

AURAK Research Strategy

2020

The American University of Ras Al Khaimah (AURAK) has a research strategy that explicitly addresses expectations articulated in Stipulation 4.1 related to research and scholarly activity in the *Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation* of the Commission for Academic Accreditation of the UAE Ministry of Education. This research strategy aligns with the university's strategic goal, strategic objective, and strategic actions related to research, and reflects a number of the university's values as articulated in the AURAK Strategic Plan 2019-2024. This research strategy is designed to assist faculty in meeting the university's research expectations for full-time faculty. The research goal, objective, actions, strategy, and promotion requirements, in turn, contribute directly to advancing the university's vision and mission.

Strategic Vision

Through inspired teaching, ***research, creative work***, and community engagement, AURAK sets a new standard in the Gulf Region for student-centered excellence that empowers graduates to change the world. [emphasis added]

Strategic Mission

To be a leading institution in the Gulf Region, the American University of Ras Al Khaimah:

- Provides a transformational, student-centered learning experience based on the North American model of higher education enriched by attention to the culture of the region.
- Engages students, faculty, and staff in innovative undergraduate and graduate programs and ***high-impact research***. [emphasis added]
- Prepares future leaders and entrepreneurs through community outreach and ***creative initiatives*** involving local, regional, and global partners. [emphasis added]

The American University of Ras Al Khaimah pursues this mission as an independent, public, state-owned, non-profit, coeducational institution.

AURAK Values Related to Research

Integrity: To model adherence to a code of honesty, transparency, and accountability.

Collaborative Engagement: To ensure continual involvement of students, faculty, and staff in activities that contribute to the success of the institution and to the solution of local, regional, and global problems.

Scholarship and Research: To advance knowledge through discovery, dissemination, application, and community engagement.

Academic Freedom: To cultivate an environment of critical thought and enquiry, tolerance for divergent views and beliefs, and an open and respectful exchange of ideas.

Sustainability: To nurture an appreciation of the shared responsibility of humankind to preserve planet Earth for future generations.

Strategic Research Goal

Strategic Goal 3 – Offer leading-edge academic programs and community engagement initiatives that meet local, regional, and international needs and **generate high-impact research**. [emphasis added]

Strategic Research Objective

Strategic Objective 3.4 – Promote high-impact research (KPI's: 10% increase in scholarly peer-reviewed, indexed publications per year; 50% increase in external research funding by 2024; university ranking – top 8 in UAE) – see QA Manual for additional information on KPI's.

Strategic Research Actions

Strategic Action 3.4.1 – Increase community and public awareness of research.

Strategic Action 3.4.2 – Promote and enhance student research.

Strategic Action 3.4.3 – Increase financial, administrative, and logistical support for faculty research.

Strategic Action 3.4.4 – Increase research collaborations that result in Scopus-indexed publications by AURAK faculty in collaboration with researchers at international peer universities.

Strategic Action 3.4.5 – Increase research collaborations that result in Scopus-indexed publications by AURAK faculty in collaboration with researchers at international peer universities.

Strategic Action 3.4.6 – Revise faculty promotion and scholarly activity award policies to encourage faculty to publish high impact factor research.

Strategic Faculty and Staff Excellence Goal

Strategic Goal 4 – Enhance faculty and staff excellence through improved recruitment, retention, and professional development

Strategic Collaboration Objective

Strategic Objective 4.4. – Nurture a culture of collaboration among faculty and staff

Strategic Collaboration Actions

Strategic Action 4.4.2 – Identify programs and research themes that cut across schools, disciplines, and units (e.g., sustainability, innovation, public policy).

Key Research Priorities

AURAK research expectations are translated to “key priorities” as follows:

- Recruit and retain high quality faculty members, who can work at the interface of the University’s disciplines;
- Provide opportunities for current faculty and staff to develop expertise in the interdisciplinary areas bridging the University’s current program offerings, with particular emphasis on sustainability;
- Provide support for faculty members to undertake research visits and attend conferences;
- Provide an efficient research support system, ensuring that well in excess of 5% of total annual operational expenditures are devoted to research support;
- Provide appropriate administrative support, equipment and facilities to support research for programs offered at an advanced level;
- Better promote AURAK’s research expertise and disseminate research outputs effectively;
- Capitalize on public relations opportunities to promote AURAK and attract top quality students who may later develop into research staff;
- Be cognizant of AURAK’s position in relation to other UAE competitors, and how to further improve its standing;
- Establish research links with other institutions locally, regionally, and globally.
- Share research outcomes internally and promote cross-disciplinary partnerships to develop new lines of research;
- Provide support and advice through a variety of means, particularly mentoring and the dissemination of good practices amongst faculty members of the different programs;
- Adopt creative approaches to the use of existing resources and the acquisition of new ones;
- Develop links with businesses and other potential funders locally, regionally and globally; and
- Develop a better understanding of the priorities of external funders as well as new and emerging research topics and funding opportunities.

Compliance with Stipulation 4 of the CAA Standards

AURAK's Research Strategy and policies that undergird that strategy ensure that the university is in compliance with Stipulation 4 of the CAA Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation.

Elements of Stipulation 4.1 are addressed as follows:

- Policies that define its understanding of the nature and purpose of research – A number of AURAK policies explicitly address the university's understanding of the nature and purpose of research:
 - Faculty Workload Policy – explicitly identifies research as a fundamental component of the faculty workload assignment.
 - Faculty Hiring Policy – specifies that individuals hired as faculty members must be equipped to “expand their scope of knowledge through professional development activities”, which, of course, includes research and scholarship.
 - Faculty Annual Evaluation Policy – specifies that Research, Scholarship, and Creative Endeavors comprise one of the three components of a faculty member's performance that are evaluated annually for evidence of compliance with expectations of the faculty role.
 - Faculty Probation Policy – specifies that confirmation of a faculty member's initial employment contract in the second year of employment is dependent on evidence of a research/creative works agenda that has resulted in products consistent with expectations for successful contract renewal.
 - Faculty Contract Renewal Policy – explains the importance of research, scholarship, and creative endeavors and notes that research “involves the creation of new approaches to understanding and explaining phenomena and the application of knowledge and expertise to address needs in society and in the profession.” Furthermore, the policy explicitly states that “Faculty evaluation for contract renewal for faculty at the rank of Assistant Professor and above expects research, scholarly, and creative works as indicated in the specific criteria described” in the policy.
 - Faculty Promotion Policy – explicitly addresses the university's understanding of the nature and purpose of research as follows:

High quality original scholarship, research, and creative activity are a distinguishing feature of a strong university, and the American University of Ras Al Khaimah expects its faculty to be actively engaged in their academic fields. The university insists on the rigor and seriousness of the research conducted by its faculty, as evidenced by such factors as publication in international, indexed journals and with academically reputable publishers, a strong citation index/impact factor, a growing

reputation in one's field, and others. The university also understands that not all scholarly activities are appropriate for all disciplines, and so encourages a range of activities from traditional research and scholarly publication, to other contributions to one's field, to creative works such as literary works, juried exhibitions of visual arts, and performances.

The policy then goes on to provide specific criteria related to Research, Scholarship, and Creative Endeavors that must be met for promotion from one faculty rank to another.

- Ethical Issues in Research Policy – states that “AURAK seeks to increase the output of high quality research that meets international standards and promotes the university’s reputation as a respected research active academic institution.” The policy further states that “Society is dependent on the validity and reliability of the results of scientific work and academic scholarship. This expectation for reliable and valid research carries with it an ethical commitment to pursuing research in ways that ensure that this expectation is met.”
 - Research Code of Conduct – commits the university to the definition of research provided in *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*: “the quest for knowledge obtained through systematic study and thinking, observation and experimentation”. The Code goes on to argue that “in order to gain the confidence of society, the research of every institution needs to be valid and reliable” and explains that the Research Code of Conduct “is intended to articulate the principles and standards of good research practice as a basis for a high standard of research quality at the university.”
 - Research Publication Incentive Policy – underscores the university’s understanding of the nature and purpose of research, stating that “AURAK’s commitment to research is enshrined in its mission in that it commits the institution to engage students and faculty in high-impact research.”
 - President’s Awards for Faculty Policy – provides for the annual recognition of “faculty members who perform in each of the areas of faculty evaluation (teaching, research, and service) at a level that is exemplary and who serve as role models for their faculty colleagues.” The policy further specifies that the Presidents Outstanding Researcher Award “will be presented to a faculty member who has exhibited distinction in research and scholarship through internationally recognized publications and presentations and whose research has significantly advanced the profession or discipline and the University's mission and strategic objectives.”
- A research strategy with KPIs and target levels that is approved, monitored and reviewed by the governing body – this Research Strategy is directly based on the goal, objectives, strategic actions, and KPI’s contained in AURAK’s Strategic Plan 2019-2024 that was approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2019.

- Policies that define its understanding of the nature and scope of scholarly activity, professional development in relevant vocational domains, the maintenance of academic and professional currency, and the development of learning and teaching approaches appropriate to higher education – a number of AURAK policies address one or more of these expectations with regard to research and scholarship:
 - Nature and scope of scholarly activity
 - Faculty Contract Renewal Policy – as described above
 - Faculty Promotion Policy – as described above
 - Ethical Issues in Research Policy – as described above
 - Research Code of Conduct – as describe above
 - Professional development, maintenance of academic and professional currency, and development of learning and teaching approaches appropriate to higher education
 - Professional Development for Faculty Policy – this policy articulates the university’s commitment to supporting professional development for faculty, noting that “professional development is necessary to assist faculty to upgrade their skills and to conduct and report on their research.” The policy further specifies that faculty development activities include “Scheduled in-service workshops & seminars on topics identified by the faculty as areas needing improvement, e.g., assessment, improved use of IT in the classroom and new pedagogy practices.”

- Policies and procedures relating to the institution’s support for research, scholarly activity, creative activity and innovation, that are communicated clearly to faculty and staff – a number of AURAK policies and procedures relating to support for research, scholarly activity, and creative activity and innovation exist. These policies and procedures include:
 - Professional Development for Faculty Policy – this policy provides for financial support for faculty to attend a professional refereed conference to present a paper and sabbatical and research leave for the purpose of pursuing a significant research, scholarly, or creative project
 - Research Publication Incentive Policy and Procedure – this policy and associated procedure provide monetary incentives to faculty for publishing their research in reputable journals and scholarly books involving peer review.
 - Research Support Policy – this policy identifies specific mechanisms by which the Office of Research and Community Services supports research at the university, including:

- housing the Office of Sponsored Programs, which assists faculty in identifying potential grants, preparing grant proposals and budgets, and administering grants that the faculty receive
 - organizing the AURAK Faculty Research Colloquium
 - promoting a culture of research and scholarship at the university and for the public
- Seed Grant Funding Program Policy – this policy “makes available on a competitive basis small seed grants to full-time faculty members who demonstrate the need for modest financial support to provide the foundation for more comprehensive external funding applications and that will be disseminated in peer reviewed scholarly journal publications.” The application for these grants is available on the Office of Research and Community Service webpage of the university website.

With regard to the communication of these policies and procedures, this is achieved through:

Faculty Handbook available on the university website

Research Handbook – under preparation for release in Fall Semester 2020

New Faculty Orientation Program offered annually to faculty new to the university

Announcements from the Office of Research and Community Service

- Policies that make explicit reference to the promotion of research that integrates and demonstrates principles of sustainability – AURAK demonstrates its commitment to promoting research that integrates and demonstrates principles of sustainability through its:
 - Ethics in Research Policy and its associated Research Code of Conduct – in its “Responsibility Principle”, the Research Code specifies that “Responsibility also entails conducting research that is scientifically and/or societally relevant and that is not harmful to the environment.” Also, in its Standards for Good Research Practice, the Research Code requires that researchers “take into consideration the interests of any humans and animals involved, including test subjects, as well as any risks to the researchers and the environment, while always observing the relevant statutory regulations and codes of conduct”.
 - Research Strategy – the strategy references elements of the AURAK Strategic Plan 2019-2024 that address sustainability. Specifically, one of the university’s values articulated in the plan is that of Sustainability – “to nurture an appreciation of the shared responsibility of humankind to preserve planet Earth for future generations.” In addition, the Research Strategy references Strategic Action 4.4.2 – Identify programs and research themes that cut across schools, disciplines, and units (e.g., sustainability, innovation, public policy). Also, one of

the “key priorities” identified in the Research Strategy identifies sustainability as a focus for interdisciplinary research – “Provide opportunities for current faculty and staff to develop expertise in the interdisciplinary areas bridging the University’s current program offerings, with particular emphasis on sustainability”.

- Policies related to ethical considerations in research, including, as appropriate, the use of human and animal subjects – AURAK addresses this expectation through its:
 - Ethical Issues in Research Policy, the Research Code of Conduct, and the Research Misconduct Procedure
 - Ethical Issues in Research Policy – To enable researchers at AURAK to meet their ethical responsibilities for producing sound research, this policy provides for the establishment of an AURAK Research Code of Conduct which will be located within the university’s Research Handbook. This code will be based on the following five key principles:
 - Honesty
 - Scrupulousness
 - Transparency
 - Independence
 - Responsibility
 - Research Code of Conduct – The Research Code operationalizes the principles of ethical conduct identified in the Ethical Issues in Research Policy in the form of standards of good research practice. These standards address explicitly ethical considerations in the use of human and animal subjects, requiring that researchers “take into consideration the interests of any humans and animals involved, including test subjects, as well as any risks to the researchers and the environment, while always observing the relevant statutory regulations and codes of conduct.” These expectations regarding ethical treatment of human and animal subjects are elaborated in detail in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of the Research Code.
 - Research Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure – This procedure is designed to establish a fair and transparent process by which matters related to suspected misconduct associated with research may be resolved and, if necessary appropriate disciplinary action taken.
- Policy governing intellectual property rights conforming to UAE laws and regulations – AURAK addresses intellectual property rights through the following:
 - Copyright and Intellectual Property Policy – This policy defines intellectual property and identifies conditions under which AURAK may claim ownership of works created by faculty, staff, or students.

- Research Involving AURAK's Identity, Intellectual Property and Resources Policy – This policy applies to research on AURAK's governance, management, and operation and specifies safeguards regarding the release of sensitive or confidential information regarding the university.
- Research Code of Conduct – The Research Code addresses intellectual property rights of AURAK faculty, staff, and students in its Standards for Good Research Practice. Specifically, the Research Code specifies that:
 - In research with external partners, researchers must make clear written agreements about research integrity and related matters such as intellectual property rights.
 - Authors who present the work of others; words, data, or ideas with the implication that they are their own, without proper acknowledgment of the source in a form appropriate for the medium of presentation, are committing theft of intellectual property.
 - If there is any possibility that a copyright or patent application might emerge from a group project, a written agreement within the group should specify the rights, if any, of each member of the group to the intellectual property.
 - A contract for research consultation must be approved in advance, to ensure, among other things, that remuneration is related to specific services and that the university's legitimate intellectual property rights are not compromised.
 - Early understandings should be reached in any collaboration about sharing of research resources and materials, authorship credit and responsibilities, and entitlement to any revenue from marketing of intellectual property through patents, copyrights, or licensing agreements.
 - Failure to comply with the provisions of external funding awards might compromise the university's claims to intellectual property.
- Policies to encourage and recognize the involvement of students in research, as appropriate to the level of study – AURAK addresses this requirement through its:
 - Faculty Contract Renewal Policy and Faculty Promotion Policy – both policies require faculty to document evidence of excellence in teaching that includes their use of high-impact education practices which specifically include involvement of students in research
 - Research Publication Incentive Policy – this policy states that “AURAK’s commitment to research is enshrined in its mission in that it commits the institution to engage students and faculty in high-impact research.”
 - Strategic Action 3.4.2 – this strategic action calls on the university to “promote and enhance student research”.

- Research Code of Conduct – the Research Code explicitly recognizes the involvement of students in research. For example, the research code specifies that “if there is any possibility that a copyright or patent application might emerge from a group project, a written agreement within the group should specify the rights, if any, of each member of the group to the intellectual property.”

Elements of Stipulation 4.2 are met as follows:

- Detailed plan to ensure that faculty are engaged in research and/or scholarly activity – AURAK’s detailed plan is contained in this Research Strategy.
- As an institution offering graduate-level programs, budgeting more than 5% of the total operational expenditure to support faculty research, innovation, creative and scholarly activities on an annual basis – This requirement is specifically stated in this Research Strategy under Key Research Priorities.
- Establishing a clear set of procedures for securing research support – The AURAK Office of Research and Community Service has three goals that ensure that this requirement is met:
 - To provide analysis, research, and information to the School Deans as they work with faculty to develop and implement processes and procedures to encouraging scholarship and research.
 - To assist faculty in looking for funding opportunities and collaborations.
 - To review and implement research and community service policies and procedures.

The Office of Research and Community Service is responsible for disseminating to the university community a Research Handbook containing a compilation of all procedures in place for securing research support.

- Ensuring that all faculty are regularly informed of research opportunities – This is a key responsibility of the Office of Research and Community Service.
- Providing appropriate administrative support, equipment and facilities to support research for programs offered at an advanced level – This is one of the Key Research Priorities identified in this Research Strategy.

Stipulation 4.3 – The institution encourages collaborative relationships for research, scholarship, and creative activity with external entities – This expectation is addressed through the university’s Strategic Collaboration Objective and Strategic Collaboration Actions presented above, as well as through a number of the Key Research Priorities contained in this Research Strategy.

Stipulation 4.4 – The institution defines its expectations for faculty research and scholarly activity, and embodies these in appointment criteria, faculty performance evaluations and criteria for promotion. This requirement is addressed in the following policies described above:

- Faculty Workload Policy
- Faculty Hiring Policy
- Faculty Annual Evaluation Policy
- Faculty Probation Policy
- Faculty Contract Renewal Policy
- Faculty Promotion Policy

Stipulation 4.5 – AURAK addresses requirements related to Research and Scholarly Activity Outputs as follows:

- Research output is well documented – Such documentation is provided annually in the Annual Report of the Division of Academic Affairs and Student Success.
- Results of research are utilized in serving the community and in support of national goals – This expectation is addressed through a number of the Key Research Priorities described in this Research Strategy.
- Output of research, scholarly activity, creative activity and innovation is regularly evaluated – This expectation is addressed through the Annual Operational Plan of the Office of Research and Community Service.

Review and Updating of the Research Strategy

To ensure currency of the university's Research Strategy and progress in its implementation, the Research Committee will review the strategy annually and make a report to the Provost. That report will contain any recommendations for action needed to ensure effective implementation of the strategy arising from the review, as well as any recommendations for revisions of the strategy.