

Office of Student Experience, Pakistan &  
Counselling Services and Wellness Office  
The Aga Khan University

# STUDENT EXPERIENCE & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

JULY-DECEMBER 2020



آغا خان یونیورسٹی  
THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

# Introduction

Strange. Frustrating. Anxiety-inducing. There are many adjectives that immediately spring to mind to describe what last year has been. We all set goals at the beginning and had every intention to reach them. Excited first years started their classes, savvy final years fine-tuned post-graduation plans. Then came the usual flurry of activities until March. But everything changed once the pandemic became a stark reality in Pakistan. We revised our plans, once, twice, thrice and that process is still ongoing.

All of you arrived on campus, left, some came back, some more departed and now we have a much diminished student body left at Stadium Road and Karimabad. Nothing has tested our fortitude, creativity, perseverance and pliability more than the year 2020.

However, having said all that there are a few more things about 2020 which are worth recognizing. We have been challenged, we have been forced to look inwards, and many of us have learned to be more grateful for the little things. Some of us have even deepened connections with friends and family in ways that may never otherwise have happened. We have all been reminded that life is never predictable and we must learn to roll with the punches. These are certainly worthwhile lessons to take forward in 2021 and beyond.



Dr Laila Akbarali

Interim Vice Provost, Student Affairs and Services

Dear Students,

I hope 2021 has begun with warmth and good cheer!

I wish each one of you a peaceful, fulfilling, and more predictable 2021. We will stand united and strong; and together face the challenges that lie ahead of us. I hope you will join me in taking a few moments to reflect on what this year has taught you, and to express gratitude for your family, friends, and colleagues.

My very best wishes for a great 2021

# Overview: July – December, 2020

## Safe Return to Campus website



We are actively working to keep all of you up-to-date with the changing situation. Our Safe Return to Campus website contains all the resources, regulations and policies to help you navigate your 'new normal' as you return back to campus in batches.

It is updated based on the change in situation and guidelines from regulatory bodies, health experts and the University's own assessment.

Available at:  
[aku.edu/safe-return](http://aku.edu/safe-return)

## Mental Health Day celebrations

Maintaining the mental health of our students is a key priority. During the pandemic, it became even more critical to highlight the importance of mental well-being and



to encourage access, resources and further investment in this key area. Every year we celebrate World Mental Health day, stretching it out to a week of activities and events. This year it was based on the global theme of 'Mental Health for All'.

Informational brochures highlighting key topics in mental well-being, self-help links and messages from the AKU leadership were sent to all through email and made available on the OneAKU portal.

Staff, students and faculty were invited to participate in **Walk-for-A-Cause** – numbers limited to ensure safety of all participants – to raise awareness and highlight the importance of mental health.

A Q/A session '**Ask Me Anything**' was conducted by a panel of acclaimed experts where the audience submitted questions prior to the event and had them answered.

A big thank you to all the departments and students who worked with us – in particular Aurora (the student mental health body).



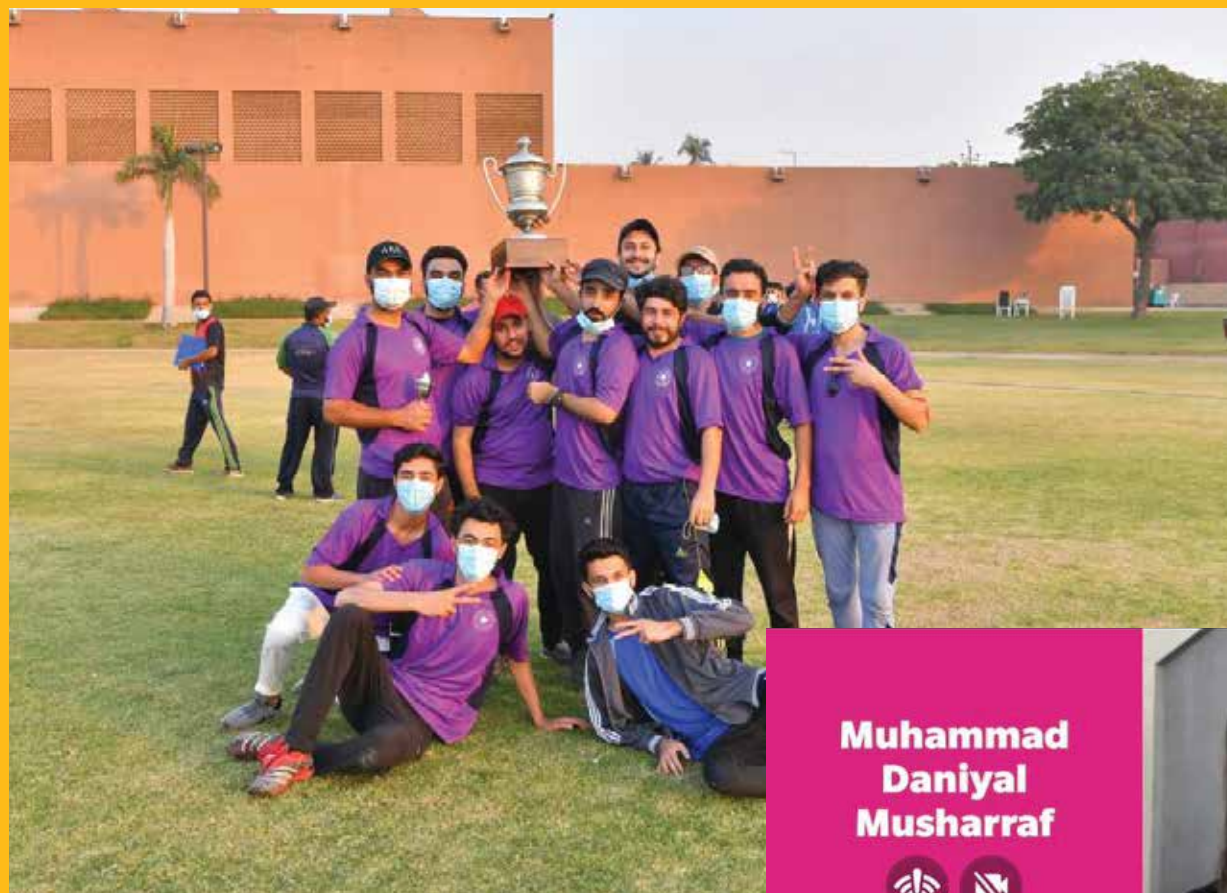
# Students' Lounge

The Students' Lounges at MC, SONAM and IED, are meant to be safe and private spaces for students. While safety concerns made us close the SONAM and IED lounges, we opened the MC Students' Lounge for all current students during meal times.

Students can enjoy both the NFSD economy meals and a wider serving with their friends in a comfortable place.







# Students' Activities

We were so glad to see that student activities continued despite all the uncertainty. Just like they did in the first half of the year, students continued to rise to the challenge and adapted themselves to the changing circumstances, displaying their creativity and fighting spirit.

Aurora worked with us to organize mental health day celebrations and create an anxiety toolkit that they distributed on their social media.

Last minute cancellation of the anticipated Dean's Trophy led to a smaller cricket tournament where the winning trophy was cinched by the SONAM class of 2020 in both male and female category. We hope this spirit will continue into 2021 as well.

There are many instances of this. The closure of sports facilities led to the Sports Society organizing e-gaming. The Students Research Forum held an entirely virtual conference with 3500 attendees from 30 cities and 104 universities across Pakistan.

**AURORA**  
proudly presents:

**LOCKED DOWN? WELL,  
STAND UP!**



USMAN SANDHU



AKBAR CHAUDRY



MASAAB ZAMAN



HAIDER SHERAZ



FAISAL NADEEM

*Join us for an event filled with laughs!*

*Register now!*

*Saturday July 18, 2020 | 6-7 PM via Facebook*

**Muhammad  
Danial  
Musharraf**



**Kaynat  
Kirmiyani**



# Reflections 2020 and Anticipation 2021

Some students and members of our team shared their thoughts and insights



The year taught us how to deal with unpredictability and helped us to reprioritize. It has also made us look at what is really important.

**Asma**



While challenging, 2020 was an eye-opener in every sector. It led to innovations in many fields such as technology, healthcare – there was the digitization of the world!

**Shahliza**



It was a game-changer!

**Maheen**



This was a great learning experience for us all and taught us the importance of engaging wholeheartedly. We can't wait for the right/perfect time, but should bring our plans and activities to action in the best way we can.

**Amin**



We have been waiting for digitization and virtualization in a lot of sectors, and COVID challenged us into a transition. Whether in offices or classrooms, people found new ways of carrying out their activities. All we needed was a push and this is the year that provided that.

**Abdullah**

2020 was a year of adjustments. I found working online a surprisingly pleasant experience as it was more time efficient and it nudged me into making enhanced use of what I already knew and learn what I didn't. At an existential level, this year made us acutely aware of the limits of human control and reiterated the balance between effort and faith by trying our best, but leaving the rest to God's will.

**Dr Hadia**

عادت اب ہماری بھی بن چکی تھی  
زندگی جہاں تھی وہی رُک چکی تھی  
دوستوں سے ملاقات تو جیسے پہنا لگنے لگا  
بہت ہوئے پرانے ، تو کوئی اپنا لگنے لگا  
اک عرصہ گزر گیا اس وبا کو آئے  
دعا سب نے کی ، یہ عذاب جلد گزر جائے  
کچھ نئے طور طریقے بنانے کو ہے  
جلد ہی نیا سال آنے کو ہے  
جو گزرا وہ گزرا آؤ زندگی کے اس نئے دور کو اپنائے  
اس دعا کے ساتھ کے 2021 ہم سب کی زندگیوں میں  
ہزاروں خوشیاں لائے آمین !

~ احمد اکبر

سال کا آغاز بڑا مزیدار ہوا  
جب نئے نئے چہروں کا اظہار ہوا  
ہستے بیٹھتے گزر گئے شروعات کے دن  
ہائے کیا مصیبت جو زندگی بنی غمگین  
یہ نئے طور طریقے ، کچھ الگ ہی ادا ہے  
منہ چھپاؤ ، دور رہو سنا ہے کوئی خطرناک واپا ہے  
ملاقاتیں ہوئی مختصر ، چہرے چھپے نقاب میں  
مرد بھی کرینگے پردہ ، اب یہ تو نہیں لکھا کسی کتاب میں؟  
نوکری بھی چھٹی ، دفتر پہ لگے تالے  
پورے ملک میں بچھ گئے پردے کالے !  
گھر کا پکانا ، گھر میں کھانا عجب ہی کوئی رونا ہے  
جناب باہر سے آ کے 1 منٹ تک ہاتھ دھونا ہے  
کچھ بچا نہ تھا کرنے کو ، بس سوتے جاؤ  
باہر سے آؤ اور ہاتھ دھوتے جاؤ !

# Coming Up!

A dedicated **Student Life website**. It will highlight the vibrant student life at AKU including upcoming and past events, student societies, facilities on campus, resources and much more.

A dedicated **Counselling Services and Wellness website**. This will be your source for carefully curated

resources on mental and physical health, getting in touch with counselors and psychiatrists, along with activities and events.





student.experience@aku.edu  
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student.psychiatrist@aku.edu  
student.healthpk@aku.edu

# Our Team

The Office of Student Experience, Pakistan;  
Counselling Services and Wellness Office;  
and Student Health

Dr Laila Akbarali, Saad Rahim Zubair, Amin Lakhani, Nadia  
Rehman, Dr Hadia Pasha, Aqsa Yaqoob, Dr Sana Siddiqui, Sania Nawaz,  
Noorjhan Momin, Dr Aziz Jiwani, Dr Wahid, Haroon, Dr Samar Zaki.

**AKU**



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