

Research Promotion at AAU

Does your university have a promotion system in place that recognizes interdisciplinary research?

At Al Ain University (AAU), promoting interdisciplinary research is crucial for the institution's mission of addressing regional and global challenges through innovative research. Recognizing and incentivizing researchers who collaborate across disciplines and work on complex problems is essential for fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration.

A promotion system that rewards interdisciplinary research can encourage researchers to pursue projects that involve collaboration with colleagues from different academic disciplines. This can lead to breakthroughs in research and new approaches to tackling complex problems.

By recognizing interdisciplinary research through the promotion system, AAU can attract and retain top talent. This demonstrates the university's commitment to supporting and rewarding interdisciplinary research, strengthening its position as a leading research institution in the UAE and the region.

Overall, promoting interdisciplinary research is a key aspect of AAU's research strategy and is necessary for addressing the critical intellectual and social issues of the day.

Strategy and Policies [1]

Al Ain University (AAU) endorses and supports good practices in research of high quality. This is achieved through education, training, and supervision so that the researchers become aware of the responsibilities they have towards the university and the research community at large. Keeping itself aligned with its vision and mission, AAU is committed to promoting research and supporting faculty members via securing the required teaching-free time, the financial support and collaborations, and maximizing their success in research as one of the goals of the institutional strategic plan.

The Deanship of Scientific Research and Graduate Studies (DSRGS) is responsible for ensuring that research and scholarly activities are directed towards the creation, integration, and application of knowledge that will result in better economic, social, and cultural well-being. The DSRGS must ensure that, in line with a research strategy, research support, research policy, research expectations, and cooperative arrangements all reflect the university's commitment to research and scholarly activities.

Research Strategy

AAU research mission is to engender an active commitment to promote and encourage research amongst faculty and students, which will ensure a sustainable research program and produce faculties of high scholar indices and graduates of distinction. Through the provision of a suitable environment and collaboration between students, faculties, colleges' administration, and the university committee responsible for scientific research and interaction with the community, research opportunities are created.

The university's strategic research plan upholds and enriches the vitality of its research mission and helps the university to be among the leading research universities in the UAE. To achieve this, it was imperative to:

1. Recruit faculty who are committed to research
2. Facilitate research through the provision of appropriate funding for equipment, consumables, travel, and other research expenses
3. Reward staff who conduct and publish research through a wide range of incentives and ensure that research is conducted in accordance with international standards of excellence and ethics

In addition, one of the most important commitments of AAU is to perform high-quality researches to be reflected in the national rankings and in the Research Excellence Framework and to publish in leading outlets and attract high levels of citations.

Therefore, the need is always there to increase the number of citations in our research, as papers with international partners and collaboration with leading institutions at the national, regional, and international levels tend to be highly cited. Joining e-scholar entry by all faculty members at the university will increase the citations of our research papers.

Raising motivation in conducting research at both individual and group levels among faculty members at AAU is part of its research strategy. Another important element of the university research strategy is related to faculty promotion to various academic ranks. One of the main requirements for promotion to a higher academic rank is to have a sound record of research. Furthermore, research performance is a critical domain in the Faculty Member's Annual Report, which indicates the level of the faculty member's performance.

Each faculty member is annually assessed by the Dean, Deputy Dean and Program Directors based on his/her research and scholarship performance. The university is committed to building its research capacity that is centered on improving the offered academic programs, innovating new undergraduate and graduate programs, and enriching the established research facilities, labs, and infrastructure with more equipment and technologies. Attraction and retention of productive research faculty, networking with partners in the public and private sectors, and allocation of research funds are the main parameters of the university research strategy. The main objectives of the AAU Research Strategy are to:

1. Ensure high-quality scientific research with an impact on national and international societies.

In order to achieve this objective, the university needs to take the following actions:

- Secure and strengthen the university information technology and media services to support both the academic and administrative functions of the university and the deployment of new and innovative teaching and research technologies, as they become available.
- Improve intellectual strength by recruiting and retaining a dedicated, culturally diverse, and active researchers.
- Improved impact through publishing in peer-reviewed journals with an increased focus on high-impact Scopus indexed journals.
- Increase the number of research publications.
- Obtain national and international prizes given to AAU researchers.
- Recruiting and developing talented young researchers.

- Establishment of more advanced research infrastructures and improve the research environment.
 - Establishing in-house research projects.
 - Conducting research seminars where faculty present their current research and future perspectives.
 - Aid researchers in identifying funding opportunities, preparing and submission of proposals and managing funds.
 - Establish new graduate programs to accommodate new trends and market needs.
 - Form research groups and build research labs.
 - Provide incentives for faculty members, students, and professional staff to conduct high quality and impact research.
2. Promote high-quality research and international collaboration.
- Establishment of multidisciplinary research centers at AAU.
 - Building relationships with governmental organizations and foundations to secure external funding.
 - Establishing formal research partnerships and consortia with other universities and organizations. These partnerships will increasingly drive the content and direction of university research, teaching, and supervision.
3. Ensure competitiveness in research funding.
- Increase the number of proposals for external funding.
 - Focus on up-to-date and breaking new grants research ideas.
 - Increase the portion of AAU total budget from external projects
 - Increase research funding from national, international funding agencies/organizations or private sectors.
 - Conduct research projects that solve current national and international issues.

Research Policies and Procedures

AAU recognizes that research and teaching cannot flourish in an atmosphere without academic freedom. The university embraces and encourages a wide range of research activities of the highest ethical standards. AAU has developed this policy to increase awareness of integrity issues among researchers and to encourage scholars to assume personal responsibility.

Conducting research is one of the fundamental activities at the university. Such research should be done following high standards, and the university members should adhere to these standards in their research. Failure to meet acceptable standards hurts the researcher's credibility, his colleagues, and the reputation of the university.

Conducting research at the university level should follow a set of policies. The AAU has policies for conducting research, such policies are found at the university catalog, and it is also reflected in the university mission. The Scientific Research Council at the university is responsible for setting up the research policies and procedures which are usually communicated to faculty members in the colleges

through the college Deans who are held responsible, together with the departments' heads, to ensure that faculty members adhere to these policies.

Each college at the university has a research committee that is responsible for coordinating, leading, and supervising all carried-out research activities at the college. Further, it ensures that the faculty members at the college adhere to the research guidelines, policies, and procedures when conducting research. Each college has active research policies that support faculty members in conducting research by securing time and funds. AAU funded many important scholarly activities such as conferences that are hosted by the university.

Furthermore, the university secures funds for faculty members by covering their expenses to participate in international conferences according to regulations set by the university. At the same time, AAU secures time for faculty members for participating in national and international conferences and other scholarly events as well. As per AAU, research policies and procedures are outlined as follows:

- The research policy applies to all faculty members, students, and professional staff at AAU.
- All researchers are required to conduct serious scientific research and publish their findings in high reputed peer-reviewed journals.
- AAU encourages researchers to engage in multi-disciplinary research.
- Each college should have a research strategy that is in line with AAU strategic plan and a research plan that includes KPIs with target levels. These KPIs shall be evaluated annually through a well-defined executive plan.
- AAU regards the maintenance of high ethical standards in research as a central and critical responsibility and will not tolerate any research misconduct. (See Research Ethical Policy).
- Faculty members are encouraged to participate in prestigious conferences and academic forums.
- Priority is given to research related to the development plans of the country.
- Requests for research support or other activities are evaluated based on the impact of research on the relevant field of study, potential for the research to be funded by external agencies /organizations, and impact on the community.
- AAU encourages students to actively engage in research and other scholarly – related activities. (See Student Research Policy)
- Faculty members are encouraged to supervise students' research.
- Faculty members are encouraged to establish collaborative research projects with their counterparts in reputed national and international universities as well as public and private industries.
- Researchers shall abide by the university Commercialization and Intellectual Property Policies conforming to the UAE laws and regulations. (See Commercialization and Intellectual Property).
- Any research study involving humans or animals should be submitted for review and approval to the Research Ethics Issues Committee (REIC) committee at AAU.
- Faculty are encouraged to submit proposals and secure funding for their research projects from various funding agencies in the UAE and abroad.
- Each faculty member is expected to publish at least one research paper in Scopus-indexed journals or conferences.
- Research activities is a key element in hiring, renewing contract, and promotion of a faculty member.

- The teaching load of a researcher who has made outstanding contributions in research may be reduced with appropriate approval.
- The College Deans shall submit to the DSRGS an annual report on research activities and achievements.

Scientific Research Incentives System [2]

AAU provides financial research rewards for an unlimited number of published research documents. These financial rewards are regulated based on specific criteria that are announced to all faculty members, students and staff, known as “Research Incentives Guidelines”. AAU has adopted new incentives system in order to encourage faculty members to continuously publish high quality researches in eminent journals. These incentives include a one time, monetary award for each publication.

Incentives are based on the quality and the rank of the journal, according to the journal Scopus CiteScore applied in the university Scientific Research Incentives System. Therefore, faculty members are encouraged to publish in first tier journals indexed in outstanding databases, e.g. Scopus, and WoS.

References

- [1] [Online]. Available: <https://aau.ac.ae/en/Research/research-and-scholarly-activities/strategy-and-policies>.
- [2] [Online]. Available: <https://aau.ac.ae/en/deanships/sci-research&graduate-studies/scientific-research-incentives-system>.