UMM AL-QURA UNIVERSITY

Department of English

RESEARCH STRATEGY

2023-2027

Research Strategy: Department of English 2023-2027

In the department of English we are committed to research excellence and impact. We aim to increase our research output by continuing to invest in our current research strengths. To broaden our scope we plan to foster interdisciplinarity by introducing new research areas within the discipline, thus developing new interdisciplines in the department. We also aim to create a supportive research culture by offering a positive environment that promotes collaboration and teamwork. Our research aims to (1) enhance the university's reputation in terms of national and international accreditations and rankings; (2), assert our role in contributing to Islamic and Middle Eastern studies; and (3) contribute to developing the Kingdom's cultural sector and reinforcing Saudi Arabia's position internationally.

The Department's strategic research aims for 2023-27 are:

- to promote a supportive research culture by creating a vibrant and inclusive environment for all of our academic staff, one that allows members to share best practices, increase research output and work towards their academic promotion.
- to support our academic staff in achieving their research goals by making workload adjustments, organising in-person or virtual writing retreats, and by encouraging them to apply for sabbatical leave.
- to support the career progression of all faculty members by offering career development workshops aimed at research-active staff, and those at different career stages (i.e. early career, mid-career and senior members).
- to promote research-led teaching in the curriculum, and simultaneously employ the classroom to generate research output relevant to the discipline.
- to increase public accessibility and research visibility by employing ORCID and other electronic identifiers on faculty profiles.
- to encourage faculty members to regularly update their profiles—particularly their affiliations and publications—via the university's portal.
- to support our academic staff in research grant applications made available by the Deanship of Academic Research.

We aim to undertake research in areas of local priority that also promise to make global impact such as:

1. **Hajj and Umrah Research:** in response to the Saudi Vision 2030 that aspires to welcome more pilgrims, the university identifies Hajj and Umrah studies as an area of responsibility given UQU's unique geographical location at the heart of the holy city of Makkah. Thus, the university has proposed 'enriching the pilgrims' experience' as one of its research priorities and has included art, language and literature among the contributing disciplines. To that end, our department aims to focus on Hajj literature written from inside and outside of the Muslim religious tradition, and explore issues relating to the historical, social, political and geographical contexts of the Islamic pilgrimage (i.e. travel writing; pilgrim narratives; Makkah, the Muslim holy city; cultural exchange; Hajj through history; Hajj in translation; and Makkah as a multilingual city).

2. **Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies:** considering the university's unique geographical location in the land of the two holy mosques and at the heart of the Arab and Muslim world, the department plans to continue research in its existing areas of interest (i.e. Quranic studies; Arabic and the Arab-speaking world; Saudi dialects; translation of Islamic texts), yet it recognises its role in conducting research on the lesser explored areas relating to Islam and the Middle Eastern world (i.e. literature and national identity; Arabic literature; orientalism and beyond; Christian-Muslim relations; and constructions of Islam and the Middle East in English discourse).

3. **Cultural Studies:** to work towards the Vision 2030 goals of celebrating national identity and supporting the Saudi National Culture Strategy, the department aims to invest in the locally emerging research priorities that involve Saudi cultural studies (i.e. Saudi heritage, film, literature, theatre, performing arts, visual culture, popular culture; language and dialect; cultural exchange, transcultural encounters, comparative cultural studies and intercultural mediation in translation studies) to accomplish the following:

    a. enhance the field of cultural studies in Saudi Arabia through research.
    b. collaborate with the ministry of culture to improve the cultural curricula from primary levels to higher education.
    c. stimulate the development of the Saudi cultural sector to influence cultural policy.

Strategic Research Priorities:

1. **Excellence**: we aim to publish high quality research in distinguished journals under world-leading publishers.

2. **Impact**: through a glocal approach (characterised by both global and local considerations), we aim to undertake research that seeks to have an impact on local policies and practices, yet concurrently engages with current scholarly debates and sustain a significant global relevance.

3. **Interdisciplinarity**: we recognise the significance of placing English studies within an interdisciplinary context; thus we plan to focus on:

   a. **Environmental Humanities**: literature and the environment; ecocriticism; and ecopoetics.

   b. **Medical Humanities**: physical and mental health issues portrayed through linguistic and literary studies; ableism and disability studies.

   c. **Digital Humanities:** film and media; video games and story-telling; employing digital resources in authorship and attribution studies; computational linguistics; and computer corpus studies on language and text.

   d. **Literature and Science:** cognitive poetics; science fiction; literature and evolutionary biology; and posthumanism and AI.

4. **Collaboration**: we promote teamwork by encouraging collaborative projects within the department. We also aim to build stronger links through internal and external partnerships.

Priorities, Strategies and Performance Indicators:

Priorities	Strategies	Performance Indicators
Publish High Quality Research	Offer workshops and seminars that aim to improve the quality of research.	Increased number of research articles published in ISI journals.
	Support members in the grant application process and keep them up to date with the latest from the Grants and Research Groups Unit.	Number of research grants awarded to faculty members.
		Number of articles published in high-ranking open access journals.
	Supporting members in applying for academic leave.	Fulfillment of proposed projects upon return from academic leave.

Publish Research of High Impact	Offer workshops that aim to guide and train members in determining a journal's impact factor.	Increased number of research articles published in journals with a high impact factor.
	Conducting workshops on how members can market their research, and supporting them in getting it noticed by publishing their news on the department's website and its Twitter / X account.	Measure impact through altmetrics and increased number of citations.
	Support members in the awards of excellence application process, and keeping them informed regarding application requirements and of any updates from the University's Academic Council.	Increased number of awards of excellence granted to faculty members by the university.
Foster Interdisciplinarity	Conducting workshops and seminars on how to place English studies within an interdisciplinary context.	Increased number of articles published with an interdisciplinary topic, or in interdisciplinary journals.
	Employing teaching, seminars, and research groups to generate new discussions, propose new questions and encourage members to broaden the limits within which English studies are explored in the department.	Increased number of interdisciplines, as well as the diversity of the disciplines with which the department is currently conducting interdisciplinary research.
Promote Collaboration	Proposing opportunities for collaboration within the department, and also inviting members to submit proposed collaborative projects as part of the department's annual research plan.	Number of research published in collaboration within the department.
	Encourage members to collaborate with other members from the university or with external collaborators.	Number of research published in collaboration with other members from the university or with external collaborators.
	Approving a timetable for the research groups' meetings for each academic year.	Number of research collaborations published by members of the department's research groups.