

The National Strategy for the Higher Education and Scientific Research Sector for the Years 2007-2012

Preface

The higher education sector in Jordan plays a significant role in the process of society's overall development, with respect to industry, commerce, agriculture, and health, as well as other humanitarian and social services, especially since this sector has developed noticeably during the past two decades regarding content, programs, and patterns of teaching and learning that affect quality and quantity.

Since higher education is one of His Majesty King Abdullah II's national priorities, in view of its being a fundamental constituent of the development process and a motivating force in reform, modernization, and the graduation of highly-skilled and knowledgeable individuals, it is necessary to adopt policies and programs, in accordance with the best international standards and practices, whose aim is to enhance the sector's competitiveness in the region and the globe, making it possible to bring about the desired qualitative leap.

In response to Royal directives of putting together a comprehensive strategy for developing the higher education and scientific research sector for the coming five years (2007-2012), a higher education retreat was held on May 13, 2007, attended by the Council of Ministers, the Higher Education Council, and members of the General Education Procession Committee, Vocational Training and Higher Education. During the said retreat, the participants agreed on the general framework and main principles of the strategy, in addition to the pivotal features of the higher education system we seek, focusing on a number of components for the purpose of reaching a quality higher education system capable of preparing highly qualified human resources that meet society's needs and are highly competitive at the Arab and international levels. In light of this, a national team has been formed to prepare the required national strategy, which will be a point of reference for all institutions of higher education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

After ample deliberations and discussions conducted by the team throughout the various meetings, a strategy has been formulated, covering the following seven components:

- Governance and University Administration
- Admission Principles
- Accreditation and Quality Assurance
- Scientific Research, Development, and Graduate Studies
- Technical and Technological Education
- University Finance
- University Environment

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is to establish a unit for the purpose of following up on the implementation of the strategy and the realization of performance indicators through work teams for each component of those mentioned above. The implementation of this strategy presupposes the amendment of existing legislations (laws, by-laws, and regulations), in addition to making available the necessary funds and qualified human resources.

Vision

Having a high quality higher education system, capable of preparing highly-qualified human resources that are able to meet the current and future needs of society and compete at the Arab and international levels.

Mission

Developing and modernizing the higher education sector to ensure graduates of outstanding caliber possessing academic and applied qualifications which meet the current and future needs of the country and the Arab nation, through developing admission principles that guarantee fairness and equality of opportunity, focusing on technical and technological education; upgrading scientific research, development, and graduate studies; modernizing programs and study plans; and creating a university environment conducive to distinction, creativity, and the spirit of leadership, and capable of enhancing loyalty and intellectual openness.

Strategic Goals

- Ensuring autonomy of universities, expanding the authority of their boards of trustees, qualifying their academic and administrative leaders, and adopting the principle of transparency and accountability for the purpose of reinforcing institutional performance and the assessment of university administration.
- Developing admission principles to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity.
- Improving and modernizing study plans and academic programs in line with the requirements of national and pan-Arab development, taking into account the scientific and technological developments at the global level.
- Implementing accreditation and quality assurance standards in the various components and stages of the higher education system.
- Upgrading scientific research, development, and graduate studies, allowing the private sector a larger role in developing scientific research, especially applied scientific research required by the comprehensive and sustainable development plans.
- Developing the programs of community colleges and institutes with the aim of enabling them to graduate professionals and technicians with competencies compatible to national and regional development plans.
- Diversifying higher education finance resources to ensure sustainability of funds necessary for the distinction and autonomy of the institutions and the support of excelling and needy students.
- Creating a suitable, harmonious university environment conducive to creativity and distinction, an environment in which a feeling of security prevails, and a sense of responsibility, belonging and acceptance of the opinion of the other; an environment able to foster the spirit of leadership among students.

Strategy Components

First: Governance and University Administration

The responsibilities of the councils governing the work of Jordanian universities, both public and private (Higher Education Council, Accreditation Commission Council, Higher Committee for Scientific Research, trustees councils, university councils, deans' councils, faculty councils, department councils) are specified by the existing laws, by-laws, and regulations which pertain to university goals and work.

Improving university performance requires autonomy, commitment to implementing those strategies which ensure their ability to manage change, and upgrading the levels of performance, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

Objectives

- Ensuring the independence of universities financially, administratively, and academically.
- Reconsidering the formation of university Boards of Trustees (private universities and non-Jordanian higher education institutions working in Jordan) and their tasks to enable them to play a bigger role in the process of higher education in Jordan.
- Preparing strategic plans for higher education institutions working in Jordan in line with the overall strategy for the higher education and scientific research sector.
- Accomplishing work in accordance with the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in all institutions of higher education.
- Qualifying university academic and administrative leaderships.

Second: Admission Principles

The past five years have witnessed a noticeable expansion in higher education. The number of universities has reached twenty five, ten of which are public universities, and the number of students joining them has also increased. Such expansion, however, has not been accompanied with distinction or even competitiveness. The same specializations have been copied at many universities, and the number of admitted students has far exceeded the capacity of each university, leading to crowding and heavy pressures on faculties' lab and classroom facilities, in addition to the rise of unemployment among graduates. Because of this, admission principles must be developed in order to achieve fairness and equality of opportunity, and in order to meet the requirements of national development, in accordance with general and program (specific) accreditation standards.

Objectives

- Developing the principles of admission in accordance with the criteria of achieving fairness and equality of opportunity.
- Adopting principles of competitiveness in parallel programs.
- Putting together admission principles for students who enroll outside the context of unified admission.

Third: Accreditation and Quality Assurance

In light of the growing number of universities and students joining higher education institutions as well as concern over quality of education, it is necessary to take the required measures to upgrade the quality of education, boost international competitiveness, and ensure quality through implementing and enforcing accreditation and quality assurance standards in all higher education institutions, and through reconsidering study plans and academic programs and modernizing them by increasing their applied constituents.

Objectives

- Applying general and program accreditation standards to all higher education institutions operating in Jordan.
- Developing a quality assurance system and applying it to all institutions of higher education.
- Devising a plan for continuous recruitment of qualified faculty members in accordance with the needs of Jordanian universities.
- Drawing quality standards for the performance of faculty members.
- Modernizing study plans and academic programs to keep up with international developments in the higher education sphere.

Fourth: Scientific Research, Development, and Graduate Studies

Continuing the development process and narrowing the gap between Jordan and advanced industrial countries require strategies and action plans vis-à-vis scientific research and technological development, adequate annual budgets, an advanced research environment, well-trained personnel, and a clear venue for partnerships between higher education institutions and production and service sectors in Jordan, as well as contacts with prominent international research centers.

Objectives

- Activating the role of the Scientific Research Support Fund, enabling it to achieve its objectives as per laws no. 4 for the year 2007.
- Improving the scientific research environment, encouraging research teams from varied specializations, and supporting excelling graduate students in the various higher education institutions.
- Linking scientific research and development to overall development goals.
- Spreading the scientific research culture in all the components of academic work.
- Increasing contacts between teaching and research staff in higher education institutions, on the one hand, and private production and service sectors inside the Kingdom and outside it on the basis of partnership, on the other.

Fifth: Technical and Technological Education

In order to keep up with technical and technological advancements, community colleges teach and train students with the aim of providing Jordan and Arab societies with technically qualified persons, especially for the needs of national industry. Similarly, applied universities undertake to expand in technological education (at the bachelor's level) to provide society with highly-qualified individuals who contribute to its advancement in this particular sphere; they also reconsider university requirements for the purpose of instilling vocational culture in its components.

Objectives

- Revising study plans, programs and specializations in community colleges with the aim of gearing them toward technical education.
- Expansion in technological education (at the bachelor's level).
- Boosting vocational culture among university students via university requirements.

Sixth: University Finance

University finance is an important element in upgrading and developing university performance and in fostering university capacity building, in order to enable universities to achieve the aim of developing and advancing society. Universities are the most important producer of human capital, booster of national economy, and achiever of sustainable development through providing highly-skilled and knowledgeable human resources at the national and Arab levels.

Public universities depend on two sources of income: tuition fees and governmental support. With dwindling governmental support for universities, it is necessary to amend the fiscal policies at work in higher education, and reconsider their restructuring to ensure the continued flow of funds via additional resources, in order to boost universities' excellence and independence and in order to support excelling and needy students.

Objectives

- Establish a higher education fund.
- Continued governmental payment of public university debt.
- Establish a university student bank which offers loans and grants, meeting as much as possible the needs of deserving students.
- Make available additional finance opportunities for universities, such as establishing endowments for each university and establishing centers of excellence offering services in the spheres of investment, consultation, and medical, engineering, and technical services.
- Governmental coverage of capital expenditures for public universities, giving priority to those recently established, in accordance with the overall strategy plan for the higher education sector and the strategy plan for each university.

Seventh: University Environment

University environment is composed of major elements affecting the student's character. These elements pertain to university curriculum, faculty members, university administration, positive interaction among students themselves, as well as the various scientific, literary, cultural, athletic, service, and entertainment activities, and the available facilities, such as libraries, restaurants, clubs, sport complexes, labs, and lecture halls. The university environment, therefore, is not merely a place for learning academic skills, but is a small community in which its members interact socially and culturally.

The study learning environment available for the university student is, in effect, the result of what the university environment contributes to his needs and expectations. Conversely, if the student does not harmonize well with his/her university environment, he/she will be incompatible personally and socially, which results in loss of confidence, autism, frustration, fear, fragmentation of thought, violence, weakness of loyalty, and lack of assimilation and interaction with the academic community.

Objectives

- Building student character and reinforcing loyalty and democratic practices through boosting awareness and intellectual openness.
- Forming student councils, societies, and committees in accordance with each university's special by-laws and regulations.
- Expanding co-curricular activities in all spheres (cultural, artistic, athletic, etc.)
- Boosting student confidence in the university and developing his/her relation to faculty members and administrative staff positively.
- Amending disciplinary regulations in ways relevant to the spirit of education and academia.
- Boosting interaction between university students and society.
- Catering to the needs of students from abroad and creating an environment which attracts them.
- Developing the academic environment at the university through establishing an adequate technological infrastructure and using modern technologies to provide them with necessary academic and social services.