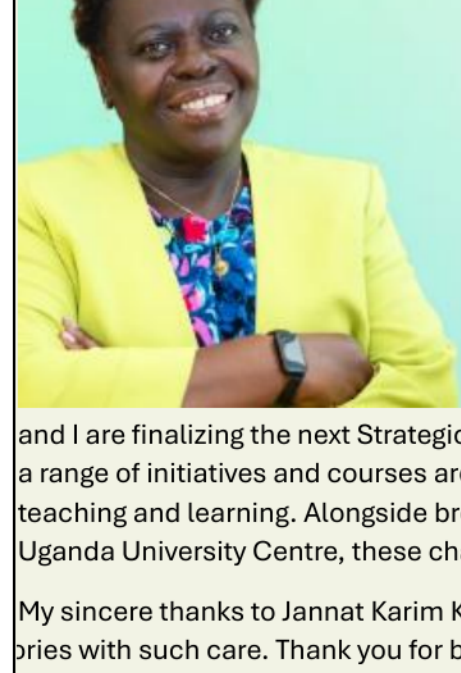


Opening Note from Prof. Jane Rarieya, Vice Provost Quality, Teaching & Learning (QTL)



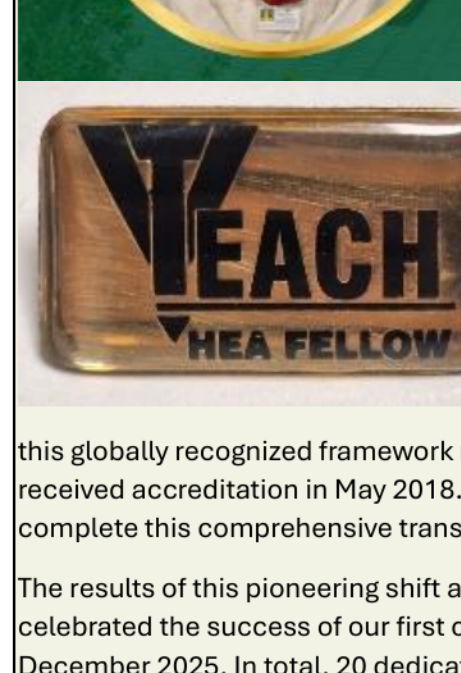
Welcome to a special edition of QTL Buzz. While it arrives a little later than our usual December release, the pause was intentional. The closing months of 2025 were a full and demanding time across the Network, and we wanted this issue to be shaped with care rather than haste.

This past year has been a personally meaningful one for me, as I have had the opportunity to serve QTL_net once again in an interim Vice Provost capacity through a period of transition. The year also coincided with the closing of QTL_net's first Strategic Plan 2020-2025, a chapter shaped by thoughtful work, strong collaboration, and many achievements. As we look back on the year 2025 through the stories ahead, we will see a strong foundation which I am grateful for.

Looking forward, there is a quiet sense of momentum building. The team and I are finalizing the next Strategic Plan 2026-2030. We also have a lot of new colleagues joining our teams, and a range of initiatives and courses are being developed to elevate what we do best: which is, support excellence in teaching and learning. Alongside broader developments across the university, including the inauguration of the Uganda University Centre, these changes signal an exciting next phase for our work.

My sincere thanks to Jannat Karim Khan, our Executive Officer for bringing this edition together and for stewarding priorities with such care. Thank you for being part of this community. I hope you enjoy this issue of QTL Buzz.

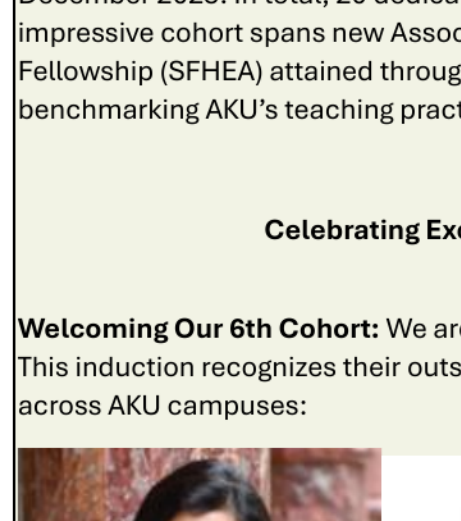
QTL_net in Action – Rewinding 2025!



Director Blended & Digital Learning, QTL_net Ms. Azra Naseem presented with the Institute for Educational Development (IED), Pakistan Dean's Award

We are so pleased to celebrate with our very own Ms. Azra Naseem who was awarded the IED Dean's Awards for Excellence in Educational Technology. She was selected for this honor for her innovative and impactful use of technology to enhance her teaching, learning, and educational practice.

Congratulations Azra! We are proud of you!



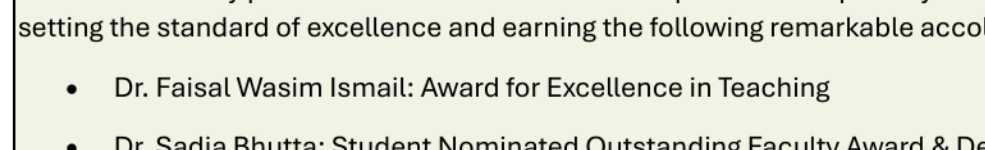
Leading the Global Curve: Transitioning to the New Professional Standards Framework (PSF 2023)

In a major milestone for academic excellence, the Teaching and Learning (TL) unit has successfully transitioned AKU's Teaching Enhancement Accredited Certification of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) also known as the TEACH scheme to the updated Professional Standards Framework (PSF 2023). Developed by Advance Higher Education (UK), this globally recognized framework replaces the previous PSF 2011, which had guided our practice since AKU first received accreditation in May 2018. Notably, AKU stands among the very first accredited institutions worldwide to complete this comprehensive transition process.

The results of this pioneering shift are already speaking for themselves. Following rigorous review cycles, we celebrated the success of our first cohort under the new framework, with results officially announced in July and December 2025. In total, 20 dedicated educators achieved fellowship status under the PSF 2023 standards. This impressive cohort spans new Associate Fellows (AFHEA) and Fellows (FHEA) and notably includes one Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) attained through a direct route. This achievement underscores our ongoing commitment to benchmarking AKU's teaching practices against the very highest international standards.

Celebrating Excellence: The Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy (HTDTA)

Welcoming Our 6th Cohort: We are thrilled to welcome the newest faculty members to the distinguished HTDTA. This induction recognizes their outstanding commitment to teaching excellence and educational leadership across AKU campuses:

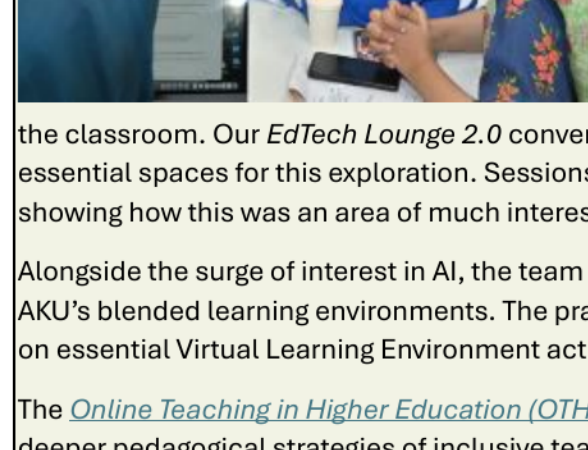


- Dr. Amber Shamim Sultan, Departments of Educational Development & Surgery, Medical College, Pakistan
- Dr Samar Zaki, Department of Family Medicine, Medical College, Pakistan
- Dr Athar Ali, Department of Surgery, Medical College, Tanzania

Honoring Remarkable Achievements: The HTD Teachers' Academy is a community of exceptional educators who continuously push the boundaries of academic practice. We proudly celebrate our existing members for setting the standard of excellence and earning the following remarkable accolades:

- Dr. Faisal Wasim Ismail: Award for Excellence in Teaching
- Dr. Sadia Bhutta: Student Nominated Outstanding Faculty Award & Dean's Award for Research Mentorship
- Dr. Tasneem Anwar: Faculty Merit Award for Scholarship of Teaching
- Dr. Syeda Sadia Fatima: Individual Award for Innovation in Education & Named Among the World's Top 2% Scientists
- Dr. Kausar Jabeen (Lead): Collaborative Award for Teaching
- Dr. Kausar Masood (Lead): Collaborative Award for Teaching
- Dr. Samar Zaki: Student Nominated Outstanding Teachers Award
- Dr. Dorothy Kanya: Collaborative Award for Teaching

Congratulations to all our esteemed members! Read more about the latest updates at HTDTA here and in the attached poster.



Powering Teaching with Technology

In 2025, the Blended and Digital Learning (BDL) team continued its ongoing work to support faculty in teaching effectively with technology. Over the course of the year, they garnered over 1000 repeated participations from AKU faculty and staff across a wide variety of workshops and interactive sessions. Whether helping instructors enhance traditional face-to-face classes or design fully blended courses, the focus remained on equipping educators with the right tools for their specific pedagogical needs.

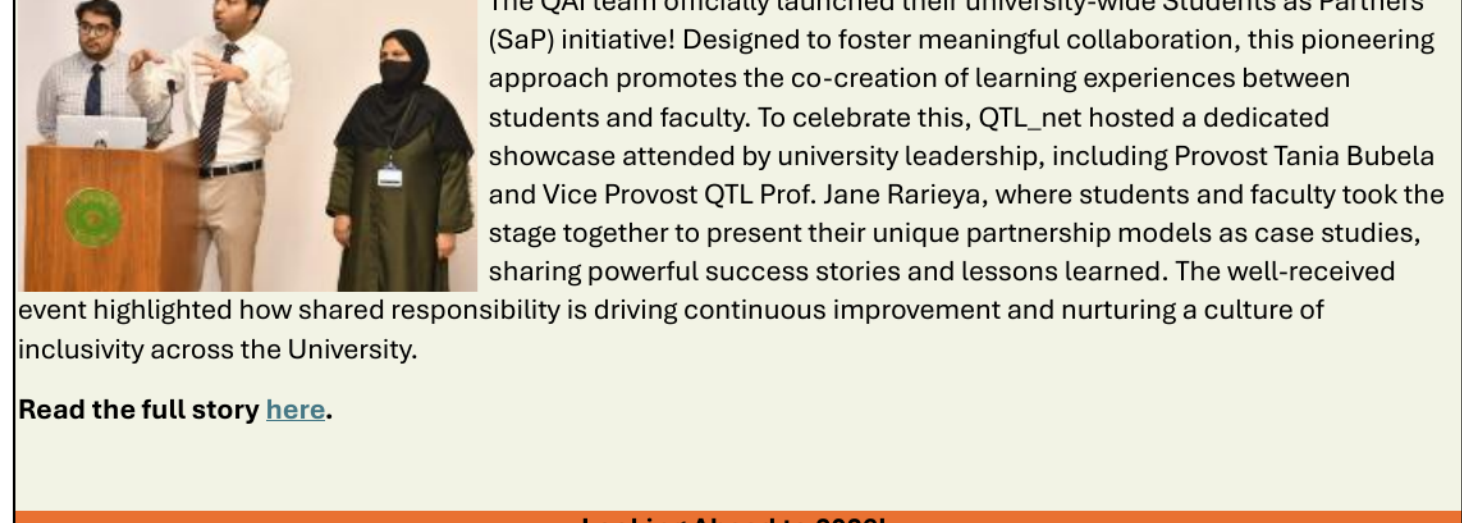
Unsurprisingly, Generative AI emerged as the undeniable focal point of the year. Because it is such a new and rapidly evolving technology, faculty were eager to understand its implications for the classroom. Our EdTech Lounge 2.0 conversations and the hands-on AI in Education Playground series became essential spaces for this exploration. Sessions like Using AI for Literature Search drew a lot of participation, showing how this was an area of much interest for AKU faculty.

Alongside the surge of interest in AI, the team maintained a steady focus on the foundational systems that power AKU's blended learning environments. The practical 90 Minutes of VLE series offered focused, bite-sized training on essential Virtual Learning Environment activities, helping faculty streamline their course architecture.

The Online Teaching in Higher Education (OTHE) courses remained successful in guiding more faculty through the deeper pedagogical strategies of inclusive teaching, facilitation, and assessment, ensuring that technology use remains deeply learner-centered.

Partner With Us. Whether you are looking to integrate a new EdTech tool, refine your VLE space for a blended course, or explore Generative AI in your syllabus, we are here to collaborate. Connect with the BDL team to book a consultative session and discover how we can support your teaching goals. Write to us at bdl@net@aku.edu.

National Dialogue Advances Quality Assurance in Higher Education



AKU's QTL_net recently took center stage in shaping the future of Pakistan's higher education by co-leading a landmark national dialogue with the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Gathering institutional leaders and Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Directors from across Sindh, Balochistan, and beyond, this intensive workshop tackled the critical shift from policy to practice in quality assurance.

A major highlight of the event was the presentation of AKU's groundbreaking Students as Partners (SaP) initiative by QTL_net's Quality Assurance and Improvement (QAI) Team. Recognized as the very first of its kind in Pakistan, the case study earned high praise from national regulators for redefining student engagement and academic rigor. Packed with insights on the revised QA framework and inspiring reflections from university leadership, this gathering reinforced the incredible momentum toward continuous improvement in our academic programmes.

"QEC Directors are the true change-makers in advancing academic quality."

Prof. Jane Rarieya, Vice Provost QTL

Read the full story here.



QAI Pioneers Student Partnerships

The QAI team officially launched their university-wide Students as Partners (SaP) initiative! Designed to foster meaningful collaboration, this pioneering approach promotes the co-creation of learning experiences between students and faculty. To celebrate this, QTL_net hosted a dedicated showcase attended by university leadership, including Provost Tania Bubela and Vice Provost QTL Prof. Jane Rarieya, where students and faculty took the stage together to present their unique partnership models as case studies, sharing powerful success stories and lessons learned. The well-received event highlighted how shared responsibility is driving continuous improvement and nurturing a culture of inclusivity across the University.

Read the full story here.

Looking Ahead to 2026!

The Road to 2030: QTL_net's Next Strategic Plan

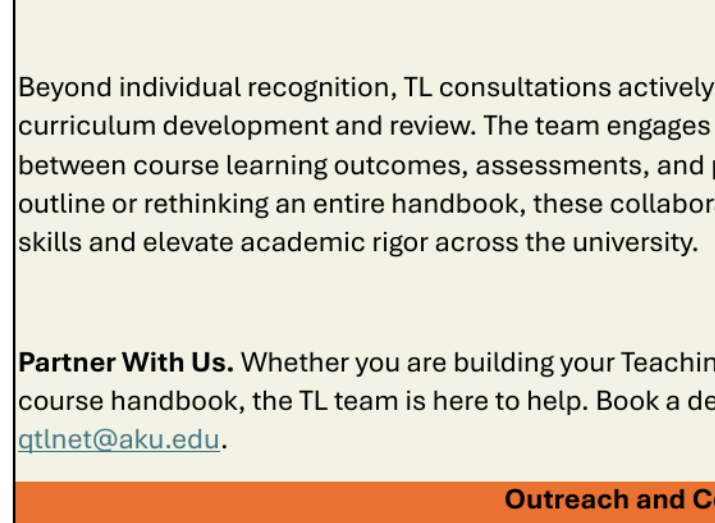
With the successful close of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, we are actively shaping our vision for 2026-2030. At its core, QTL_net remains deeply committed to its dual mandate: driving peer-led, hands-on faculty development and strengthening academic programmes through rigorous quality review cycles. Building on this strong foundation, our upcoming Strategic Plan will champion three transformative initiatives:

Outcome-Based Education (OBE): As AKU shifts toward a paradigm where curriculum design is laser-focused on graduate attributes and workforce readiness, QTL_net will provide the definitive roadmap. We will ensure all curriculum mapping and review activities are seamless guided by the new OBE framework.

Students as Partners (SaP): Capitalizing on the momentum of the 2025 SaP Symposium, QTL_net will continue to foster a culture of student-faculty collaboration. This includes pioneering student-led Self-Assessment Reviews (SAR) and empowering students to directly identify and drive programme enhancements.

AI and Digital Literacy: The next five years will introduce a comprehensive AI Teaching Competency Framework. Our goal is to cultivate a digitally fluent, AI-literate academic community where AI excellence is appreciated.

Ultimately, the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is not just about maintaining standards, it is about redefining academic excellence at AKU. We look forward to sharing the complete roadmap soon and partnering with our university community to bring this bold vision to life. Want to know more? Write to us at qtl@net@aku.edu.



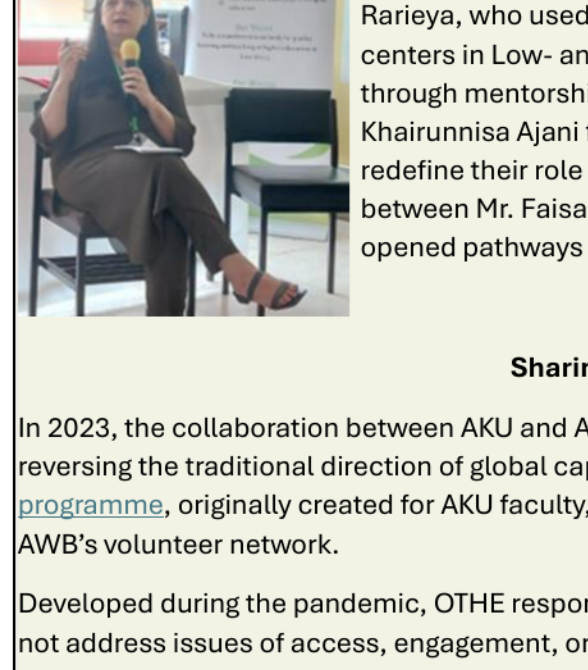
Elevating the Flagship Experience

QTL_net believes in peer-driven growth, which is why our foundational flagship courses, Rethinking Teaching (RTT) and the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Workshop (TLEW), continue to be proudly co-facilitated by our own AKU faculty. Together, we successfully trained over 100 educators across Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in 2025 and are now actively developing the next generation of faculty development: TLEW 2.0 and RTT 2.0. These elevated, advanced courses will push the boundaries of instructional design, with the highly anticipated RTT 2.0 officially launching in April 2026.

Keep an eye out for registration details!

As our internal programmes evolve, QTL_net is also expanding its impact by offering customized versions of our flagship training to external partners. Recently, we collaborated with GSMC in Kenya to design and deliver a specialized instructional skills workshop for the Aga Khan Development Network's Nation Media Group (NMG). This tailored programme successfully strengthened the pedagogical skills of NMG's training and development staff.

From Playground to Practice: Advancing AI Literacy at AKU



As AI interest surged in 2025, the BDL team focused on practical literacy, delivering 11 AI in Education Playground workshops to help the community master tools like Microsoft Copilot and navigate AKU's GenAI guidelines. One of the most valuable takeaways came from exploring how we teach with these tools. During two EdTech Lounge sessions—drawing 307 global participants—Dr. Sadia Fatima, Prof. Simiat Elias, Dr. Meher Rizivi, and Dr. Fredrick Mtenzi shared a powerful consensus: guiding students to use AI purposefully does not bypass learning; it boosts creativity and critical thinking. The key insight shared by faculty is the need to shift focus from the final product to the learning process. By teaching students to write effective prompts and rigorously fact-check AI-generated content, educators are successfully redefining assessments, utilizing flipped classrooms, and reserving class time for deep analytical work.

The BDL team was also invited to support Medical College Pakistan in designing and delivering a new longitudinal theme on AI in Medical Education and Practice within the Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) curriculum. This initiative aims to help students understand the ethical use of GenAI, critically evaluate AI tools, and integrate them effectively into patient care and academic practice. BDL also supported the Department for Educational Development to co-design and co-facilitate an AI course called Redefining Education & Research Using AI.

A pilot study, 'Exploring a Large Language Model's (LLM) Use in Supporting Journal Club Preparation and Discussion Among Residents' was also conducted by Dr. Fahad Umer and Dr. Syed Murtaza Raza Kazmi from Dentistry, Department of Surgery, with the support of BDL members. The study was published in the Journal of Dental Education and examined how LLMs can enhance residents' preparation and engagement in journal club discussions, offering insights into the practical role AI can play in continuing professional education for clinicians.

As we move further into 2026, these initiatives set a strong foundation for the future of digital pedagogy at AKU. The BDL team remains dedicated to exploring the frontiers of educational technology, ensuring our academic community has the tools, research, and collaborative spaces needed to thrive in an AI-aware world.

Quality Literacy and Governance Readiness Course

QAI is planning on developing a one-stop review process in a way that it will integrate all parameters and will be comprehensive so that academic entities can use that review to pull out information as and when needed. This will reduce the pressures and efforts of preparing for several reviews for the entities. In a similar vein, QAI will also soon introduce a new foundational course for faculty and students to build a shared understanding of quality enhancement and governance processes. The course would strengthen conceptual clarity on QA principles and sector-wide practices while fostering collaborative learning and empowering participants to contribute effectively to decision-making at the University. This course will be part of the university initiative Lifelong Learning, Education And Development of Skills (LEADS). For more information reach out to us at qai@aku.edu

Elevating Academic Excellence Through Consultative Support

At QTL_net, both our BDL and TL teams offer dedicated consultative support to academic entities across AKU. Within the TL team, these consultations specifically focus on helping faculty refine their curricula and achieve formal recognition for their pedagogical expertise. A major part of this involves guiding educators through the creation of impactful Teaching Dossiers (TDs). These curated, reflective records are essential for showcasing teaching excellence and serve as vital evidence for promotion applications, admission to the distinguished HTDTA, and securing globally recognized Advance HE Fellowships through AKU's TEACH scheme.

Beyond individual recognition, TL consultations actively drive institutional excellence through hands-on curriculum development and review. The team engages faculty in reflective exercises to ensure a strong alignment between course learning outcomes, assessments, and pedagogical approaches. Whether refining a single course outline or rethinking an entire handbook, these collaborative reviews are designed to embed higher-order thinking skills and elevate academic rigor across the university.

Partner With Us. Whether you are building your Teaching Dossier, applying for a fellowship, or redesigning a course handbook, the TL team is here to help. Book a dedicated consultative session today by reaching out to qtl@net@aku.edu.

Outreach and Community Building

QTL_net's Regional Leadership Comes into Focus

At the 2025 Association for Faculty Enrichment in Learning and Teaching (AFELT) International Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, QTL_net emerged as a regional leader in pedagogical innovation. Centered on the theme of evolving landscapes in higher education, AKU's delegation showcased how institutions in low- and middle-income countries can set a gold standard for faculty development.

QTL_net delivered over ten workshops and paper presentations, both independently and in collaboration with faculty across AKU. What distinguished these contributions was a clear, consistent message: higher education transformation depends fundamentally on how institutions support teaching. Across topics such as assessment, quality assurance practices, AI and digital learning design, and faculty development, this shared premise remained central.

This perspective was articulated in a paper by Ms. Jannat Karim Khan and Dr. Jane Rarieya, who used QTL_net as a case study to demonstrate how teaching and learning centers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) can catalyze sector-wide change through mentorship, reflective practice, and evidence-informed support structures. Dr. Khairunnisa Ajani further emphasized the need for faculty development centers to redefine their role in rapidly evolving higher education contexts, while discussions between Mr. Faisal Notta, Prof. Wanja Tenambergen, and other regional leaders opened pathways for collaboration and sector-wide partnerships.

Sharing Expertise to Scale Impact

In 2023, the collaboration between AKU and Academics Without Borders (AWB) took on a new significance by reversing the traditional direction of global capacity building when the Online Teaching in Higher Education (OTHE) programme, originally created for AKU faculty, was selected to be delivered to universities across LMIC through AWB's volunteer network.

Developed during the pandemic, OTHE responded to a critical realization that simply shifting lectures to Zoom did not address issues of access, engagement, or digital readiness. Designed as a synchronous learning experience that combines self-paced study with weekly live sessions, the four-course programme models the pedagogy it promotes. Faculty learn to redesign courses for online environments, build inclusive and engaging learning spaces, and develop authentic assessments suited to real-world constraints. What began as an internal response to an urgent need quickly proved relevant far beyond AKU and this relevance led AWB to partner with AKU to extend OTHE's reach. Today, nearly 500 faculty and staff across 11 countries, including Kenya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Syria, have benefited from the programme. AKU prepares AWB volunteers to co-facilitate OTHE within their own networks, creating a sustainable model of shared expertise and contextual adaptation rather than one-way knowledge transfer.

Digital Learning in Pakistan's Mountaintops

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting institutions across the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) regions, the QTL_net team facilitated an introductory workshop on Effective Use of Technology at the University of Chitral (UOCH), under the University Improvement Programme (UIP). The workshop was held from November 4-6, 2025 and guided 17 faculty and staff through hands-on, student-centred activities.

The workshop was developed in direct response to the needs identified by UOCH, which requested training in the effective use of Learning Management Systems, in designing engaging digital lesson plans, in creating interactive digital content, and in applying digital pedagogy and active learning strategies.

"The facilitators didn't just teach digital tools; they modelled their effective use," Dr. Yasir Arafat, Director Quality Enhancement Cell

Community Support through Pedagogical Excellence

QTL_net continued its commitment to extending educational excellence beyond the AKU campuses in the realm of pedagogy and instructional skills and collaborated with GSMC in Kenya, to conduct their third specialised workshop for Nation Media Group (NMG) from AKDN, which aimed at strengthening the instructional skills of staff involved in training and development.

In Pakistan, these efforts continued in Northern Pakistan, through the UIP, to enhance the teaching capacity at the Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit and UOCH. As a perfect example of the cascade model, it was heartening to see previously AKU-trained faculty now leading professional development at their universities. A key highlight: Ms Samina Khan, a Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW) graduate (2023), was appointed Director of Human Resource Development at KIU, reflecting leadership and mentorship skills fostered through UIP driven capacity building.

Continue your Learning Journey with QTL_net!

Check our 2026 Calendar: March to June | July to December

One to One consultations are available for faculty. Please make an appointment with our team