Towards a New Generation of Engaged Universities:
The Need to Act, Adapt and Transform
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Building capacity for research at an LMIC university: A success story -
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PURE AWARD MANAGEMENT MODULE AT THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

CLICKS
Center for Learning Innovations & Customized Knowledge Solutions
FORUM ORGANIZER

A BACKGROUND OF THE INSTITUTION

- Established in 1983, the Aga Khan University (AKU) positions itself as a university of and for the developing world.
- Guided by its core principles of Quality, Access, Relevance, and Impact, it functions as one single global University with integrated campuses and 11 teaching sites distributed across three continents and six countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and the UK.
- The University supports core disciplines in Nursing, Medicine, Teacher Education, Muslim Cultures and Civilizations, and Media and Communications at undergraduate and graduate levels.
- The university is relatively small with a student body of 3300+, a faculty size of 800+ and around 1300+ staff supporting teaching and learning.
- As stated in its mission, AKU aims “to offer programs of international quality; prioritizing teaching and research that underpin intellectual innovation and change; and developing leaders through its educational programs”.

OVERVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH PROFILE

- AKU has had a good track record for knowledge creation. However, global research priorities are constantly evolving, and so is AKU's research portfolio.
- What will maintain our university's global footprint for decades and centuries to come, is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.
- Whether the said knowledge is medical, educational, environmental, or focuses on media and culture, our goal is to foster a research environment that brings together a diverse group of people in their quest for knowledge.
- AKU has a 5-year Global Research Strategy in place which focuses on Identifying and Cultivating Emerging Research Themes; Improving on Research Strengths, Coordination and Governance; Establishing a Supportive Environment for the Next Generation of Researchers at AKU; and Enhancing AKU's Impact in the Knowledge Society by Identifying Contextually Relevant Research Metrics and Improving Knowledge Dissemination.
- As we mark the 40th year for AKU, we will continue to expand our research portfolio beyond the borders in which we operate, inspiring budding scientists, researchers, and educators, and creating an identity of knowledge production.

Research Office
Actively Involved in Project

Dr. Salim Virani
Vice Provost, Research

Melaine D'Cruze
Director, Research Office

Salima Sherali, Manager

Sana Ramzan, Associate

Nabeel Ahmed, Associate

Project Team

Irfan Haji,
Project Director

Muhammad Hayat Khan,
Project Manager

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PURE AWARD MANAGEMENT MODULE AT THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

WHAT IS PURE AWARD MANAGEMENT MODULE?

- Pure Award Management Module (AMM) is a research information management system used by universities and research institutions to streamline various aspects of research administration and management.
- This module typically provides functionalities for tracking, managing, and reporting on research grants and awards, including compliance monitoring, and reporting capabilities to Principal investigators, Researchers, and Grant Administrators.
- It helps institutions efficiently handle the entire lifecycle of research awards, from proposal submission and approval to post-award management and reporting.
- Pure AMM is a valuable tool for research universities like AKU, looking to improve the efficiency and transparency of their research administration and approval processes.

KEY FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITIES

- Centralized monitoring of all the grants from initiation to close out.
- Reporting of all entered content as per requirements.
- Automated workflow for approval processes.
- Customization of the workflow as per the institution's requirement.
- Actions are being recorded at every level which shows the transparency of the system.
- Documentation repository and records are in one place.

BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Pakistan till August 2023

East Africa and UK till August 2023

Pure Global System (end to end) from 1st Sept 2023

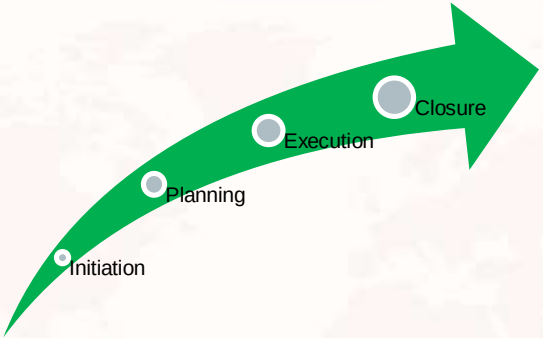
REASONS FOR SEEKING A NEW SOLUTION

- The previously used system was not a dedicated grant management system and did not support an end-to-end solution.
- The previous system was not implemented globally and only teams in Pakistan were using that system and that too only for the pre-award process.
- Considering the substantial increase in research activities at AKU globally and to ensure internal and external quality assurance and compliance requirements, the Research Office felt the need to expand the scope of the grants module from pre-award to include post-award and closeout phases as well.

THE GOALS AND OUTCOMES INTENDED TO BE ACHIEVED BY THE INSTITUTION

- Pure AMM is designed to be a simple and turnkey solution for Research Grants Management.
- It is an off-the-shelf solution to manage the complete grants life cycle and would fulfil most of the requirements, identified by the Research Office (Pakistan, United Kingdom, and East Africa) related to grants management and reporting needs.
- It captures a wide range of research-related outcomes, publications, and datasets, and can add additional/custom reporting variables.
- Pure AMM has a very vibrant user community and innovations/new functionalities and rolled out quicker than the previous system.
- Pure AMM works on a proven interconnected data model featuring automated data sourcing, advanced data sharing options having data quality controls.
- Workflows can be custom-defined to track the entire funding lifecycle, review opportunities, monitor and submit applications and meet compliance needs.

PROJECT STRATEGY



All phases were subdivided into tasks and milestones which needed to be done on specific dates. Despite several changes in the plan we were able to deliver the project within the timeframe allocated.

PROJECT REPORTING

Quarterly reports were presented to the University Research Council (URC) chaired by the Vice Provost, Research.

Monthly project reports were shared with the Project Management Office (PMO-ICT).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- Collaborative process with university stakeholders
- Ensuring the solution meets diverse needs
- System customization
- User acceptance test
- Identifying data to be migrated
- Data migration
- Checking data quality
- Addressing reporting needs

TRAININGS AND SUPER USER CONFERENCE

- Recognizing the role of users in successful implementation
- Designing effective training programs – More than 40 training sessions were conducted globally
- Super User Conference and user feedback sessions
- Change management session

SOME GLIMPSES FROM THE SUPER USER CONFERENCE

THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

- Data is no longer managed in silos or captured in disparate formats.
- Data only needs to be entered once to be easily retrieved for use across the institution.
- Accessible to all stakeholders, allowing real-time access to grant status, milestones, and reporting, thereby fostering transparency, and building trust among collaborators.
- The module provides better tracking mechanisms for awards, allowing organizations to monitor the status of awards and compliance. This enhances accountability and transparency.
- It can assist in generating accurate and timely reports required for audits, funding agencies, or internal purposes.

Challenges and Mitigations

Challenges	Mitigation Strategies
User Adoption: Resistance or reluctance from some users to adapt to a new system can hinder successful implementation.	**Change Management:** Implement effective change management strategies to ensure smooth user adoption and minimize resistance.
Integration: Difficulty in integrating the award management module with existing systems or other modules can be a challenge at the onset.	**API and Allocated Resource:** Use application programming interface (API) and standardized data formats to facilitate integration with other systems seamlessly. A programming resource is also required from the institutional end for the integration.
Customization: Different organizations have a unique award management processes; thus, the system needs to be customizable to meet specific requirements.	**Flexible Configuration:** Provide administrator rights to institutions project team to keep monitoring the configuration of the system to meet the organization's unique needs. An IT administrator can help in making this easy for the institution at the initial implementation stage.
Training and Support: Insufficient training and support for users can lead to errors, delays, and frustration.	**Comprehensive Training Programs:** Develop comprehensive training programs for users and provide ongoing support to address any issues.

Thank You

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