



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



December 2023 | Issue: 8 | 10th Anniversary Special Edition!

10 Years, 10,000 Participants!

End of The Year Message from Professor Tashmin Khamis, Vice Provost (Quality, Teaching and Learning)



This year marks the tenth anniversary of the university-wide Network of Quality, Teaching & Learning (QTL_net) established in 2013, whose function is to support academic entities and faculty to promote a high-quality learning experience for its students through excellence in academic programmes and teaching that is learning-centred and research-led. In the past decade QTL_net has engaged over 10,000 participants through 150 different teaching and blended learning activities. This has been made possible with the support from the leadership and Deans, enabling buy-in from the Academy.

However, beyond these impressive numbers QTL_net sought to measure its impact using a well-established educational change framework (Guskey, 2000, AUCE, 2018). Our thanks to the many faculty, students and teaching champions who took part in the engagement surveys and IDAR for their support with analysis.

Impact on teaching, learning and an institutional teaching culture.

Results indicate that those who have taken QTL_net courses are more likely to plan lessons, have learning outcome-driven constructive alignment in their courses, use digital tools to engage learners, and use active learning approaches in their teaching (fig 1). New faculty who complete the online faculty orientation to teaching and learning programme report being more prepared for their role as faculty and more aware of support services available to them to play these roles

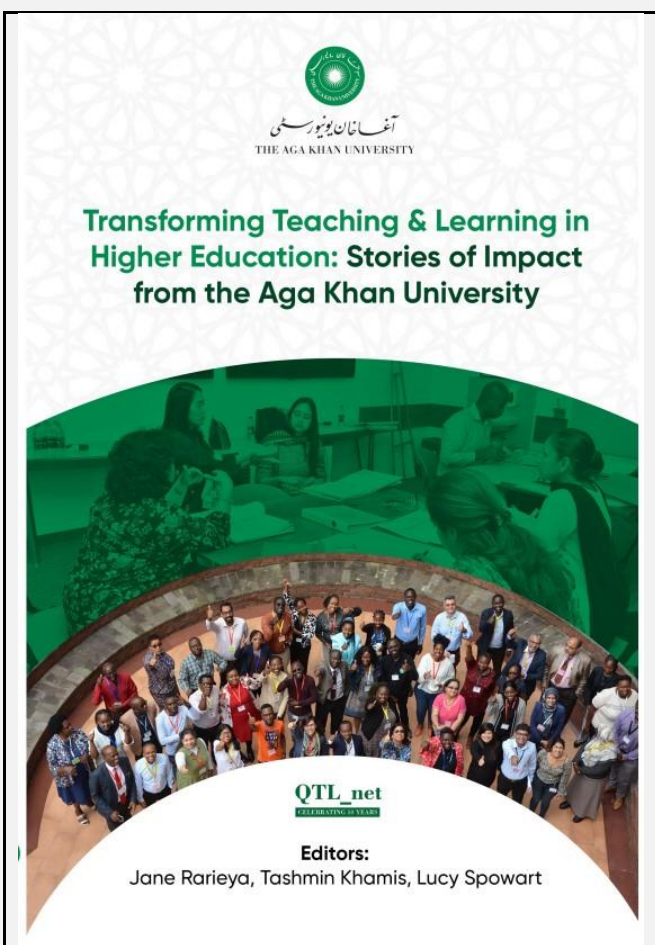
(70% vs 6%). There also appears to be a dose-response. The more workshops participants have attended the greater the change in teaching practice. This aligns with literature on educational development that shows that one-off sessions on teaching development leads to less change than a series of sustained engagement in professional development around teaching.

Students also report enhanced learning experiences with course evaluations improving steadily over the last 5 years, with post covid data better than pre covid data, showing that blended learning approaches work. There has also been an impact on the institutional culture with more research-led teaching, an exponential growth in citations from AKU faculty on SOTL by AKU faculty. The profile of teaching has been enhanced with teaching portfolios as a part of academic promotion; more faculty having a HE teaching qualification through HEA fellowships as AKU remains the only accredited institution in Pakistan and East Africa; and the prestigious Haile T Debas Teachers Academy memberships. These successes has led to QTL_net supporting capacity development of AKDN partners (UCA, IIS) as well a national partners (KIU and University of Chitral) through the University Improvement Programme.

A recent report by Civitas Learning (2023) clearly shows that faculty development on teaching had the greatest positive impact on student success. Investing in educational development of faculty had the most significant gains for student success.

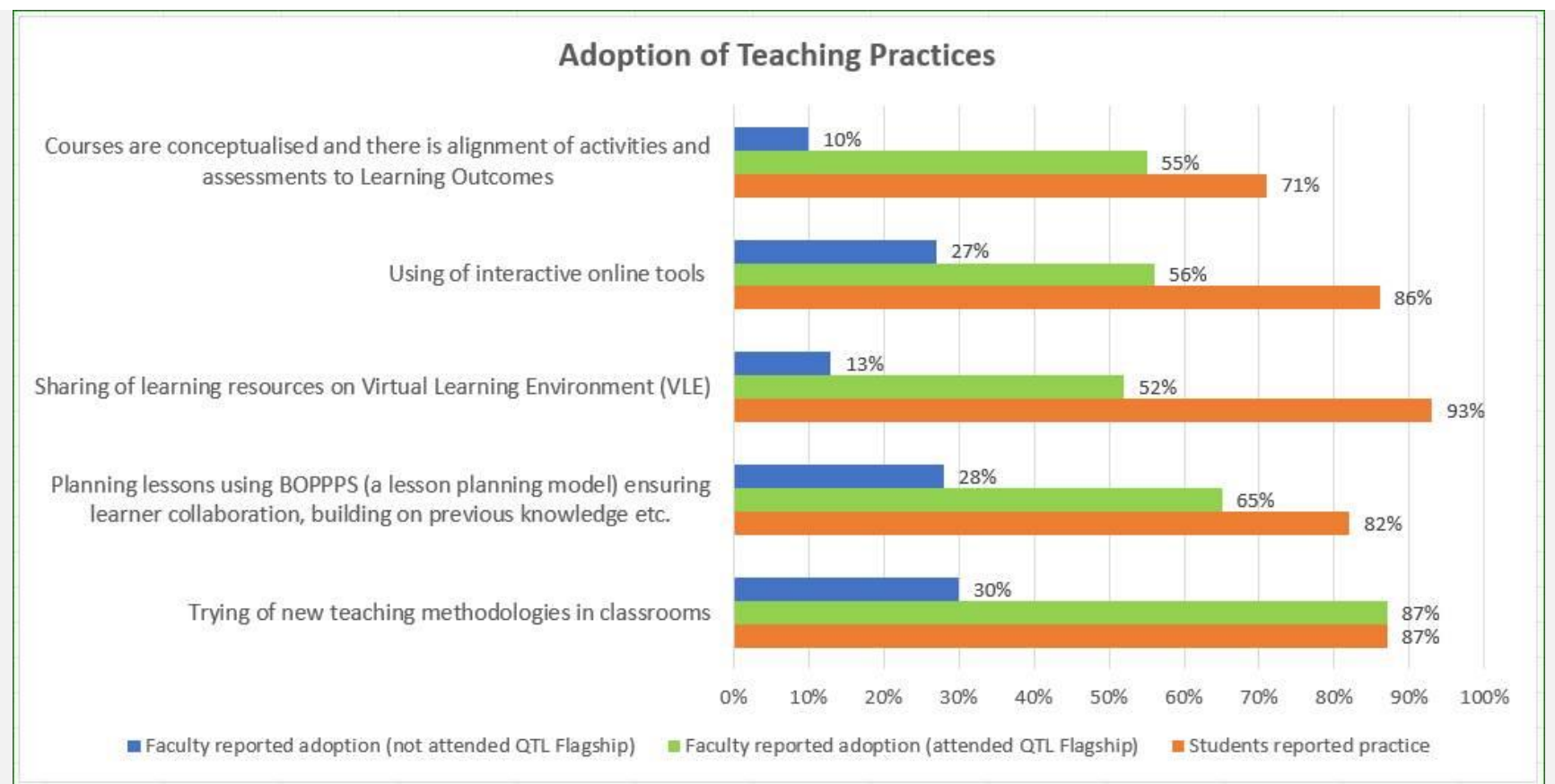
My thanks to the QTL_net team, the deans and academic staff who have engaged with us and our many teaching champions. Read their impact stories in the publication: Transforming teaching and learning in Higher Education (Editors, Rarieya, Khamis, Spowart, 2023) at <https://ecommons.aku.edu/books/120/>

Thank you for your commitment to teaching and the learner experience. I wish you all a restful and peaceful holiday with your loved ones.



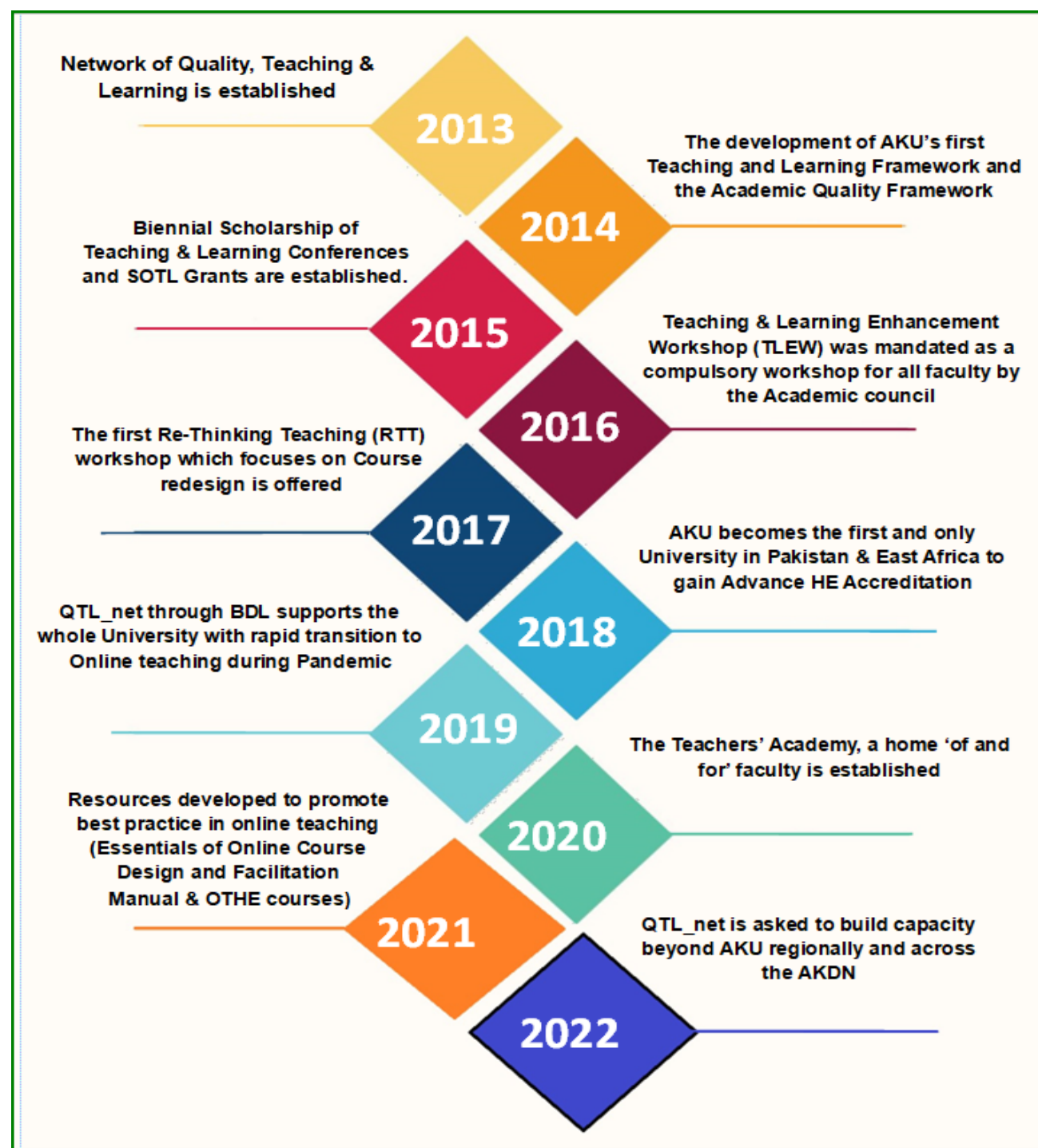
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- [Advance HE](#)
- [University World News](#)



Milestones and Achievements in a Decade

10 Years, 10 Milestones



Love Letter Post Cards by Faculty Members Across AKU

Dear BDL,
 With great pleasure, I wish to convey our heartfelt gratitude for planning, organizing and implementing the different types of trainings/workshops (courses like effective use of VLE, Digital bootcamps, EdTech lounge sessions and OTHE- reconceptualizing online teaching) for me and our faculty both full time and part time (FTF and PTF). All these trainings have helped me and the faculty team to become more effective in online teaching, thus making online and remote teaching interactive, enjoyable acceptable and enhancing students learning experiences.
 You surely have been a treasure to me and the entire SONAM-Ug team. I never had any challenges during the COVID 19 lockdown because I had gathered enough online skills to help me survive through the pandemic. No faculty was left behind because they too had some skills to start immediately. Thank you for always being there for me and responding to our urgent refresher trainings.



To: Blended and Digital Learning Team (BDL)

From: Carolayne Namukwya



Dear BDL,
 I am thrilled to share the impact Blended and Digital Learning has had on me as a faculty member and individual! The experiences I gained through blended learning training, online teaching in higher education and participating in developing online teaching policy have been nothing short of transformative. Embracing online teaching has enriched my pedagogy, allowed me to confidently facilitate development of blended learning programmes and create efficient quality assurance mechanisms for online learning. I am confident that this exposure has made me a valuable faculty member and empowered me to contribute even more to our institution's success. Asante!



To: Blended and Digital Learning Team (BDL)

From: Dr Nicholas Wachira



Thank you QTL Team

WRITTEN & COMPOSED BY:
**DR. NAHIDA WALLI,
 MD, MMED, FHEA,
 PROGRAM DIRECTOR, PAEDIATRICS**

Dear QTL_net,
 I am writing to express my deep gratitude for the invaluable support and opportunities you have provided for my professional journey. I needed more formal training in teaching when I started as a faculty member and had to attend various education-related workshops and courses for my professional development. However, exponential growth in my potential as an educator, teacher, and mentor happened due to QTL_net. The insights gained through QTL_net revolutionized my teaching methods, infusing creativity and effectiveness into my teaching and learning strategies.
 The valuable insights I gained initially led me to secure a fellowship in FHEA, and subsequently, they played a significant role in my selection as one of the founding members of AKU Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy. These experiences enhanced my teaching practices and enabled me to affect the learning journeys of my peers I mentored. Finally, I again extend my most profound appreciation to you and your remarkable community. Your unwavering support has empowered me to be a better educator.



To: Teaching & Learning (TL)

From: Muhammad Irfan

The saber tooth cat...
 I have an immense fascination with history and evolution. A story is told of a species known as the saber tooth cat that walked the earth centuries ago. The cat's characteristic appearance was two long fang like teeth hanging from the top jaw. The saber-shaped canine teeth which protruded from the mouth when closed alongside wide and bulky forearms, were well adopted to hunt and kill very large prey that was in existence at the time. With evolution, there was a decline in the prey population which led to the death and subsequent extinction of this cat. I equate this story to my practice of teaching and learning. Curricula and teaching strategies need to evolve continuously so that the graduates who go through our the various programs of study are well adopted to current and future needs of the society. Further, curricula also need to adopt to the diverse pool of learners in the learning space and respond to emerging issues and changes in the environment. This evolution cannot happen without a robust assessment process that involves student assessment of teaching (SET), self-assessment review (SAR), peer assessment review (PAR) and incorporation of current evidence in what we do. Looking back, I appreciate the role that SET, SAR and PAR have played in revolutionizing how we teach at SONAM EA and contributed to the deliberate constant evolution in the design and approach to teaching and learning. What can I say, indeed a saber tooth curriculum has no place in what we do as a school and what I do as an individual. I marvel at the transformation from a white board and felt pen to AI and other digital technologies with ease and finesse in my years as a teacher. We must evolve or we will perish!



To: Quality Assurance & Improvement (QAI)

From: Eunice Ndirangu Mugo

Celebration & Recognitions

The Grand Opening of Teaching and Learning Commons (TLC) at AKU Karachi

In March 2023, AKU introduced the Teaching and Learning Commons (TLC) in the redesigned Audio-Visual Space, now known as the Digital Scholarship Centre (DSC). A joint effort between QTL_net and the library, the TLC is accessible to AKU faculty and students. Additionally, it serves as the office space for the QTL_net and DSC teams. Since its launch, it has entertained over 1000 faculty and 600 students engaging in workshops, group study, meetings, and individual reflection and writing. The TLC serves as a dynamic hub promoting collaborative learning and supporting academic initiatives.



Hosting the fifth Biennial Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference (SoTL)

The Network's fifth International SOTL Conference in November 2023, was a fully hybrid event which drew over 300 participants from across the world, including participants from AKU, AKDN, and higher education institutions in Pakistan and Kenya. Keynote speakers from Advance HE (UK), CUE (Kenya) and Harvard University focused on Teaching and Learning in the era of AI and Outcome and Competency Based Curriculum (OBE/CBC).

- To enjoy the highlights of the conference, [click here](#).

- To access abstracts and other details on the conference, [click here](#).

Congratulations to the Fourth Batch of The Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy

We welcome eight new members to the Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy, joining 26 existing members. The [Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy](#), 'of and for faculty', is the first interdisciplinary academy, established in September 2020, which consists of a prestigious group of outstanding teachers at the University. Dr. Khairulnissa Ajani, Director of Teaching and Learning, will serve as the acting Director. Dr. Jane Rarieya, the founding director, stepped down but received an honorary membership during the SoTL Conference Award Ceremony. In 2023, all 35 fellows received a newly designed lapel pin featuring the Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy name.



Dean Jane Rarieya (honorary member)



From Left to Right: Dr. Yasmeen Parpio, Dr. Dorothy Kamaya, Dr. Rashna H. Sukhia, Dr. Amna Subhan, Dr. Tashfeen Ahmad, Dr. Ayesha Habib, Dr. Iffat Khannum, Dr. Shahan Waheed

TEACH CPD Scheme: Celebrating 100 Fellows.

In December, we celebrated a milestone with the 100th fellow recorded in our TEACH data. This fellow from the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) is the first to achieve Fellowship (FHEA) through [AKU's TEACH CPD Scheme](#). The IIS became a special collaborative partner in May 2022 post-reaccreditation. In 2023, we granted 24 fellowships (Associate Fellow=5; Fellow=19), bringing our total fellows to 126, inclusive of both AKU and IIS members.

Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA): Augustine Gitonga (Library), Sarmad Soomar (SONAM, PK), Asra Khan (Medical College MC, PK), Abeer Hammadi (QTL_net), Aly Jafferani (QTL_net)

Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA): Kiran Qasim Ali (QTL_net & IED, PK), Nimira Asif (SONAM, PK), Najam Abbas (IIS, UK), Maria Bulimba (MC, EA), Ali Akbar Zehri (MC, EA), Syed Murtaza Kazimi (MC, PK), Amber Sultan (MC, PK), Fahad Umer (MC, PK), Ali Sadiq (MC, PK), Muhammad Zuhair Yusuf (MC,PK), Najeeha Iqbal (MC, PK), Tabassum Zehra (MC, PK), Javeria Rehman (MC,PK), Shahan Waheed (MC,PK), Taimur Khalid (MC,PK), Maureen Akolo (SONAM EA), Abednego Alibiri Ongeso (SONAM EA), Wesley Too (SONAM EA), Dinah Kassaman (SONAM EA)

'My special thanks go to the unwavering and persistent support from the TEACH team at the AKU (QTL_net), which proved very reassuring and timely. At all the stages of orientation, familiarization, training, and feedback, the team delivered far above expectations with their patience, accommodating approach, ever-cooperative attitude, and non-tiring help. All these lifted the spirits and helped applicants push the process forward. I am fortunate and grateful to have found such a supportive set of mentors and facilitators.' - Dr Najam Abbas (First FHEA from the IIS-UK through TEACH Scheme)

New Appointments



Dr. Khairunissa Ajani
Director, Teaching and Learning & Associate Professor,
SONAM, Pakistan



Dr. Winfred Kithinji
Assistant Director, Teaching and Learning



Ms. Afshan Ahmed
Senior Coordinator,
University Improvement Program

Outreach Work

The year 2023 has marked a period of significant expansion for QTL as it broadens its educational outreach to the University of Central Asia (UCA), Karakoram International University (KIU), and the University of Chitral (UofC). In February, QTL conducted a transformative Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW), training seven faculty members from KIU and one from UCA. These newly equipped facilitators, in collaboration with AKU facilitators, subsequently orchestrated the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) in KIU, Gilgit, and UCA, Kyrgyzstan in March 2023. To catch a glimpse of this impactful initiative, check out our coverage on social media [here](#).

These facilitators, joined by AKU counterparts, shared their expertise with the remote mountainous community of Chitral. In November 2023, they conducted the ISW for the University of Chitral. Reflecting on the experience, Kausar Hussain, a participant from the Department of Education at UOC, expressed, "Despite being aware of these concepts in the education department, we weren't practicing them in classes at the level we learned in this workshop. In the future, we plan to apply these techniques in our classes, improving the teaching-learning process and creating a more conducive learning environment. We request more workshops on teaching and learning aspects and pedagogy to further enhance our instructional skills."



QTL_net in 2024 | Have you Booked Your Slot?

Please write to us at qtlnet@aku.edu

- RTT (Karachi): 18th Jan to 23rd Jan [Click here for registration](#)
- TLEW (Karachi): 26th Feb to 28th Feb
- TLEW (UK): 25th Mar to 27th March
- TLEW (East Africa): 12th Jun to 14th June
- TEACH Introductory Webinar (Cycle 12): 4th April
- TEACH Writing Workshop (Cycle 12): 16th and 23rd May
- Call for SoTL Grants
- OTHE| Rethinking Online T&L : 26th Feb to 22nd Mar
- OTHE| Facilitating Online Courses: 29th Apr to 24th May
- OTHE| Assessment in Online Courses: 8th July to 2nd Aug
- OTHE| Inclusive Online Teaching: 2nd Sept to 27th Sept
- AI in Education Playground: Once every month
- Digital Bootcamps: Once every quarter
- EdTech Lounge: Once every quarter

[Click to view our Teaching & Learning Calendar](#)

[Click to View our Blended & Digital Learning Calendar](#)

