU policies.

**11.0 ACADEMIC REGALIA**

11.1 Guidelines for Academic Regalia to be worn at AKU Convocations are in Annex F.

**12.0 POLICY REVIEW**

12.1 This policy and procedures will be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier if required by regulatory changes or institutional priorities.

## ANNEX A – DEFINITIONS

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Academic Entity</b>	Any academic unit, including a faculty, school, college, institute, department or division, authorised by AKU to offer academic programmes.
<b>Convocation</b>	Convocation is the official ceremony of AKU at which: (a) Students who have successfully completed an approved programme of study, and whose completion has been endorsed by Academic Council, are awarded their respective degree or diploma parchments; and (b) University Awards and Honorary Degrees, as approved by relevant authorities, are presented.
<b>Graduand</b>	A student who has successfully completed all requirements of an approved programme of study, whose completion has been endorsed by Academic Council, and who is awaiting conferral of the qualification at Convocation.
<b>Graduate</b>	A person upon whom AKU has conferred a degree, diploma or certificate.
<b>Parchment</b>	The official degree, diploma or certificate document issued by AKU to signify successful completion of an approved programme of study.
<b>Provisional Certificate</b>	An official AKU document confirming that a student has completed all requirements for a qualification and is awaiting formal conferral at Convocation.
<b>Posthumous Award</b>	The awarding of a degree or diploma to a student who has died before completing all requirements, in accordance with approved criteria.
<b>Programme</b>	An approved course of study leading to an AKU credential (e.g., degree, diploma, certificate, residency/fellowship).
<b>Official Name</b>	The student's name as recorded in the Office of the Registrar and used for all formal University records and parchments.
<b>Non-ceremonial Award Date</b>	The date (September 1) on which AKU may formally award a degree or diploma outside of a Convocation ceremony where Convocation is more than five months away.

## **ANNEX B – CONVOCATION AND PARCHMENTS PROCEDURES**

### **PART 1. CONVOCATION PLANNING AND CALENDAR**

- 1.1 By an agreed annual deadline, the Office of the Registrar prepares a proposed Convocation calendar for all campuses, including dates, locations and times.
- 1.2 The Registrar reviews the proposed calendar with the President and other relevant senior leaders for approval.
- 1.3 Once approved, the Office of the Registrar communicates the calendar to Academic Entities and key administrative units and publishes it on official AKU platforms.
- 1.4 Academic Entities develop local plans for adjacent celebrations and timelines consistent with the approved calendar and AKU-wide Convocation procedures.

### **PART 2. PREPARATION OF GRADUAND LISTS AND PARCHMENTS**

- 2.1 Academic entities verify that students have met all programme requirements and submit approved lists of graduands to the Office of the Registrar by the established deadlines.
- 2.2 The parchments are prepared 'in advance and sent for the Chancellor's signature.
- 2.3 Upon programme completion, the Office of the Registrar validates graduand data, including official names and qualifications, and prepares lists for Academic Council endorsement.
- 2.4 Upon Academic Council endorsement, the Office of the Registrar reconciles prepared parchments with these endorsements. -
- 2.5 Parchments are securely stored and transported to Convocation venues using protocols approved by the Registrar.

### **PART 3. NON-CEREMONIAL AWARDS (September 1)**

- 3.1 Academic Entities identify students who qualify for a non-ceremonial award and submit their details to the Office of the Registrar by the same deadline used for Convocation graduands.
- 3.2 The Office of the Registrar arranges academic review and Academic Council endorsement of non-ceremonial awards.
- 3.3 The Office of the Registrar prepares parchments for non-ceremonial awards and issues them on September 1 following Academic Council endorsement.
- 3.4 Recipients are invited to attend the next available Convocation ceremony to be formally recognised as graduates.

### **PART 4. POSTHUMOUS AWARDS**

- 4.1 The Dean of the relevant Academic Entity initiates a written request to the Registrar for a posthumous award, providing details of the student's academic progress.
- 4.2 The Registrar coordinates a review of the student's record against the eligibility criteria in Section 9.0 of the *Convocation and Parchments Policy*.
- 4.3 If the criteria are met, the Registrar submits the case for Academic Council endorsement.
- 4.4 Following endorsement, the student's name is added to the list of graduands and to the Convocation booklet with an indication that the award is posthumous.
- 4.5 Arrangements for any private presentation of the parchment to the family are coordinated by the Office of the Registrar and the relevant Dean.

## **PART 5. PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATES**

- 5.1 Requests for Provisional Certificates are submitted in writing (letter or email) to the Registrar by the student or by the head of the Academic Entity.
- 5.2 Requests must include:
  - 5.2.1 the student's name, programme and expected qualification;
  - 5.2.2 the reason for the request;
  - 5.2.3 the date by which the document is required; and
  - 5.2.4 supporting documentation demonstrating the requirement.
- 5.3 The Registrar verifies programme completion with the relevant academic entity and reviews the supporting evidence.
- 5.4 If approved, the Registrar issues the Provisional Certificate using the standard wording and format and records its issuance in the student's record.
- 5.5 Where a request is not approved, the Registrar communicates the reasons in writing to the requester.
- 5.6 The decision of the Registrar is final and binding.

## **PART 6. NAMES ON PARCHMENTS**

- 6.1 Prior to each Convocation, the Office of the Registrar invites students to confirm the spelling and format of their official names by a specified deadline.
- 6.2 Requests for changes must be supported by appropriate legal or official documentation, in accordance with national regulations.
- 6.3 The Office of the Registrar updates official records where documentation is satisfactory and within the published timelines.
- 6.4 After the deadline, only corrections of demonstrable University errors will normally be made for that Convocation cycle.

## **ANNEX C – DEGREE, DIPLOMA, AND CERTIFICATE PARCHMENT REPLACEMENT PROCEDURES**

This Procedure addresses how to replace a parchment if it has been damaged, lost, stolen, or destroyed. Refer queries to the Registrar if replacement is required for another reason.

### **PART 1. DAMAGED PARCHMENTS**

- 1.1 The requester must first return the damaged parchment to the Office of the Registrar at any AKU campus.
- 1.2 The Office of the Registrar at any campus will determine whether a replacement is warranted, and if so, the request will be made to the University Registrar for approval.
- 1.3 A fee for replacement parchment applies and the student must provide the prescribed form: Parchment Replacement Form for details
- 1.4 Replacement degree parchments will only be delivered once per year at the time of Convocation due to the signature of the Chancellor.
- 1.5 Replacement of damaged diploma and certificate parchments will normally be delivered approximately 45 days following the approval of the request for a replacement parchment.
- 1.6 Replacement parchments are not distributed at Convocation but delivered separately to the requestor.
- 1.7 A replacement parchment will have the word “Replacement” on the parchment.
- 1.8 The fee for the replacement parchment may be changed without notice.
- 1.9 While an application for a replacement parchment may be submitted by an individual other than the degree, diploma or certificate recipient, the replacement parchment will only be presented to the graduate unless the graduate has officially authorised someone else on the Student Information Release Form to collect the parchment:  
<https://www.aku.edu/admissions/Documents/information-release-form.pdf>

### **PART 2. LOST, STOLEN OR DESTROYED PARCHMENTS**

- 2.1 The graduate must make an application to replace the lost / stolen / destroyed parchment on the prescribed form:  
<https://www.aku.edu/admissions/Documents/Replacement%20Parchment%20Form.pdf>
- 2.2 The graduate must make a police report stating that the parchment has been lost / stolen / destroyed. An original copy of the police report must accompany the application for replacement of the lost / stolen / destroyed parchment.
- 2.3 In accordance with local legal requirements, the application to replace the lost / stolen / destroyed parchment must be accompanied by a notarized / court affidavit attesting to the parchment being lost. (For example, in Pakistan, an affidavit on judicial paper worth Rs 200/= giving the reasons for the issuance of a replacement parchment will be endorsed by a First-Class Magistrate with his signature and the seal of the court.)
- 2.4 A copy of the graduate’s national identity card or passport must accompany the application.
- 2.5 In addition, as part of the application for the replacement of a lost / stolen / destroyed parchment, the graduate must include a statement that obligates them to return the replacement parchment if the original parchment is found.
- 2.6 A fee for replacement parchment applies and the student must provide the prescribed form: [Parchment Replacement Form for details](#)
- 2.7 Replacement degree parchments will only be delivered once per year at the time of Convocation due to the signature of the Chancellor.

- 2.8 Replacement of damaged diploma and certificate parchments will normally be delivered approximately 45 days following the approval of the request for a replacement parchment.
- 2.9 Replacement parchments are not distributed at Convocation but delivered separately to the requestor.
- 2.10 A replacement parchment will have the word “Replacement” on the parchment.
- 2.11 The fee for the replacement parchment may be changed without notice.
- 2.12 While an application for a replacement parchment may be submitted by an individual other than the degree, diploma or certificate recipient, the replacement parchment will only be presented to the graduate unless the graduate has officially authorised someone else on the Student Information Release Form to collect the parchment:  
<https://www.aku.edu/admissions/Documents/information-release-form.pdf>

## **ANNEX D – GUIDELINES FOR PARCHMENTS**

### **PART 1. GENERAL**

- 1.1 Degree, diploma and certificate parchments are official AKU documents and must be consistent in design, appearance and layout, subject to national regulatory requirements.
- 1.2 Parchments will normally:
  - 1.2.1 Include AKU Ayat logo in the approved AKU green colour and size;
  - 1.2.2 Display the full name of AKU (“The Aga Khan University”);
  - 1.2.3 Contain a statement conferring or awarding the qualification;
  - 1.2.4 State the name of the graduate and the full name of the degree, diploma or certificate (normally without abbreviations);
  - 1.2.5 Include the date on which the qualification is awarded, expressed as day, month and year;
  - 1.2.6 Bear the signatures of designated University officers (for example, Chancellor, President and University Registrar for degrees; Dean and Registrar for diplomas), as determined by AKU practice; and
  - 1.2.7 Incorporate appropriate security features to deter forgery.
- 1.3 The Office of the Registrar maintains detailed layout templates and security specifications for all parchments.

### **PART 2. PAKISTAN – HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (HEC) REQUIREMENTS**

- 2.1 For programmes offered by Pakistan-based academic entities, the format of parchments and the presentation of student names must meet the requirements of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC).
- 2.2 In particular:
  - 2.2.1 Parchments must comply with HEC criteria for attestation of academic degrees, including any specified wording and layout requirements;
  - 2.2.2 For students with a single name, the parchment will include the student’s name together with the appropriate notation such as “s/o” (son of) or “d/o” (daughter of) and the father’s name, in accordance with HEC practice.
- 2.3 The Office of the Registrar will monitor and implement current HEC and other national regulatory requirements and update parchment templates and associated procedures as needed.

## **ANNEX E – GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING TWO CONVOCATION CEREMONIES IN ONE DAY**

### **PART 1. CONVOCATION PLANNING AND CALENDAR**

- 1.5 Where the President approves two Convocation ceremonies in a single day (for example, morning and afternoon ceremonies at the same venue), the following principles apply:
- 1.5.1 There will be a morning ceremony (normally beginning at approximately 09:30) and an afternoon ceremony (normally beginning at approximately 14:00), taking into account local context and prayer timings.
  - 1.5.2 There will be one Convocation booklet listing all graduands and award recipients for that campus.
  - 1.5.3 Graduands will be allocated to the morning or afternoon ceremonies by academic entity, in consultation with Deans, to maintain cohort integrity.
  - 1.5.4 A single academic entity will not normally be split across morning and afternoon ceremonies.
  - 1.5.5 There may be one or two Chief Guests, as determined by the President. Where there is a single Chief Guest, the same address may be delivered at both ceremonies.
  - 1.5.6 Convocation will be formally opened at the start of the morning ceremony and adjourned and reconvened, as appropriate, between the morning and afternoon ceremonies. It will be formally closed at the end of the final ceremony of the day.
  - 1.5.7 Separate invitations will indicate the specific ceremony (morning or afternoon) at which each group of graduands will be recognised.
  - 1.5.8 Members of the Board of Trustees and faculty may be invited to attend one or both ceremonies, as appropriate.

## **ANNEX F – ACADEMIC REGALIA GUIDELINES**

- 1.1 Academic regalia are worn at Convocation and on other formal AKU ceremonial occasions.
- 1.2 All on-stage participants at Convocation are required to wear the appropriate AKU academic regalia, known collectively as the Jamiapoash.
- 1.3 The Jamiapoash comprises a robe (Khila’at) and headwear (Sirpoash), reflecting the shared identity of the AKU community. While the basic robe is common to all members of AKU, design features (for example, colour, embroidery and braid) distinguish different roles and academic levels (such as Chancellor, Chief Guest, Trustees, faculty, doctoral, master’s, bachelor’s and diploma recipients).
- 1.4 The Office of the Registrar is responsible for maintaining detailed specifications for academic regalia, including colour standards, embroidery patterns and distinctions between ranks and qualifications, and for ensuring their consistent use across all campuses.
- 1.5 Academic Entities must ensure that all graduands and faculty participating in Convocation are provided with the appropriate regalia in accordance with these specifications.