SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Al Ain University



جامعة العين
AL AIN UNIVERSITY

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 17

International Comparative Approaches and Best Practice for the SDGs

Benchmark | Compare | Adapt | Implement | Share

Indicator question: Does your university as a body, through international collaboration and research, review comparative approaches and develop international best practice on tackling the SDGs?

DIRECT RESPONSE: YES

Through international collaboration and research, Al Ain University reviews comparative approaches and develops, applies and shares international best practice for tackling the Sustainable Development Goals. Its institutional system combines external benchmarking, international accreditation and standards, cross-country research, global practice networks, joint projects and international knowledge-exchange forums.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

1. AAU maintains an institutional cycle for comparative review and best-practice development

Al Ain University's approach is institution-wide and evidence-based. The University compares its performance and practices with international standards and peers; brings the findings into quality assurance, research, curriculum, campus operations and partnership activity; tests solutions with overseas universities and international organizations; and disseminates the resulting knowledge through publications, conferences and professional networks.

The independent International Quality Review undertaken by the UK Quality Assurance Agency in February 2024 provides direct confirmation of this system. QAA reported that AAU has a Benchmarking Policy supporting external comparison of academic-programme quality, uses international rankings as an influential benchmarking tool, and draws on extensive feedback from international accreditations. It further found that international accreditation reports are considered through institutional committees that monitor issues and actions for improvement and enhancement.

QAA concluded that AAU met all ten European Standards and Guidelines examined. It identified AAU's mobilisation of the University community in its Sustainable Development Initiative—through academic programmes, research and extracurricular initiatives—as institutional good practice. This independent finding connects AAU's international comparative-review process directly to its SDG work.

Evidence route	How AAU reviews comparative approaches	How best practice is developed or shared
International quality review	Benchmarks institutional systems against the European Standards and Guidelines	External findings are considered through committees and continuous-improvement processes
Global rankings	Compares SDG, environmental and social performance with universities internationally	Results provide reference points for planning and performance monitoring
International standards	Assesses operations against externally defined environmental, health, safety and facility-management practice	Certified management systems embed common international practice
Comparative research	Tests methods, settings, countries, datasets and interventions	Peer-reviewed findings identify transferable approaches for specific SDGs
International partnerships	Combines AAU expertise with overseas academic, industry and civil-society knowledge	Joint projects, training and technical solutions adapt practice to real problems
Global forums and networks	Reviews evidence and approaches with international researchers and practitioners	Research, demonstrations and professional learning disseminate effective practice

Public evidence: E01 | E02 | E03 | E04 | E05 | E09 | E11 | E20 | E23 | E37

AAU Achieves International Institutional Accreditation by QAA (UK)



Al Ain University (AAU) has achieved a significant milestone in accreditation. For the very first time in AAU's history, AAU has secured institutional international accreditation from the "Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)"- United Kingdom. The International Quality Review (IQR) is a rigorous process that benchmarks global higher education institutions against international Quality Assurance standards, of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)".

Al Ain University successfully completed its IQR and has been awarded global quality accreditation by QAA. Overall, the review team concluded that AAU meets all 10 internal quality assurance standards outlined in the ESG. Securing IQR accreditation from QAA allows AAU to highlight our quality standards on an international stage and facilitates dialogue with institutions worldwide.

Prof. Ghaleb El Refae, AAU President, said; "Securing Institutional International Accreditation was a set objective of the (2021-2025) AAU's Strategic and Operational Plan and achieving it within the stipulated set target is noteworthy". He added; "This goal was achieved on time, highlighting the University's commitment to successfully meeting its objectives. This accomplishment underscores Al Ain University's effective quality assurance and adherence to international standards, which enhances the University's global standing and encourages us to continue striving for development and excellence".

Dr. Nazih Khaddaj Mallat, Vice-President (Accreditation & Quality Assurance), said: “We are immensely proud to achieve a significant milestone by obtaining institutional accreditation through the QAA International Quality Review. This international recognition, obtained after rigorous assessment against the 10 European Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance, directly impacts the student learning experience and underscores our commitment to excellence in education, continuous improvement, and adherence to international best practices. At the end, we do extend our heartfelt thanks to QAA, the Review Team, and all our internal and external stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to this accomplishment.”

Al Ain University Among Top 100 Global Institutions According to THE Impact Rankings 2024



Al Ain University (AAU) has been ranked among the TOP 100 universities worldwide in Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024, after being ranked among the top 200 globally last year.

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings evaluate universities based on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include: no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals.

Al Ain University also, topped the ranking for three main SDGs by securing; # 11 (SDG 4- Quality Education), # 5 (SDG 5 -Gender Equality), and #37 (SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth) among the 1963 listed universities worldwide by the ‘THE Impact Ranking 2024’. These achievements confirm the university's commitment to achieving sustainable development goals and enhancing its positive impact on society and the world.

Prof. Ghaleb Al Refae (AAU President) indicated that the global ranking results confirm the AAU’s commitment to achieving the highest quality standards in education in line with the sustainable development goals, in addition to providing a sustainable educational environment for students. He affirmed that the university's progress in the rankings demonstrates its prestigious position as an active contributor to achieving the sustainable development goals through its strategic plans, scientific research, various initiatives, and the continuous diligent work of all university staff to achieve more successes.

Prof. Nazih Khaddaj Mallat (Vice President for Accreditation & QA), stated: "This achievement reflects our commitment to excellence and sustainability and making a positive impact on our global community. This accomplishment is the result of the concerted efforts at the university from all parties. We extend our thanks to the faculty members, staff, students, and partners who contributed to this success. We will continue to strive together to achieve more accomplishments."

Al Ain University aims to enhance its academic standing and reputation both locally and globally in the field of sustainable development by focusing on improving the quality of scientific research, organizing conferences, launching initiatives, and continuing to work towards achieving more goals in the future.

AAU participated in the WEEC 2024



Al Ain university (AAU) actively engaged in the 12th World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC 2024), to emphasize its commitment to environmental issues and sustainable development. AAU's professors presented a variety of research presentations discussing environmental issues, and the university also participated in the accompanying exhibition, showcasing its community initiatives in climate, environmental sustainability, and environmental education.

The hosting of this global conference by the United Arab Emirates reflects its commitment to environmental sustainability. Al Ain University, aligned with this vision, is dedicated to applying the highest standards of environmental sustainability through education, scientific research, community activities, and university infrastructure. The university is committed to providing high-quality education, organizing conferences, workshops, and launching initiatives that serve the youth and contribute to enhancing sustainable entrepreneurship for the future.

Al Ain University takes pride in its ranking as the 5th in the United Arab Emirates in the 2024 QS World Sustainability Ranking. Additionally, the university has achieved advanced positions in Sustainable Development Goals, ranking 6th globally in Goal 4 (Quality Education), 33rd globally in Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and 88th globally in Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The university is also a member of the Universities Climate Network, a network of 33 local universities collaborating in education, research, and community service in environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

Al Ain university offers a diverse range of programs and specializations that align with its educational outcomes and sustainable development goals. Al Ain University actively seeks to strengthen its relationships and establish collaborative agreements with external institutions interested in

environmental issues, including the Abu Dhabi Environment Agency and the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority.

Al Ain University made a notable contribution to COP 28, with its professors delivering oral presentations and research papers addressing environmental, climate, sustainability, and artificial intelligence issues. The university's students also participated in the Climate Ambassadors program, innovation competitions, and entrepreneurship challenges.

The university prioritizes the promotion of scientific research and encourages professors to conduct innovative research that serves the environment, addresses climate challenges, and generates creative solutions.

INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

2. International comparison is embedded in AAU's governance and improvement system

AAU's comparative activity is not limited to individual collaborations. Its strategic planning, quality assurance and research structures provide standing routes for receiving international evidence, assigning responsibility and acting on findings. The Strategic and Operational Plans connect institutional objectives to performance indicators, research, internationalization, partnership and sustainability. The Annual Report records results, while the Sustainability Research Center and the Deanship of Scientific Research and Graduate Studies support interdisciplinary research and external cooperation.

The 2024 QAA review verified the operational link between external comparison and institutional action. QAA found that AAU draws on stakeholder feedback and external experts, uses international rankings for benchmarking, and receives extensive feedback from international accreditations. It also confirmed that final accreditation reports are processed through institutional committees which monitor issues and action taken. QAA described the University's quality systems as comprehensive and robust, supportive of continuous improvement, and reinforced by external validation and wide-ranging data.

Institutional mechanism	Comparative input	Result within AAU
Benchmarking Policy	External comparison of academic-programme quality	Structured comparison forms part of quality monitoring
International rankings	Shared SDG, sustainability, quality and performance frameworks	AAU reviews its position against international institutions
International accreditation	External expert reports, standards and improvement actions	Committees track issues and institutional responses
Industrial Advisory Boards	Feedback from employers and external specialists	Curricula and provision respond to present and future needs
Research governance	International partners, peer review, research ethics and dissemination	Comparative evidence is converted into credible public knowledge

Institutional mechanism	Comparative input	Result within AAU
Sustainability governance	UN SDGs and international sustainability frameworks	Teaching, research, operations and engagement are connected to implementation

INDEPENDENT 2024 FINDING

QAA recognized AAU's whole-university Sustainable Development Initiative as good practice and confirmed the University's use of external comparison, international rankings and accreditation feedback for continuous improvement.

Public evidence: E04 | E05 | E06 | E15 | E16 | E17 | E18 | E19

Al Ain University Celebrates Academic Excellence with International Institutional Accreditation (QAA) and a Five-Star QS Rating



Al Ain University celebrated two remarkable achievements that cement its position at the forefront of educational institutions in the UAE and the region. The university received international institutional accreditation from the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and a "Five-Star" rating from QS Stars. These accomplishments attest to the quality of education the university provides and its commitment to academic excellence standards. This recognition enhances the university's status as a leading institution contributing to building an educational future that meets the demands of the global economy and evolving job market, while also aligning with the UAE's vision for developing a world-class educational system.

The celebration was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage of Sheikh Theyab bin Tahnoon bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the University's Board of Trustees, and attended by Ms. Julie Tait, Director of Global Business Development at the QAA, UK, and Dr. Ashwin Fernandes, Executive Director for the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia at QS. The event also welcomed a large number of distinguished guests, including representatives from ministries, government agencies, diplomatic missions, members of the Board of Trustees, university executives, faculty and administrative staff, students, and notable community figures.

In his speech, Dr. Noor Al Deen Atatreh, Vice Chairman of the University's Board of Trustees, highlighted the important role of the wise leadership in supporting education in the UAE, stating: "Al Ain

University's attainment of international institutional accreditation and a five-star rating reflects the ambitious vision of our wise leadership, which supports education and promotes innovation as an essential part of comprehensive development. This achievement is not only a source of pride for Al Ain University but also a testament to the nation’s efforts to provide a world-class educational environment.”

He added, “Our wise leadership, headed by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, has prioritized education as a cornerstone of societal progress. The recent announcement of February 28 as UAE Education Day reaffirms that education is the foundation of our beloved nation's future. At Al Ain University, we aim to achieve this by adopting the highest standards of quality and innovation in education.”

Prof. Ghaleb El Refae, President of Al Ain University, emphasized that this accomplishment is a step toward achieving the university's strategic goals, stating: "We continuously strive to provide a distinguished educational experience that meets the needs of our students and society. Receiving these international accreditations reflects our efforts in developing academic programs, enhancing the research and innovation environment, and reaffirming the quality of education we offer, as well as our commitment to cutting-edge research and active community engagement. We remain dedicated to delivering world-class education that aligns with international standards, ensuring that Al Ain University maintains its leading position both locally and globally."

Ms. Julie Tait, Director of Global Business Development at QAA, remarked, “We at the QAA are proud to award this prestigious accreditation to Al Ain University. It is a leading institution that has demonstrated its commitment to global quality standards, and we are confident that this accreditation will enhance its status among international universities and support its efforts to provide high-quality education.”

Dr. Ashwin Fernandes from QS highlighted the significance of the university's rating, noting: "Al Ain University’s five-star rating reflects its excellence in various areas, including teaching, research, employability, and infrastructure. This result demonstrates that the university offers a comprehensive educational experience, ensuring that students are well-prepared for a successful future. We believe that this achievement will contribute to attracting more international students and enhancing the university's global reputation."

The event received widespread praise from attendees, who affirmed that this achievement marks a significant step toward strengthening the university’s position among global academic institutions and increasing its appeal to international students and researchers. A dynamic presentation showcased the university's key accomplishments over recent years, including its initiatives to support scientific research and expand its network of collaborations with global academic institutions.

This achievement underscores Al Ain University’s commitment to the UAE’s higher education vision and its active role in advancing education quality and producing qualified graduates capable of tackling future challenges and contributing to community development.

STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL PLANS

3. (2021-2025) AAU Strategic Plan

Vision	AAU aspires to be amongst the leading learning institutions in the region, by achieving international quality standards in Teaching, Research, and Community Engagement.
Mission	AAU strives to be a learning institution of excellence that responds to market needs and prepares graduates who possess the scientific and technological competencies that are needed for their careers. The university plays an active role in the creation of knowledge through quality teaching and research. It values Community Engagement and nurtures partnerships with institutions and organizations through a commitment to the educational, technological, and economic development of the country and the region.
Values	Collaboration, Diversity, Excellence, , Integrity, Sustainability

	(2021-2025) Strategic Goals	Objectives / Initiatives
1. Academic Programs	Strengthen AAU's commitment to deliver quality undergraduate and graduate programs that are characterized by rigorous disciplinary depth and breadth, with a high level of direct interaction between faculty and students (SDG 4 & 9).	1.1. Promote curricular reform and innovation in all areas of the academic programs. 1.2. Offer a variety of well-supported quality programs that are consistent with the University's educational mission. 1.3. Secure needed laboratories, classrooms, and workspaces that are needed for faculty, staff, and students. 1.4. Support all library functions. 1.5. Promote and support the efficient and effective use of technology in the academic and administrative process to enhance curricular needs.
2. Faculty Staff	Continue to recruit and retain a dedicated and culturally diverse faculty whose teaching is informed by research and embodies learning experiences that enable students to improve academically and personally (SDG 4, 5, 8, 10, & 16).	2.1. Support and enhance the professional stature of the faculty body. 2.2. Implement and strengthen existing policies for improved communication between faculty and administration, thus involving faculty input into the decision-making process, and an enhanced sense of shared responsibility for the University management. 2.3. Recruit AAU Graduates, graduated with distinction.
3. Students	Improve the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates within the student body, while increasing the number of well prepared and academically able students who wish to enter a sustainable environment that facilitates the development of competent, and creative professionals (SDG 4, 5, & 10).	3.1. Develop an effective enrollment management program that is linked to the academic programs' needs. 3.2. Improve the AAU reputation in local high schools, and other educational institutions. 3.3. Review and coordinate all enrollment-related works, programs, services, and activities. 3.4. Enhance the current academic advising process.
4. Scientific Research	Foster research and support faculty members to secure the time, financial support, and collaborations to maximize their success in research, scholarship, and other sustainable activities (SDG 4).	4.1. Articulating at the unit level different research activities and plans to achieve research goals. 4.2. Fostering outreach to the community and region and maintaining an online directory of faculty to assist them in their research. 4.3. Recognizing and rewarding the faculty and staff's efforts in research to enhance productivity. 4.4. Linking the faculty research interests to the SDGS.
5. Learning Resources	Secure and strengthen the University's 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 (SDG 4 & 9).	5.1. Providing an adequate and predictable mechanism for funding informational and institutional technologies, so that AAU can satisfy the technology needs of its students, staff, and faculty, now and in the future. 5.2. Strengthening the maintenance and upgrading of the University's information technology infrastructure, facilities, and hardware. 5.3. Strengthening the information technology services and the instructional technology services and support systems that are offered at the University. 5.4. Promoting and supporting the efficient and effective use of academic and administrative technologies that satisfy the faculty and curricular needs.
6. Community Engagement	Contribute for a sustainable society and the local community, by addressing their educational, cultural, social, and economic interests (SDG 4, 16, & 17).	6.1. Supporting collaborative partnerships with schools, businesses, corporations, government agencies, community organizations, community development organizations, religious institutions, and civic organizations to provide, develop, and implement community-building efforts. 6.2. Participating in elementary and secondary education delivery systems to improve teaching and learning at all levels. 6.3. Promoting internal and external activities that help outreach AAU. 6.4. Seeking membership in local, regional, and international associations. 6.5. Collaborating with other academic institutions in the areas of teaching, research, consultancy, and training programs.

Research Policies

Research Policies

- Intellectual Property and Research Commercialization
- Research Support
- Research Ethics Policy
- Student Involvement in Research

INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING

3. AAU reviews its SDG practice through common international frameworks

During 2024, AAU used multiple international frameworks that permit direct comparison with institutions across countries. THE Impact Rankings assess university contributions to the UN SDGs; UI GreenMetric compares environmental management, infrastructure, mobility, education and research;

QS Sustainability measures environmental and social impact and governance; and QS Stars evaluates institutional performance across defined areas. The resulting external profiles allow AAU to identify relative strengths and areas for continuing development.

AAU's 2024 evidence demonstrates active participation rather than a statement of intent. The University was placed among the top 100 institutions in THE Impact Rankings 2024 and published positions of 11th for SDG 4, fifth for SDG 5 and 37th for SDG 8. UI GreenMetric published AAU's overall position and scores across six sustainability categories. AAU also held a 2024 QS Stars five-star rating and appeared fifth in the UAE and 228th in Asia in the QS Sustainability 2024 edition.

International framework	Comparative scope	Documented AAU result
THE Impact Rankings 2024	Research, stewardship, outreach and teaching mapped to the SDGs	Top 100 overall; leading published results for SDGs 4, 5 and 8
UI GreenMetric 2024	Six operational, environmental, education and research categories	Published overall rank and category-level scores
QS Sustainability 2024	Environmental impact, social impact and governance	Fifth in the UAE and 228th in Asia
QS Stars 2024	Externally assessed institutional performance categories	Five-star institutional rating
QAA International Quality Review	Ten European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance	All ten standards met; three areas of good practice identified

Public evidence: E04 | E05 | E06 | E08 | E09 | E10 | E11 | E12 | E13 | E14

Al Ain University Awarded “5 Stars” by QS Stars Rating Systems 2024



According to QS Stars Rating Systems 2024, Al Ain University (AAU) has achieved a remarkable milestone by obtaining the “5 Stars” institution overall, and in each of the categories: Teaching, Employability, Internationalization, Facilities, Social Responsibility, Inclusiveness, Research and in Pharmacy & Pharmacology (Program).

The "QS Stars" rating reflects Al Ain University's outstanding performance across key indicators that play a pivotal role in the success and development of higher education institutions. This rating is considered the highest of its kind as universities are evaluated across a wide range of important performance indicators according to predefined international standards and are awarded ratings from one star to five stars (highest rating) based on their performance.

Prof. Ghaleb Al Refae (AAU President), stated that this achievement adds to the university's distinguished academic record of accomplishments, enhancing its position as a locally and globally outstanding educational institution. Also, it is a clear indication of Al Ain University's excellence in providing high-quality education within a conducive learning environment which ensures our commitment to comprehensive excellence.

Dr. Nazih Khaddaj Mallat (Vice President, Accreditation & Quality Assurance) said that the association with the “QS Stars Rating System” from the past to present has indeed helped AAU to move way forward with some focus areas. AAU would be focusing on other criteria and indicators of the QS Stars Rating System and hopes to improve more in the future. He also thanked QS for such recognition and international exposure.

Al Ain University Among Top 100 Global Institutions According to THE Impact Rankings 2024



Al Ain University (AAU) has been ranked among the TOP 100 universities worldwide in Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024, after being ranked among the top 200 globally last year.

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affirmed that the university's progress in the rankings demonstrates its prestigious position as an active contributor to achieving the sustainable development goals through its strategic plans, scientific research, various initiatives, and the continuous diligent work of all university staff to achieve more successes.

Prof. Nazih Khaddaj Mallat (Vice President for Accreditation & QA), stated: "This achievement reflects our commitment to excellence and sustainability and making a positive impact on our global community. This accomplishment is the result of the concerted efforts at the university from all parties. We extend our thanks to the faculty members, staff, students, and partners who contributed to this success. We will continue to strive together to achieve more accomplishments."

Al Ain University aims to enhance its academic standing and reputation both locally and globally in the field of sustainable development by focusing on improving the quality of scientific research, organizing conferences, launching initiatives, and continuing to work towards achieving more goals in the future.

AAU ranks 5th in UAE and 228th in Asia by QS Ranking for Sustainability 2024



Al Ain University has achieved a new milestone by securing the 5th position within the United Arab Emirates, 228th in Asia, and 821-840 worldwide, according to the QS World Universities Ranking for Sustainability 2024. This ranking assesses the ability of global universities to achieve sustainable development goals.

The ranking assesses universities' performance against the complete set of 17th United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It includes three main dimensions: firstly, the environmental impact, encompassing five indicators: equality, knowledge exchange, educational impact, employability and opportunities, and quality of life for universities. Secondly, the social impact, includes three indicators: sustainable institutions, sustainable education, and sustainable research. And thirdly, governance.

This ranking reflects Al Ain University's initiatives and efforts to address environmental and social challenges. It underscores its commitment to contributing to achieving sustainable development goals across all areas, demonstrating its dedication to preparing new generations to confront climate challenges and provide advanced ideas and solutions in this field.

Dr. Noor Al-Deen Atatrah, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, stated, "The importance of sustainability-focused rankings lies in the fact that environmental sustainability is a central point of interest at the local, Arab, and global levels. This has been evident in the United Arab Emirates, with its

significant focus on climate issues and sustainable development, prominently showcased in recent times through hosting COP28 at Expo Dubai. This achievement is a clear testament to Al Ain University's strategy and commitment to sustainable development, aligning with the wise leadership's directions in the country towards comprehensive development."

Prof. Ghaleb Al-Refae, the AAU president, affirmed that Al Ain University, as a leading academic institution, is committed to playing its role in achieving sustainable development goals and serving the nation, especially in light of the global emphasis on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals endorsed by the United Nations. He emphasized that the university utilizes scientific research to shed light on climate and environmental issues, among others, and puts forth innovative ideas to find effective solutions. In addition, he highlighted the series of events and activities organized by the university, contributing to the achievement of all 17th Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr. Nazih Khaddaj Mallat, Vice President for Accreditations and Quality Assurance, stated that Al Ain University, through its objectives, policies, mission, and the members of its academic and administrative bodies, seeks to enhance sustainable responsibility through its core functions in education, scientific research, and the development of academic programs. This includes both curricular and extracurricular activities, as well as community service. He emphasized that the university is constantly striving to excel and progress on all fronts, achieved through the concerted efforts of all involved.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

4. External standards are translated into operational and academic practice

International best practice is developed when external comparison is translated into institutional systems. In 2024, AAU achieved QAA international institutional accreditation and obtained ISO certification in environmental management, health and safety management, and facility management. These externally validated frameworks establish common requirements, documented processes, evidence review and recurring improvement cycles across academic quality and campus operations.

The QAA review explains how this translation occurs at AAU: self-study and external evaluation produce reports; QAIRC coordinates responses; institutional committees consider findings; and issues and actions are monitored for improvement and enhancement. The same review found that AAU actively benefits from external quality assurance and the sharing of good practice available through accreditation and close links with industry and employers.

External reference	Area of practice	Institutional application
European Standards and Guidelines	Institutional quality assurance	AAU met all ten standards examined in the 2024 QAA review
QAA international accreditation	External review and cyclical enhancement	Reports, findings and actions are processed through responsible units and committees
Environmental-management certification	Environmental responsibilities and controls	Internationally referenced management practice is embedded in operations
Health and safety certification	Risk prevention, safety and organizational controls	Externally assessed health and safety management processes
Facility-management certification	Management and continual improvement of facilities	Common international practice applied to the campus environment
International accreditations and advisory boards	Programme quality and labour-market relevance	External expertise informs curricula and current and future employer needs

Public evidence: E04 | E05 | E06 | E07 | E08 | E15 | E16

CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

5. AAU-affiliated research compares approaches and produces transferable SDG evidence

In 2024, AAU-affiliated researchers worked with international co-authors and datasets to compare countries, methods, technologies and interventions. These peer-reviewed studies move beyond general partnership: each examines alternatives or variation, reports a reproducible method, and develops evidence that can guide policy or professional practice in a specific SDG domain.

2024 international study	Comparative approach	Best-practice contribution	SDGs
Sustainability reporting in the UK and Germany	Compares firms in liberal and coordinated market economies over 2010-2023	Identifies how market competition and institutional context affect ESG disclosure and informs transparency policy	8, 12, 16
Activity-based learning and ChatGPT	Compares active-learning and conventional approaches using surveys and trials	Develops evidence for effective learner-centred and AI-supported education	4
Remote-sensing crop monitoring	Compares pre-trained deep-learning models using land-use and land-change data	Identifies stronger technical approaches for crop and land monitoring	2, 9, 13, 15
Carbon, soil and climate relationships	Uses a global Earth-modelling framework with spatial regression and path analysis	Supports localized climate and land-management strategies	2, 13, 15
Global cataract burden	Meta-analysis estimates global and regional changes from 2000 to 2020	Provides comparable evidence for health planning and preventable-vision action	3, 10
Digital financial literacy in Indonesia	Tests relationships among social-media use, financial literacy and inclusion	Develops evidence for inclusive small-enterprise and digital-finance interventions	5, 8, 9, 10
Intelligent transport for sustainable cities	Reviews and prioritizes transport-system approaches for smart-city contexts	Synthesizes implementation approaches for lower-impact urban mobility	9, 11, 13

The studies are publicly traceable through permanent DOI records and identify AAU affiliations. Together, they demonstrate international collaborative research that compares alternatives and produces knowledge capable of being adapted across institutions, sectors and countries.

Public evidence: E17 | E18 | E19 | E37 | E38 | E39 | E40 | E41 | E42 | E43

Crop monitoring using remote sensing land use and land change data: Comparative analysis of deep learning methods using pre-trained CNN models

Min Peng [a], Yunxiang Liu [a], Asad Khan [b], Bilal Ahmed [c], Subrata K. Sarker [e], Yazeed Yasin Ghadi [d], Uzair Aslam Bhatti [f], Muna Al-Razgan [g], Yasser A. Ali [h] Show more

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Abstract

In the context of the rapidly evolving climate dynamics of the early twenty-first century, the interplay between climate change and biospheric integrity is becoming increasingly critical. The pervasive impact of climate change on ecosystems is manifested not only through alterations in average environmental conditions and their variability but also through ancillary shifts such as escalated oceanic acidification and heightened atmospheric CO_2 levels. These climatic transformations are further compounded by concurrent ecological stressors, including habitat degradation, defaunation, and fragmentation. Against

Article preview

Abstract

Introduction

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FEEDB

CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

6. International partners compare and develop practical approaches for environmental SDGs

AAU combines international research exchange with implementation partnerships in environmental education, earth sciences and energy transition. At the 12th World Environmental Education Congress in 2024, AAU academics presented research on environmental issues and the University exhibited community initiatives in climate action, environmental sustainability and education. The Congress provided an international setting in which institutions and practitioners reviewed environmental-education approaches and shared applied experience.

The 2024 memorandum with China's Zhejiang Institute of Geology creates a technical route for exchanging research expertise in geological surveys, mineral-resource research and exploration, sustainable building materials, geotechnical engineering, urban geological safety, hazard prevention and control, ecological restoration, and environmental assessment. AAU's partnership with Siemens Energy establishes joint research and pilot projects in energy transition, decarbonization, energy storage and blockchain applications, combining international industrial knowledge with academic research and student innovation.



Exhibit 1. AAU research presentation at the 12th World Environmental Education Congress 2024, an international platform for comparing and sharing environmental-education practice. Source: AAU [E23].

Public evidence: E23 | E28 | E29 | E40 | E51 | E52 | E53

An MOU with Zhejiang Institute of Geology in China



The College of Engineering at Al Ain University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Zhejiang Institute of Geology in the People's Republic of China, a first-tier public institution under the Zhejiang Provincial Government. The institute specializes in theoretical and applied geological studies, integrating advanced scientific research with practical applications across multiple geological fields. It is committed to developing innovative geology and natural resources solutions and is distinguished by its international collaborations with various academic and research institutions.

The signing ceremony occurred at the Abu Dhabi campus, attended by a high-level Zhejiang Institute of Geology delegation, including senior officials who traveled specifically from China to the UAE to finalize the agreement.

The MoU was signed on behalf of Al Ain University by Prof. Abdullah Ahmed Al-Shara, Director of the Civil Engineering Program, and on behalf of the Zhejiang Institute of Geology by Dr. Gu Hongwei, Director of Green Development in Mining Research. The event was witnessed by Prof. Amer Qasem, Vice President of the University, along with department heads, directors, and faculty members from both sides.

This partnership aims to establish a strategic collaboration between the two institutions by exchanging academic and research expertise in various fields, particularly civil engineering and geology. The MoU outlines cooperative initiatives in diverse areas, including: Geological surveys, Mineral resource research, Exploration, development, and utilization of mineral resources, Research on sustainable building materials, Geological engineering, Geotechnical engineering, Urban geological safety, Prevention and control of geological hazards, Ecological restoration of land and regions, Resource and environmental assessments

This agreement marks a pivotal step in building academic bridges between the two parties, offering students and faculty opportunities to engage in educational and research exchange programs. These initiatives will contribute to developing scientific and research skills for both sides.

During the visit, the Chinese delegation toured the civil engineering laboratories at Al Ain University, exploring the university's advanced facilities in this field, which reflect the high quality and scientific development achieved by the university in its academic programs and research labs.

Prof. Amer Qasem, Vice President of Al Ain University - Abu Dhabi, expressed his delight at the signing of the MoU, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in advancing education and scientific research. He emphasized that this agreement would be a starting point for new and fruitful partnerships with global academic institutions.

Al Ain University and Siemens Energy collaborate to Foster Research and Innovation in the Energy Sector



Al Ain University (AAU) and Siemens Energy LLC have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a collaborative partnership to advance innovation, knowledge exchange, and joint research in the energy sector. The MoU was signed by Prof. Ghaleb El Refae (President- Al Ain University), and Dr. Fahad Al Yafei (Chief Technology Officer, Technology and Innovation Center Abu Dhabi, Siemens Energy.). The signing ceremony was attended by Dr. Noor Al Deen Atatreh (Board of Trustees Deputy Chairman- Al Ain University), Mr. Khalid Bin Hadi (UAE Managing Director- Siemens Energy), and staff members from both organizations.

The partnership between Al Ain University and Siemens Energy focuses on collaborative research and pilot projects, with AAU students addressing real-world challenges and providing consulting solutions. At the same time, Siemens Energy experts contribute their knowledge to enhance the academic environment. This collaboration also aims to create new job opportunities for AAU graduates and develop a skilled talent pipeline for Siemens Energy. It involves sharing resources, pursuing joint funding for energy transition research, and working on projects in de-carbonization, energy storage, and blockchain applications.

“This collaboration marks a major advance in aligning academia with industry needs. By partnering with Siemens Energy, we offer our students exceptional opportunities to tackle real-world challenges, drive innovation, and prepare for leadership roles in the energy sector. Together, we are advancing research and developing sustainable solutions for a better future.” said Prof. Ghaleb El Refae, President of Al Ain University.

“Partnership is key to accelerating de-carbonization. Enabling knowledge transfer and fostering innovation in the energy sector is crucial to empowering future generations in the fight against climate change. We’re proud to launch this collaboration with Al Ain University and work with academia to develop and commercialize new technologies that will make a meaningful contribution to reaching net

zero," said Dr. Fahad Al Yafei, Chief Technology Officer, Technology and Innovation Center Abu Dhabi, Siemens Energy.

An MOU between Al Ain University and the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi



Al Ain University (AAU) and the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at boosting collaboration in areas of shared interest in research and development. The signing of the agreement was overseen by Her Excellency Dr. Sheikha Salem Al Dhaheri, the Secretary General of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, and Prof. Ghaleb Al Rifai, AAU President.

The MoU aims to promote collaboration in multiple environmental disciplines, benefiting both parties involved. It also mandates that faculty members possess the expertise, unique research resources, and innovative ideas to bridge any scientific gaps, as well as support the efforts of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and Al Ain University to safeguard the environment and preserve biological diversity. This will enhance the reputation and function of both institutions as centers of scientific excellence, ultimately aiding Abu Dhabi in achieving its sustainability and environmental objectives.

Prof. Ghaleb Al-Refai, President of the University, said this memorandum will strengthen collaboration in the areas of research, service, and development while highlighting the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic systems in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. The University is committed to utilizing its academic programs and scientific research to serve all sectors, particularly the environmental sector. Al Ain University is dedicated to preserving the environmental balance and climate and achieving the objectives of sustainable development. The university is making every effort to provide its expertise and resources to achieve these goals.

Ahmed Baharoon, the Executive Director of the Environmental Information, Science and Awareness Management Sector at the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, stated that the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the agency and Al Ain University demonstrates their shared dedication to actively promoting sustainable development through scientific research activities that focus on utilizing modern technologies. He added that this collaboration is one of the essential elements for meeting the developmental needs in environmental conservation and resource management.

By signing the MoUs, the universities' significant research capabilities will be utilized to meet the emirate's environmental research requirements, while also providing the universities with an abundance of meaningful research questions. The strategic priorities of EAD, such as climate change, habitat conservation, ground and marine water, fisheries, and air quality, present exciting research opportunities. Additionally, policy formulation and balancing social, economic, and environmental factors offer valuable areas for research. The results of the collaborative research will be disseminated through various mediums, such as scientific literature, reports, and journals.

Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi partners with 8 UAE Universities to collaborate on scientific research



To enhance and explore bilateral research opportunities, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has signed eight memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with major universities in the UAE.

Partnering universities include Abu Dhabi University, Al Ain University, American University of Sharjah, Khalifa University, New York University Abu Dhabi, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, UAE University, and Zayed University, with EAD having future plans of partnering with other research organisations going forward.

The agreements serve as frameworks for collaboration in the field of scientific research for the purpose of closing knowledge gaps. All entities recognise the mutual benefits of collaboration and have set out basic terms and conditions to allow the fast-track development of research projects.

The agreements will allow partner universities to bring their faculty member’s expertise, specialist research resources and innovations to help bridge scientific knowledge gaps and support EAD’s operations. This will reinforce EAD’s position as an innovative and science-driven organisation and will be a catalyst for achieving Abu Dhabi’s environment and sustainability targets.

Ahmed Baharoon, Executive Director of Environment Information, Science Outreach Management Sector at EAD, said: “The visionary leadership of Abu Dhabi has always placed great importance on, and investment in, education and scientific research. In the last few decades, the emirate’s research capacity and capabilities have developed tremendously, therefore institutional-level agreements between these eight universities and EAD will provide researchers with a rich seam of collaboration opportunities. Universities are home to faculty members who are deep subject matter experts and operate highly specialist research labs and equipment.

“Since its establishment, EAD has been a science-driven Agency. It is essential that the creation of laws, policies, projects and strategic advice by EAD, as well as education programmes and reports, are based on robust, defensible science. The Agency therefore places strategic importance on strengthening environmental research and development that signing these eight memoranda of understanding will provide.

“We also maintain an environmental research needs register that will provide these universities with a rich list of potential research projects. We also provide access to decades of environmental monitoring data, reports, and research publications, as well as in-depth expertise.”

The breadth of expertise in the external research community will allow EAD, in collaboration with its partners, to address environmental challenges in a holistic manner and consider the complex interactions between soils, water, air, wildlife, social and economic systems.

The MoUs will allow the considerable research capabilities of the individual universities to support the environmental research needs of the emirate while providing the universities a rich source of substantive research questions.

There are exciting research opportunities across all of EAD’s main strategic priorities, including: climate change, habitat conservation, ground and marine water, fisheries, and air quality. Policy formulation and the optimisation of social, economic, and environmental imperatives also provide rich research areas. The outcomes of collaborative research will be published in scientific literature, reports and journals, and more.

Abu Dhabi Environment Agency announces official launch of ADERN

ABU DHABI, 26th June, 2023 (WAM) -- The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has announced the official launch of ADERN (Abu Dhabi Environmental Research Network), a community of research scientists, research institutions and allied innovators, to convene research and development experts around the scientific knowledge gaps facing stakeholders to continuously enhance the environment of the emirate.

With a focus on addressing environmental challenges, ADERN will play a vital role in advancing the understanding and implementation of sustainability in Abu Dhabi.

Recognising the urgency of the climate agenda and the inseparable connection between climate, biodiversity loss and pollution, ADERN will address the climate science-policy agenda by leveraging research resources toward inter-disciplinary multi-sectoral collaboration.

To support the research efforts of ADERN, EAD has developed the Abu Dhabi Environmental Research Needs Register, an extensive list of over 200 research requirements. An Environmental Knowledge Graph System - a world-first innovation developed to analyse and communicate cause-effect relationships between humans and the environment and the impact of a changed environment on human well-being.

EAD’s enviroportal contains data from its 25 years of research. An Environmental Research Directory will catalogue the hundreds of environmental researchers and allied innovators, research facilities, research projects and events. Collectively these tools will help stakeholders make science-based decisions that address the environmental challenges faced by the Emirate.

Eight universities have joined ADERN as founding institutional members. These include Abu Dhabi University, Al Ain University, American University of Sharjah, Khalifa University, NYU Abu Dhabi, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates University and Zayed University.

Ahmed Baharoon, Executive Director of Environment Information, Science Outreach Management Sector at EAD, said, “We are facing unprecedented challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We cannot ignore these issues, and time is of the essence. That is why today, we launch the Abu Dhabi Environmental Research Network, a ground-breaking initiative to revolutionise how we approach science-based problem-solving. Our mantra is simple yet powerful: ‘Convene, Converge, Collaborate.’”

“We are bridging the gap between problems and solutions by harnessing the power of collective action. Through aligning research efforts with stakeholder needs and cultivating collaboration, we aim to create a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to environmental research and problem-solving, ensuring impactful outcomes.”

Over the past decade, Abu Dhabi has become a notable epicentre for innovation and scientific progression. The research capacity of the UAE has shown a significant 16-fold increase since 2000, highlighting its academic prowess. This exponential growth, backed by the expansion of existing universities and the establishment of new ones, underscores the Emirate's steadfast commitment to a knowledge-driven economy and the pursuit of scientific breakthroughs.

As the UAE prepares to host COP28 later this year, the launch of ADERN is a testament to Abu Dhabi Emirate’s determination to tackle climate change head-on and aligns with the ‘Year of Sustainability’.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL COOPERATION

7. Joint frameworks convert international expertise into research and pilot activity

International best practice is strengthened through direct collaboration on applied problems. The Zhejiang agreement covers exchange of expertise and research across geology, resilience and ecological restoration. The Siemens Energy partnership covers joint research, pilot projects, resource and knowledge sharing, joint funding, real-world energy challenges and routes toward commercialization. Both arrangements connect comparative international knowledge with testing and application in the UAE context.



Exhibit 2. AAU and the Zhejiang Institute of Geology during the 2024 cooperation visit establishing shared research in earth sciences, environmental assessment and resilience. Source: AAU [E28].



Exhibit 3. AAU and Siemens Energy formalize their 2024 research and innovation partnership at the World Utilities Congress. Source: AAU [E29].

Public evidence: E28 | E29 | E51 | E52 | E53

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE

8. AAU convenes international review of digital-health methods and standards

AAU and the UK-based Global Academy for Digital Health jointly organized the 2024 Global Digital Health Knowledge Exchange and Empowerment Conference. Its stated purpose was to address unmet needs of digital-health strategy and policymakers and make next-generation research and development accessible. The programme brought together international academic, clinical, government and technology expertise.

The conference's comparative and best-practice scope included artificial intelligence and the patient journey, digital pathology, radiomics, smart-hospital frameworks, digital-health standards, data-analytics approaches, quality-of-life modelling for non-communicable diseases, accessibility for people with disabilities, telemedicine, clinical informatics, healthcare quality governance, knowledge management, information architecture, and legal, social, ethical and professional considerations. Eight specialist workshops, an international technology exhibition, peer-reviewed papers and a doctoral consortium enabled participants to test methods, receive feedback and disseminate practice.

Knowledge-exchange mechanism	International comparative function	Practice-development output
Research-paper programme	International peer review of original research	Published proceedings and extended journal submissions
Eight technical workshops	Demonstration and examination of methods across clinical and digital domains	Professional learning in current techniques and systems
Digital-health standards and frameworks	Comparison of architectures, analytics, governance and interoperability approaches	Shared reference points for implementation
Doctoral consortium	Researchers present methods to senior international academics and stakeholders	Structured feedback and stronger research designs
International technology exhibition	Leading providers demonstrate digital-health innovations	Exposure to operational tools and emerging practice

Public evidence: E24 | E25 | E26 | E27 | E41

Al Ain University Organizes the Global Digital Health Conference - Knowledge Exchange and Empowerment



Al Ain University organized the "Global Digital Health Conference - Knowledge Exchange and Empowerment" at its Abu Dhabi campus from September 24 to 26, 2024. The event was organized in collaboration with the Global Academy of Digital Health in the UK, with the support of the Dubai Health Authority and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

The opening ceremony of the conference was attended by Professor Amjad Qandil (representing the Commission for Academic Accreditation - Ministry of Education), Dr. Noor Al Deen Atatreh (Vice Chairman of Al Ain University's Board of Trustees), Prof. Ghaleb El Refae (President of Al Ain University), Professor Mohammed Oudah (President of the Global Academy of Digital Health in the UK), and Professor Ismail Matalqa (President of Ras Al Khaimah Medical and Health Sciences University), alongside several prominent figures from various universities, medical centers, and institutions. The conference also saw participation from a large number of academic and economic elites, faculty members, specialists, and a group of enthusiasts and followers in the scientific field.

The conference aimed to meet the strategic needs of digital healthcare and policymakers by providing opportunities to access the latest outputs of research and development in innovative digital healthcare.

The event featured a series of keynote speeches focusing on digital health foresight, specialized workshops, and the presentation of outstanding research papers. Additionally, a dedicated PhD research forum was held in this vital field. The conference also included an exhibition showcasing leading providers of digital healthcare services and products.

In a special statement to Emirates News Agency, Professor Mohammed Oudah (President of the Global Academy of Digital Health in the UK) said: "The Academy is the sponsor and founder of the Global Digital Health Conference worldwide, and this is the first time the conference is being held in the Middle East and North Africa. The field of digital health is very promising, and we expect it to help bridge the gap in providing healthcare to everyone, everywhere around the world."

He added, "The conference includes a group of doctors and scientists affiliated with the Academy who have developed workshops on the use of robotics in orthopedic surgeries and joint replacements of the knee and hip. We will also present our experience in collaboration with Gilmer in France in a workshop on using artificial intelligence to identify fractures."

Professor Oudah continued, "The conference will highlight key digital applications in pathology, mythology, smart hospitals, and pharmaceutical operations management, with the participation of our colleagues from Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi. The event will also focus on scientific research and development. We look forward to achieving scientific research outcomes that serve humanity through the formation of research and scientific teams from each workshop. We appreciate Al Ain University’s efforts in hosting this conference, which is the first of its kind in the region."

On his part, Prof. Ghaleb El Refae (President of Al Ain University) affirmed, "The convening of the 'Global Digital Health Conference - Knowledge Exchange and Empowerment' at Al Ain University reflects our firm commitment to supporting innovation and contributing to shaping the future of digital healthcare. In collaboration with our partners, we aim to make a tangible impact on research and development in this important field."

He added, "This conference is an exceptional opportunity to exchange ideas and expertise, and explore the latest innovations and technologies that will transform healthcare as we know it today. We are

confident that the discussions and workshops during this event will help drive technological advancements in the healthcare sector and enhance the capabilities of both local and international talents to keep pace with global developments."

The 2024 Global Digital Health Knowledge Exchange & Empowerment Conference



More than 54 university students from 8 Arab countries presented their research at Al Ain University



Under the patronage of Her Highness Dr. Shamma bint Mohammed bin Khalid Al Nahyan, the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalid Al Nahyan Cultural and Educational Institutions, Al Ain University represented by the Deanship of Student Affairs, in collaboration with the Tolerance club, organized the Annual Student Conference of the Association of Deanships of Student Affairs 2024

from February 19 to 21, 2024, under the theme: "Sustainability of University Life in Light of COP 28."

The conference attracted over 54 student researchers from eight Arab countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The conference covered various topics, including basic medical sciences, sustainable development and the role of university students in promoting it, artificial intelligence and its role in creating new job opportunities, and digital media and its role in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship among university students.

The opening ceremony was attended by Her Highness Dr. Shamma bint Mohammed bin Khalid Al Nahyan, who expressed her delight at being present at Al Ain University, emphasizing the humanitarian, academic, and cultural significance of the institution. She stated, "The theme of this year's conference, 'Sustainability of University Life,' presents significant challenges as it reflects the importance of the role universities play in achieving sustainable development and ensuring the quality of students' future and well-being." She highlighted the importance of scientific research, encouraging students to participate in initiatives and adopt a lifestyle that supports sustainability through their consumption choices and involvement in research focused on sustainability. She added, "Sustainability is not just a goal we seek to achieve but an ongoing journey of learning and development."

The opening ceremony was also attended by His Excellency Prof. Amro Ezzat Salama, the Secretary-General of the Association of Arab Universities, Dr. Noor El-Deen Atatreh, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Prof. Ghaleb Al Refae, President of Al Ain University, university presidents from Arab countries, Al Ain University professors, and participating students.

Dr. Noor El-Deen Atatreh, emphasized Al Ain University's commitment to preparing a new generation of high-level researchers, enhancing their research capabilities and scientific writing skills in line with the vision of the UAE, which supports scientific research and encourages youth innovation and creativity. He commended the university's efforts in organizing scientific conferences, cultural workshops, and creating an integrated educational and cultural environment.

Prof. Ghaleb Al Refae, highlighted the distinctive feature of this conference, which lies in the participation of students. He emphasized the general importance of scientific research and its specific significance for university students in terms of enhancing their knowledge, skills, and gaining new experiences in various fields. He expressed gratitude to all those involved in organizing the conference and the participating students, stating that their involvement in such conferences is a valuable asset. He affirmed Al Ain University's commitment to organizing more conferences focusing on scientific research and promoting student participation at the local, Arab, and global levels.

Prof. Ibtehal Abu Rezeq, Vice-President of the University for Development and Follow-up Affairs, Dean of Student Affairs, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Student Affairs Deans, noted that organizing this conference is part of Al Ain University's commitment as the headquarters of the Association of Student Affairs Deans in Arab universities affiliated with the Association of Arab Universities. The aim is to support researchers and scientific research while encouraging students to engage in research and innovation. She added that the conference aims to encourage students to participate in scientific research, developing their skills, refining their capabilities, providing opportunities for exchanging experiences among Arab university students, creating an environment for collaborative student work in scientific research, and exploring the potential and talents of young students in various fields and domains.

AAU organizes the 2nd AAU Health and Biomedical Postgraduate Symposium



The College of Pharmacy at Al Ain University organized the second AAU Health and Biomedical Postgraduate Symposium at Abu Dhabi Campus. More than 100 postgraduate students from 10 Arab and foreign countries participated, presenting over 120 research papers.

The symposium included diverse lectures, group discussions, scientific and social activities, and cultural games. It provides an opportunity for postgraduate students to enhance their scientific knowledge, develop skills, explore various career opportunities, interact with experts, and expand their professional network through the postgraduate student research competition. The competition covers several fields, including health and medical sciences, pharmacy and drug discovery, artificial intelligence in health sciences, medical engineering, nutrition and food sciences, pharmacy practice, and clinical sciences. The student research competition consists of three categories: oral presentations, poster presentations, and a three-minute thesis competition.

Al Ain University students won 8 awards in various research fields. Additionally, Dubai Medical College for Girls received 6 awards, the United Arab Emirates University received 5 awards, and 4 awards each went to the Jordan University of Science and Technology and Abu Dhabi University. The University of Sharjah secured 3 awards, while the Gulf Medical University and Qatar University each received 2 awards. The Arab University of Beirut, Hashemite University in Jordan, Ajman University, Khalifa University, Egypt International University, and Al-Zarqa University in Jordan each received one award.

Prof. Ghaleb Al Refae, the AAU President, emphasized that the university places great importance on scientific research and encourages students, especially postgraduate students, to produce scientific research and work on publishing it in reputable scientific journals. He highlighted that scientific research enhances students' skills for their future careers. He also affirmed that Al Ain University has been keen on establishing several research centers and scientific laboratories to support research activities.

In turn, Prof. Mohammed Ghattas, Dean of the College of Pharmacy at Al Ain University, highlighted the role played by the university's administration in supporting students through organizing conferences and workshops. These initiatives contribute to enhancing students' skills and provide them with opportunities to build relationships with individuals who share common interests in their fields of work.

RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

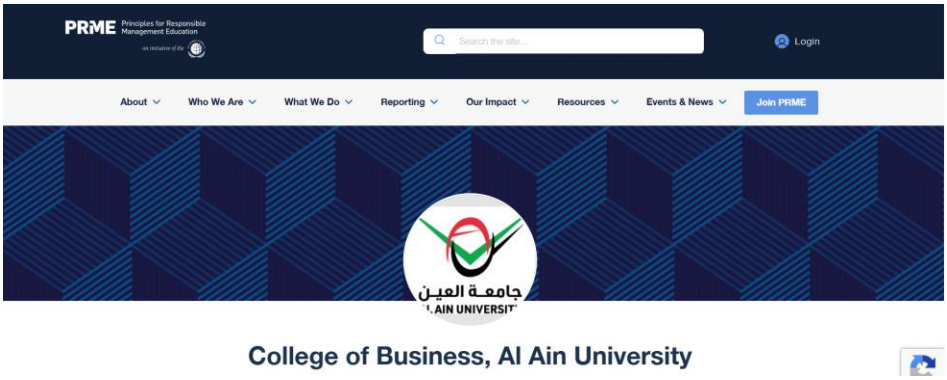
9. UN PRME connects AAU to international practice in SDG education and leadership

AAU's College of Business is a Communicating Signatory of the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Management Education and participates in the PRME Chapter Middle East. The network provides an international community for comparing responsible-management education, sustainability curricula, faculty development, youth engagement and institutional impact. AAU's 2024 College of Business reporting documents this engagement as part of its education and outreach programme.

A 2025 UN PRME case study documents the continuing institutional effect of this collaboration. Following PRME Carbon Literacy Training, the learning was brought back to the College and extended to faculty. The BBA curriculum was revised so that every course aligns with one or more SDGs. The case also describes research using the PRME and Higher Education for Good Youth Talks dataset—nearly one million contributions from 212 countries—to examine empathy, altruism, global awareness and young people's learning priorities, with the findings informing curriculum and institutional change. This later evidence demonstrates how an established international network converts comparative global evidence into local educational practice.

International input	AAU review and adaptation	Documented practice
UN PRME principles and peer network	Comparison with responsible-management education approaches internationally	Standing institutional participation through the College of Business
PRME Carbon Literacy Training	Faculty examine a common international climate-literacy approach	Training transferred into wider faculty development
HE4G Youth Talks global dataset	Research compares learning priorities and values across 212 countries	Evidence informs curriculum and institutional change
SDG curriculum alignment	International principles are mapped to local programme design	Every BBA course aligned with one or more SDGs in the documented 2025 continuation
International mentoring	AAU expertise is shared with students across countries	Resources and opportunities circulate through the network

Public evidence: E20 | E21 | E22 | E37 | E46 | E47



Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders: Dr. Iffat Sabir's Institutional Transformation at College of Business, Al Ain University



In 2023, Dr. Iffat Sabir, Deputy Dean of the College of Business (COB) at Al Ain University in the United Arab Emirates, faced a familiar challenge for academic leaders: turning an ambitious mission statement into reality. COB's mission spoke of developing "responsible leaders for tomorrow," yet sustainability was not yet embedded in teaching and learning. For Dr. Sabir, this gap represented both a challenge and an opportunity. Her engagement with PRME would become the catalyst for a journey of personal growth and college transformation that continues to unfold.

The Catalyst for Change

What began as a single assignment evolved into a driving force for college transformation when Dr. Sabir started working towards responsible education by engaging with PRME, as COB became a Signatory institution. With her hands-on and strategic approach, she first engaged through PRME's Carbon Literacy Training programme. Reflecting on the experience, she notes, "I am a learner of sustainability. And whatever I learn, I go back to my college and implement it."

"The training was eye-opening," she adds. "It shifted my perspective from thinking about sustainability as an abstract goal to seeing how it could be practically embedded in what we teach and how we lead." Inspired, Dr. Sabir and the College Dean guided college faculty members through the same programme the following semester, a multiplier effect showing how one individual's engagement with PRME can spark broader institutional momentum and transformation.

Research That Resonates Globally

Dr. Sabir continued taking advantage of opportunities from the PRME community and soon her contributions extended beyond her campus. A collaboration between PRME and the Higher Education for Good Foundation (HE4G) gave PRME Signatories access to the Youth Talks dataset: the largest global youth consultation ever conducted, with nearly one million contributions from young people across 212

countries. This partnership fostered research projects across the community, and Dr. Sabir was one who benefited from the robust dataset.

Her study, recently accepted in the International Journal of Management Education, examines how empathy, altruism, and global awareness shape young people's learning priorities. "The most interesting thing for me was the global youth," she reflects, highlighting the relevance to Al Ain's diverse student body representing over 40 nationalities. Her research confirmed that students with higher levels of empathy and altruistic orientation had significantly different expectations from their educational programs. For Dr. Sabir, this underscored the importance of embedding sustainability-based education into the curriculum and using evidence to guide institutional change.

Embedding Sustainability Across the College

From there, the sustainability perspective fed directly into curriculum reform. Under the Deanship team, the Bachelor in Business Administration program was revised by the faculty so that every course explicitly aligns with one or more UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Community engagement activities were also reframed to reinforce the same principles outside the classroom. "Sustainability is always around in whatever we are doing in our college - research, community engagement, any other initiative," she explains. "Now it is reflected 100 percent for my students."

Students, particularly women, have been central to this transformation. Recognizing the need to empower female students with skills, confidence, and networks, Dr. Sabir spearheaded a Women's Leadership Forum. The initiative connects students with industry mentors, provides training in leadership and decision-making, and highlights women's contributions both within society and at home, as a decision-maker. "It's about creating opportunities for students who have historically been underrepresented in leadership spaces to develop as leaders who can drive progress on the SDGs," she says.

This expansion demonstrates the ripple effect of how a single individual's PRME engagement can scale to create systemic transformation.

The Power of Community

For Dr. Sabir, PRME's greatest strength lies in its sense of collegiality, "You don't feel like an outsider. You feel part of the system, with a role to contribute." This stands in stark contrast to other sustainability networks. "You don't feel that warmth, that connection, that accessibility that I feel when working with PRME," she notes.

This culture is tangible in everyday interactions. "Send an email, and in a day you get back the response you're looking for, not a generic auto-reply," she explains. Partners are "always willing to work" and "not afraid of sharing their results," creating an environment where knowledge flows freely. "Most of the content is free, which I really love, because it gives my students access without paying a fee to learn about sustainability initiatives," she adds.

Through this collaborative ethos, Dr. Sabir extends PRME's impact beyond her institution. As a mentor in the PRME Students Mentorship Programme, she guides students from Beijing to California, sharing resources and opportunities that might otherwise remain inaccessible. "When I see their response, it's really like a change that PRME is making in the community. That is success."

From Individual to Institutional Transformation

This sense of belonging, combined with concrete resources from Senior Leadership and opportunities for engagement, has allowed Dr. Sabir to transform not only her own approach to education but also the College of Business at Al Ain University's capacity to develop responsible leaders. Her story illustrates how one individual's engagement with PRME can ripple outward, shaping faculty, students, institutions, and communities in ways that bring responsible management education to life.

MOU Signed Between College of Business at Al Ain University and Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan



The College of Business at Al Ain Campus, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan to enhance collaboration in joint research, knowledge exchange, and policy dialogues on key issues such as sustainability, economic development, and climate resilience. The MOU was signed by Prof. Zafar Hussain, Dean of the College of Business at Al Ain University, and Dr. Sajid Amin, Deputy Executive Director of SDPI. The partnership aims to open opportunities for international training and consultancy for both students and faculty members in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By leveraging the expertise of both institutions, the collaboration is committed to advancing impactful research that addresses urgent global challenges.

INTERNATIONAL CO-DESIGN AND TRANSFER

10. International university partnerships enable joint design, testing and dissemination

AAU's international agreements provide recurring mechanisms for joint research, training, seminars, workshops, academic exchange and the transfer of expertise. The 2024 agreements with Murdoch University, Management and Science University and Zhejiang Institute of Geology strengthen this infrastructure. The German Jordanian University agreement expressly covers joint research, training,

workshops, seminars and innovative technical and e-learning programmes. Earlier AAU agreements with MSU Malaysia and the Association of Arab Universities include exchange of information and data, research projects and joint events.

A completed example is the Global Engineering Project with the University of Mount Union in the United States. Mixed student teams jointly designed and tested a solar-powered water and flood alarm system using load sensors and wireless communication between a sensing station and a monitoring station. The project enabled participants from two countries to compare design ideas, integrate different technical contributions and produce an applied resilience solution relevant to SDGs 6, 9, 11 and 13.



Exhibit 4. AAU and University of Mount Union participants in the joint water and flood alarm project, combining international student co-design, sensors, communications and monitoring. Source: AAU [E34].

Public evidence: E28 | E30 | E31 | E32 | E33 | E34 | E35 | E36

FROM COMPARISON TO IMPLEMENTATION

11. AAU's evidence demonstrates a complete international best-practice cycle

Across institutional benchmarking, international standards, collaborative research and joint projects, AAU follows a consistent cycle. International reference points define the comparison; research and external review test performance or methods; responsible units adapt findings; implementation occurs in programmes, operations or projects; and knowledge is shared through publications, conferences and networks.

Stage	AAU practice	2024 evidence	Result
Benchmark	Select an international standard, ranking, peer setting or research question	QAA, THE, UI GreenMetric, QS, ISO and international research designs	Common comparative basis
Review	Examine performance, feedback, data, methods and alternative approaches	External accreditation, ranking results, peer review and international forums	Validated findings
Adapt	Interpret evidence through institutional units, committees and partner teams	QAIRC processes, research groups, colleges and joint technical teams	Context-appropriate practice
Implement	Apply changes in management systems, curricula, research and pilot projects	Certified management systems, research projects and partnership activity	Operational SDG action
Share	Publish, present, train, demonstrate and exchange expertise	DOI publications, WEEC, digital-health conference, workshops and networks	Transferable knowledge
Improve	Use external validation and new evidence in recurring cycles	QAA monitoring, recurring rankings, accreditation and continuing partnerships	Sustained enhancement

COMPARISON BECOMES PRACTICE

AAU does not treat international collaboration as exchange alone: comparative findings are routed through governance, research, professional learning, curriculum, management systems, technical projects and public dissemination.

Public evidence: E04 | E07 | E09 | E11 | E20 | E23 | E24 | E25 | E28 | E29 | E34 | E37 | E38 | E39 | E40

EVIDENCE YEAR AND CONTINUITY

12. The 2024 evidence is part of a continuing international programme

The required reporting-year evidence is centred on 2024. In that year AAU completed an independent international quality review; held or published results in international sustainability and institutional benchmarking systems; obtained international management-system certifications; participated in the World Environmental Education Congress; co-organized the Global Digital Health Conference; established research and innovation partnerships with international academic and industry partners; and published cross-country and comparative research relevant to multiple SDGs.

Later public evidence confirms continuation. In 2025, the College of Business and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Pakistan established cooperation in sustainable-development research and policy, while UN PRME documented the transfer of international carbon-literacy training and global youth evidence into AAU curriculum and faculty development. In 2026, AAU participated in the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Indonesia and received an AACSB Global Impact Award, extending the University's international exchange and recognition of impact-oriented practice.

Period	International comparative activity	Institutional significance
Established foundation	International agreements, UN PRME participation, THE-SDG forum and the Mount Union co-design project	Standing routes for comparison, co-design and knowledge transfer
2024 core year	QAA, ISO, global rankings, WEEC, digital-health exchange, research partnerships and comparative publications	Multiple direct forms of review and best-practice development
2025 continuity	SDPI Pakistan partnership and documented UN PRME curriculum and faculty-development outcomes	International evidence translated into continuing institutional practice
2026 continuity	Global Sustainable Development Congress and AACSB Global Impact recognition	International exchange and external validation remain active

Public evidence: E20 | E22 | E34 | E44 | E45 | E46 | E47 | E48 | E49

INSTITUTIONAL CONCLUSION

13. AAU reviews comparative approaches and develops international best practice for the SDGs

Al Ain University answers Yes to Indicator 17.2.4. Independent 2024 QAA evidence confirms AAU's Benchmarking Policy, use of international rankings and accreditation feedback, committee oversight of improvement actions, and whole-university Sustainable Development Initiative recognized as good practice. These mechanisms establish an institutional system for reviewing comparative approaches and developing best practice on the SDGs.

The system operates across quality assurance, campus management, research, education and applied projects. International standards provide common reference points; comparative studies examine countries, methods and interventions; global networks and conferences enable peer review and exchange; and partnerships convert expertise into training, pilot projects and technical solutions. AAU then applies and shares the resulting knowledge through institutional processes, publications, curricula, management systems and joint projects.

FINAL RESPONSE: YES

Through international benchmarking, accreditation, standards, comparative research, global networks, international forums and joint projects, AAU reviews alternative approaches and develops, applies and shares international best practice for tackling the SDGs.

13.1 Submission evidence summary

Required component	Principal public evidence	Documented result
Institutional comparative review	2024 QAA review and Benchmarking Policy	International evidence informs continuous improvement
International SDG comparison	THE, UI GreenMetric and QS sustainability systems	AAU performance is compared through common global frameworks
International best-practice standards	QAA accreditation and 2024 ISO certifications	Externally validated practices are implemented
Comparative SDG research	Seven AAU-affiliated 2024 studies	Transferable evidence across environmental, health, education and economic SDGs
International knowledge exchange	WEEC and Global Digital Health Conference	Methods, standards, research and technologies are reviewed and shared
Joint practice development	Zhejiang, Siemens Energy, Mount Union and university agreements	Research, pilots, co-design and expertise exchange
Continuity	UN PRME, SDPI and 2026 engagement	The programme continues beyond 2024

PUBLIC EVIDENCE REGISTER

14. Public evidence register

These public sources support AAU's institutional comparative-review system, 2024 evidence and continuing international best-practice activity.

14.1 Methodology and direct AAU evidence

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E01	THE methodology	Indicator wording, evidence-year and public-evidence framework	Open public evidence
E02	AAU SDG page	Direct institutional evidence for Indicator 17.2.4	Open public evidence
E03	AAU evidence PDF	Public evidence for comparative approaches and best practice	Open public evidence
E50	United Nations	SDG 17 and the global partnership context	Open public evidence

14.2 Independent review, standards and institutional governance

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E04	Independent QAA review	Benchmarking, accreditation feedback, committee action and SDG good practice	Open public evidence
E05	AAU news	QAA international institutional accreditation achieved in 2024	Open public evidence
E06	AAU news	Institutional celebration of QAA and QS external recognition	Open public evidence
E07	AAU news	2024 environmental, health and safety, and facility-management certifications	Open public evidence
E08	AAU news	Five-star QS Stars institutional assessment in 2024	Open public evidence
E15	AAU report	Institutional activities and results for 2023-2024	Open public evidence
E16	AAU strategy	Planning, research, partnership and monitoring framework	Open public evidence
E17	AAU research center	Interdisciplinary sustainability-research structure	Open public evidence
E18	AAU deanship	Institutional responsibility for research and graduate studies	Open public evidence
E19	AAU policies	Public governance of research activity	Open public evidence

14.3 International sustainability benchmarking

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E09	AAU news	AAU's published THE Impact Rankings 2024 result	Open public evidence
E10	THE	International university SDG comparison platform	Open public evidence
E11	UI GreenMetric	AAU's 2024 overall and category-level sustainability results	Open public evidence
E12	UI GreenMetric	Common definitions, indicators, evidence and scoring framework	Open public evidence
E13	AAU news	AAU's QS Sustainability 2024 position	Open public evidence
E14	QS	International sustainability comparison and participant context	Open public evidence

14.4 International networks and knowledge exchange

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E20	UN PRME	AAU College of Business participation in an international responsible-management education network	Open public evidence
E21	AAU College of Business	2024 institutional record of responsible-management activity	Open public evidence
E22	UN PRME	Documented transfer of international training and global research evidence into AAU practice	Open public evidence
E23	AAU engagement	Research and practice exchange at WEEC 2024	Open public evidence
E24	AAU conference	International digital-health knowledge exchange in 2024	Open public evidence
E25	Conference programme	Comparative methods, standards, workshops, peer review and international expertise	Open public evidence
E26	AAU conference	Research presentations from eight Arab countries in 2024	Open public evidence
E27	AAU symposium	Health and biomedical research exchange in 2024	Open public evidence
E44	UAEU-THE forum	International review of SDG 6 approaches and Impact Rankings data	Open public evidence
E45	WAM	Independent report of the international SDG 6 forum	Open public evidence

14.5 International research and practice partnerships

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E28	AAU partnership	2024 exchange of expertise and research with Zhejiang Institute of Geology	Open public evidence
E29	AAU-industry partnership	Joint research and pilot projects with Siemens Energy	Open public evidence
E30	AAU partnership	2024 academic and research cooperation with Murdoch University	Open public evidence
E31	AAU partnership	2024 cooperation with Management and Science University, Malaysia	Open public evidence
E32	AAU partnership	Information exchange, joint research and events with partners in Jordan and Malaysia	Open public evidence
E33	Partner university	Joint research, training, workshops and innovative programmes with German Jordanian University	Open public evidence
E34	AAU project	International co-design and testing of a water and flood alarm system	Open public evidence
E35	AAU-NGO partnership	Research, training and expertise exchange with Educators Without Borders International	Open public evidence
E36	AAU engagement	2024 Southeast Asian university collaboration	Open public evidence
E51	AAU-government partnership	Environmental research cooperation with Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi	Open public evidence
E52	Abu Dhabi Media Office	University network for environmental research and innovation	Open public evidence
E53	WAM	External evidence of the Abu Dhabi Environmental Research Network	Open public evidence

14.6 AAU-affiliated comparative and international research in 2024

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E37	Peer-reviewed study	Cross-country comparison of sustainability reporting in the UK and Germany	Open public evidence
E38	Peer-reviewed study	Comparison of activity-based and conventional learning approaches	Open public evidence
E39	Peer-reviewed study	Comparative deep-learning methods for crop and land monitoring	Open public evidence
E40	Peer-reviewed study	Global modelling of carbon, soil and climate relationships	Open public evidence
E41	Peer-reviewed study	Global and regional comparison of cataract-related visual impairment	Open public evidence
E42	Peer-reviewed study	Empirical evidence for digital financial inclusion among small enterprises	Open public evidence
E43	Peer-reviewed study	Comparative synthesis of intelligent transport approaches for sustainable cities	Open public evidence

14.7 Continuing international best-practice development

ID	Source class	Relevance	Public source
E46	AAU partnership	2025 sustainable-development research and policy agreement with SDPI Pakistan	Open public evidence
E47	International partner	Independent listing of SDPI partnerships and MoUs	Open public evidence
E48	AAU engagement	Participation in the Global Sustainable Development Congress 2026	Open public evidence
E49	AAU recognition	AACSB Global Impact Awards recognition in 2026	Open public evidence