

QTL\_net wishes its friends and partners joyful holidays and a prosperous New Year!

## End of an Era, Dawn of New Possibilities



### A Journey Remembered - Farewell Message from Prof. Tashmin Khamis

Eleven years ago in March 2013 I was asked by the then Provost, Greg Moran to establish a centralised Academic Support Service for [Quality Assurance & Improvement](#) and [Professional Development on Teaching](#) and [Blended & Digital Learning](#) for faculty. As Founding Director establishing what we now fondly call, QTL\_net, [the Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning](#), has been the highlight of my career. We have grown from a team of two people to a [global unit of 20 academic support staff](#) across Pakistan and East Africa. Over the past decade QTL\_net has reached more than 10,000 participants across AKU (10% of whom are from within the AKDN). The external Unit Review commended the world-class capacity development programmes and how embedded QTL\_net is across AKU, creating safe, inclusive and interdisciplinary spaces for faculty.

QTL\_net over the past decade has:

- Established AKU's first [Academic Quality and Teaching & Learning Frameworks](#).
- Established the cyclical review process of academic programmes.
- Adopted internationally certified peer-led, experiential, faculty development programmes such as TLEW and RTT resulting in an enhancement of teaching practices.

- Provided a [reward and recognition structure for teaching](#), including [teaching dossiers](#) as part of academic promotion, and through the establishment of the [Haile T Debas Teachers Academy](#) which now has 35 members.
- Supported the transition to online learning at AKU during the COVID-19 pandemic catalysing AKU's first Digital Learning Strategy and now the [OTHE programme](#), that is being used by Academics without Borders (AWB) for other LMICs.
- Championed an Outcome Based Education approach to curriculum.
- Built capacity on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), resulting in a six-fold increase of SoTL publication citations from AKU faculty over the last five years.
- Achieved international recognition, including through [AKU's accreditation by Advance HE \(UK\)](#), enabling faculty to gain a teaching qualification through Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships. AKU remains the only institution in Pakistan and East Africa to have achieved this and proudly boasts 150 HEA fellows!
- Forged external partnerships to support and build capacity for University Improvement with KIU and the University of Chitral in Northern Pakistan, the IIS in London and UCA, as well as extending best practices in HE quality circles (INQAAHE, EAQAN, IUCEA, HEC, DAAD, HAQAA).

This has all been possible because of the formidable team I have had the pleasure to lead. I must mention Azra Naseem, Director BDL, Faisal Notta, Director QEC, and Dr Khairulnissa Ajani, Director TL who lead and empower the Specialists and Associates under them, as well as Sahreen Chauhan, Manager of TEACH and the Teachers Academy as well Jannat Khan, our Executive Officer and the admin teams. My thanks to the many mentors who have journeyed with us.

Without the faculty who came forward with the demand and the support of AKU Presidents, Provosts, Board, Deans, Associate Deans, Library, IT, Registrar's Office, DED, CIME, ELE\_net and others in the Academy, QTL\_net would not be as successful as it has been. I thank particularly the Teaching

Champions, our resource pool of FDWs and Trainers as well as our Teachers Academy Chairs, Sadia Fatima and Shanaz Cassum, that make QTL sustainable.

It has been my honour to have served AKU as the first Vice Provost (Quality, Teaching and Learning). I now leave QTL\_net in the safe and capable hands of Professor, Dean Jane Rarieya who has been a valued member of QTL\_net since we began, and who I know will take QTL\_net to new heights.

***Thank you for the opportunity. Asantenti Sana, Khuda Hafiz.***



Prof. Tashmin Khamis reflected on her impactful work in QTL\_net, and around leadership, mentorship and across the borders. Below is a **link to Tashmin's special talk titled, 'A decade of QTL\_net, Lessons in change management and Leadership Development.'**

**Headlines**

## A Bittersweet Goodbye

The team bid farewell to Professor Tashmin Khamis, Vice Provost (Quality, Teaching, and Learning) and visionary founder of QTL\_net, in bittersweet events held in Karachi and Nairobi. The gatherings were filled with warmth and gratitude as President Sulaiman Shahabuddin, Provost Tania Bubela, other senior leadership and countless faculty and staff who shared in her journey came together to wish her well and celebrate her legacy of excellence and innovation. During her Farwell speech and in a special reflective talk held separately, Tashmin reflected on her impactful work in QTL\_net, and around leadership, mentorship and across the borders.







## QTL\_net in Numbers

In 2024, QTL\_net trained **1500 plus participants** from AKU faculty and staff, students and the AKDN in close to 50 workshops and activities that took place in Karachi, Gilgit, Chitral, Nairobi and London!

## Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop



Exciting developments unfolded in Nairobi, Kenya, as the Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning (QTL\_net) hosted the Canadian certified Training of Trainers (ToT) course, marking a significant milestone. Master certified trainers Professors Tashmin Khamis and Jane Rarieya trained two more ToTs to enable both AKU and UCA to run the Canadian certified Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW/TLEW). Dr. Khairulnissa Ajani Director of QTL\_net at the Aga Khan University (AKU), and Dr Mariia Guzikova, Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology at the University of Central Asia (UCA), are now certified master trainers of the Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW) for the globally acclaimed Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) Canada. Together, they

conducted the FDW to prepare a new generation of skilled facilitators, who in turn facilitated the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Workshop (TLEW) for faculty from East Africa and Central Asia.

This achievement strengthens the teaching and learning culture within AKU and UCA, paving the way for deeper collaboration among the two AKDN higher education sister institutions. It heralds a new era of shared knowledge and capacity building, empowering faculty across regions to enhance their teaching practices.

## Pioneering the Future: AKU's First Online & Blended Learning Policy



In March 2024, the academic council approved AKU's first-ever Online and Blended Learning Policy, led by QTL\_net. This policy provides guidelines and a robust framework for offering high-quality online and blended education, reflecting AKU's commitment to IQRA. The approval of the policy is timely and underscores our proactive approach in adapting to the evolving needs of higher education, where global trends show a strong preference for blended learning among students. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all faculty, staff, students, and external collaborators for their invaluable support in achieving this milestone.

## Exciting Additions to the Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy Family!

We are thrilled to announce the induction of four esteemed faculty members into the Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy, bringing our total membership to 37. Please join us in welcoming:

- **Dr Mariam Noorani (SFHEA)**, Medical College, Tanzania
- **Dr Meher Rizvi (FHEA)**, Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan
- **Dr Nosheen Nasir (FHEA)**, Medical College, Pakistan
- **Dr Syed Murtaza Raza Kazmi (FHEA)**, Medical College, Pakistan

## Welcoming New HEA fellows from AKU and IIS (UK)!

Join us in congratulating these nine outstanding individuals on their recognition and achievement in earning HEA fellowship titles through the TEACH scheme. This marks the end of our 11th application round.

**AFHEA:** (1) Ayesha Ahmed, CIME, PK, (2) Mussarat Ashraf, MC (BBS), PK, (3) Nasra Gathoni, Library, EA, (4) Prisila Everisty Milingi, ELE\_net, EA, (5) Sanam Hanif, SONAM, PK, (6) Tayyaba Shah, SONAM, PK.

**FHEA:** (1) Dr Meher Rizvi, IED, PK, (2) Dr Muzdalifat Abeid, MC (Dar), EA, (3) Dr Wafi Momin, IIS, UK.

Moreover, we're thrilled to announce that three faculty members have achieved the prestigious SFHEA this year, bringing our total to 12 at AKU and IIS. Join us in celebrating their leadership in teaching and learning and their contributions to educational excellence in Higher Education!

**SFHEA:** (1) Dr Mariam Noorani, MC (Dar), EA, (2) Dr Shahid Shamim, MC, PK (3) Dr Sadia Fatima, MC, PK. *Dr Fatima is also an inaugural member of the Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy and Chair of the Membership.*

All the fellows at AKU and IIS will be trained in the first quarter of 2025 to support the TEACH scheme as critical friends and assessors, thereby expanding our pool of HEA fellows at both institutions.

**QTL\_net drives Academic Transformation in Northern Pakistan through the University Improvement Programme**





In 2024 too, QTL\_net continued to play a pivotal role in improving higher education beyond its own campuses. There have been on-going efforts since 2022, made possible through the University Improvement Programme (UIP), to build capacity and improve teaching quality at the Karakoram International University (KIU) and the University of Chitral (UoCh) by supporting the universities' faculty development activities.

At the forefront of these efforts, a series of *Teaching and Learning Enhancement Workshops (TLEW)* are being conducted at both KIU and UoCh. These workshops are modeled after and certified by the Instructional Skills

Workshop (ISW) Network in Canada and aim to equip faculty with the essential tools to create engaging and learner-centered classrooms through the power of effective lesson planning. In 2024, the *Rethinking Teaching (RTT)* workshop for KIU faculty was also launched, geared towards re-designing courses to align course outcomes with assessments and pedagogy. Additionally, a specialized team of trainers and teaching champions is also being actively supported and mentored by QTL\_net at KIU so they can continue to provide support to their peers at both KIU and UoCh, and address teaching and learning challenges in the region. Additionally, a 3-day workshop at Karakoram International University (KIU) focused course websites KIU.

In addition to faculty development, QTL\_net is also collaborating with both universities to elevate academic programme standards and strengthen Quality Assurance processes, enabling them to conduct self-assessments and implement quality frameworks. This collaboration focuses on the

development and implementation of Quality Frameworks and governance structures, laying the foundation for sustained academic excellence.

## HEC and AKU collaborate to enhance Academic Quality



The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, with QTL\_Net hosted a significant training event for Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs). This gathering brought together leaders from 19 public and private universities across Sindh fostering collaboration on best practices to improve academic quality. During the event Prof. Khamis, Faisal Notta (Director QEC), and Azra Naseem (Director Blended & Digital Learning) shared AKU's approach to maintaining academic standards through continuous quality assurance

processes with an emphasis on digital learning tools as well.

A major highlight of the event was participation of AKU students who provided valuable feedback and insights into regulatory processes and emphasized the importance of student engagement with institutional and regulatory bodies.

## Transforming Education through Outcome-Based Education

AKU is committed to providing students with the best possible educational experiences. To achieve this, the University is transitioning to an **Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model**. This is a student-centered approach that focuses on clearly defined education and learning outcomes. A dedicated team of Deans, Program Directors and academic experts have been selected to develop a roadmap for this transformative initiative. There is also an existing Curriculum Academic Committee (CAC) to guide the process and ensure a smooth transition across all AKU entities. QTL\_net through its Vice Provost, is also providing essential support, including capacity development, and sharing best practices. The journey officially began with the first CAC meeting in June 2024. We will continue to share updates as AKU steers the future of higher education across the globe!

## Developing AKU's First Digital Learning Strategy (DLS)

The Digital Learning Strategy Working Group (DLSWG) was formed in May 2024 and has since convened five times, focusing on establishing a strong foundation for advancing digital learning at AKU. The group worked on ensuring representation from all key academic and support units, and by September, the team was fully in place. Significant progress was made, including finalizing the terms of reference, establishing a document repository, and developing consultation templates. The group conducted consultations across academic and support units to gather valuable data on digital learning initiatives. Additionally, innovative student engagement strategies were explored, with a comprehensive implementation plan developed by our student representative. These efforts have laid the groundwork for the future development of AKU's Digital Learning Strategy, and in 2025 we are looking forward to more exciting updates regarding DLS implementation.

## QTL\_net in Action – Recapping 2024

QTL\_net is on a mission to ignite a passion for teaching and improving quality and therefore our year has been filled with impactful workshops, and courses as well as collaborative efforts that are empowering and enabling educators across the AKU and AKDN.

### AI in Educational Playground:

The BDL team is actively raising awareness among faculty and students about the transformative impact of Generative AI on teaching, assessments, and AI literacy through its engaging AI in Education Playground sessions. Since November 2023, we have conducted ten sessions, reaching a total of 410 participants, including 220 faculty and staff and 190 students. We have also tailored sessions for various academic units, such as SONAM-Pakistan on AKU's AI Guidelines, SONAM-Kenya on AI literacy for students, and the Medical College-Kenya on AI literacy for UGME students. Looking ahead, we plan to offer more sessions for students, and faculty. If you have questions or ideas about GenAI and would like to collaborate with us, please reach out at [aiiep@aku.edu](mailto:aiiep@aku.edu).



### Rethinking Teaching (RTT):

RTT was conducted across Pakistan and East Africa, empowering 95 faculty members and challenging faculty members to rethink their courses, empowering them to innovate and create learning environments where learners thrive.



## **Teaching & Learning Enhancement Workshop (TLEW):**

In similar fashion, TLEW honed the skills of more than 50 faculty members from London to Karachi and Nairobi, where faculty actively reflected on their lesson planning. They experimented with a variety of teaching techniques through micro-teaching sessions alongside peers and facilitators.

## **Online Teaching in Higher Education (OTHE):**

In collaboration with Academics without Borders, the BDL team has significantly expanded its Online Teaching in Higher Education (OTHE) Programme to universities in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and AKDN institutions. This year alone, three courses have been offered, benefitting 95 participants from various international institutions and AKU. These courses are facilitated by experienced AKU faculty and AWB volunteers, who are esteemed academics from prestigious universities worldwide. To learn how you can benefit from this transformative program, please visit our website: <https://www.aku.edu/ctl/programmes/Pages/othe.aspx>

## **VLE Essentials Course (VEC):**

The VLE Essentials Course (VEC) was launched this year with the aim to equip participants with essential skills for navigating and utilizing the AKU Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This engaging blended course combines two weeks of online learning with a hands-on in-person workshop. Participants can learn to create and customize their course websites, apply essential settings, choose the right templates, and align with AKU's VLE policies and guidelines, while also reviewing their sites with the AKU Course Website Review Checklist. The course has been offered in Karachi and Nairobi both.



## Collaborations with IBA:

QTL\_net hosted the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) team including Director Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Dr. Sana Tauseef, Manager QEC Sheikh Masood Ali, and Assistant Manager QEC Saadia Nizar Dawoodani. Engaging sessions with AKU's Quality Assurance and Improvement team, led by Faisal Notta, Director QEC, provided IBA's team with tools and strategies that focused on enhancing student learning experiences,

fostering student engagement, and driving programme improvement. President Sulaiman Shahabuddin, an IBA alum himself, also met with the guests, and reflected on how such collaborations reflect a core pillar of AKU's Strategic Plan where AKU remains committed to building new partnerships with national and international organizations to further its mission of advancing knowledge.

In a similar vein, Dr. Khairulnissa Ajani, Director Teaching and Learning and SONAM Faculty member was also invited as a panelist at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi's Annual Quality Dialogue. Dr. Ajani joined esteemed panelists in discussing strategies to enhance inclusive practices and inspire meaningful change in higher education.

## Plan 2025 with us!



### Teaching & Learning Trainings

<b>January</b> – RTT in Pakistan, TEACH Critical Friend Training	<b>February</b> – Teaching Dossier workshop
<b>March</b> – TEACH Introductory Webinar cycle 14	<b>April</b> – Call for SOTL Grants
<b>May</b> – TEACH Writing Workshop, TLEW in University of Chitral	<b>June</b> – RTT in East Africa

### Blended & Digital Learning Trainings

<b>January</b> – Digital Bootcamp, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE	<b>February</b> – VLE Essentials Course, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE
<b>March</b> – Digital Bootcamp, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE	<b>April</b> – Edtech Lounge, VLE Essentials Course, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE
<b>May</b> – Digital Bootcamp, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE	<b>June</b> – VLE Essentials Course, AI in education Playground, 90 Minutes of VLE

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

**Contact Us**

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