



SU Engagement with External Stakeholder Framework

December 16, 2024

Version	3.0
Policy Code/Category	SU – GM – 004
Purpose	The Framework is designed to streamline and guide stakeholder interaction, fostering a more systematic approach to establishing formal and impactful relationships.
File Location	SharePoint
Related Documents	Strategic Plan 2023-28 - Guidelines strategic partnerships and evaluation
Framework Owner	Community Engagement and Partnerships (CEP)
Approved by	EMC
Approval date	Dec 2024
Review date	Dec 2027

Document History

Version	Approved Date	Approved by	Circulation Date	Brief Description [Short text only]
1.0			September 2015	It was under the name Community Engagement Strategy
2.0	March 17, 2024	EMC	March 17, 2024	The previous community engagement strategy was extended to become the current framework.
3.0	December 16, 2024	EMC	16/12/2024	Minor revision to match the new University structure and alsfundraising as part of has been removed from Alumni goals as it is invalid in Oman.

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Introduction

Since its founding in 2001, Sohar University has concentrated on developing effective relationships with external stakeholders. SU has also shown a strong interest in community and industry engagement and integration as part of SU's commitment to the community. SU believes that such engagement with external organizations has a big impact on the quality of education, research findings, and innovation that the university provides.

This framework for community and external engagement is designed to enhance the process, moving towards a more systematic approach.

The framework will act as a foundational concept for potential future expansion and further development as required.

As an improvement to the engagement process, starting from the 2023/2024 Academic year, the University has decided to establish a dedicated department for Community Engagement and Partnerships (CEP). This department will be responsible for the administration and facilitation of community and industry engagement.

Scope:

In our commitment to fostering meaningful connections and collaborations, Sohar University places community and external engagement at the forefront of our vision and mission. This framework encourages active involvement, partnership, and mutual benefit between the university, our local community, and external stakeholders. We aspire to create a harmonious and impactful relationship that promotes academic excellence, social responsibility, and positive societal change.

The Mission statement of Sohar University is formulated as “Engaging minds, prospering lives, and serving the community through outstanding education, research opportunities, and partnerships”

Sohar University Strategic Plan 2023-2028 involves a broad spectrum of engagement activities, defined through the Strategic Plan Thrust “Community and Industry Engagement.” Sohar University commits to serving societies by leading changes in response to local and global challenges. By leveraging our strengths and expertise, we strive for impact through purposeful partnerships with industry leaders. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guide us to strengthen our service and contribution to the broader community through collaborative engagement with stakeholders. This thrust cascades down to some objectives to achieve this goal such as: **Establish Impactful Stakeholders Partnerships, Optimize Effective**

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Collaboration Champion, engage with **the Community**, Incorporate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Strengthen Community Outreach, and Expand Continuing Education.

Sohar University deals with multiple stakeholders There top five primary stakeholders are the **Community**, **Industry**, **Employers** and **government**, **Professions**, **Education** providers, and **Alumni (CIPEA)**. In line with SU's Vision and Mission for engagement with these external bodies.



Figure 1: Types of External Stakeholder Engagement

Main Objectives:

The following are some objectives that Sohar University works toward with External Stakeholders while maintaining this conviction:

- Develop and implement initiatives that contribute to the betterment of the local and global communities.
- Establish partnerships with community organizations to address societal challenges through research, volunteering, and collaborative projects.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and outreach activities that promote community well-being.
- Foster partnerships with industries and employers to align curriculum with industry needs.
- Facilitate internships, co-op programs, and industry-focused projects to enhance students' practical skills.

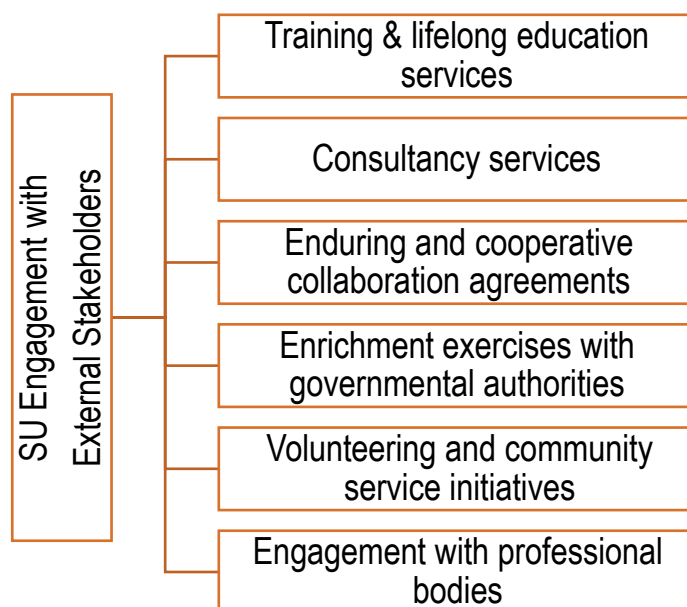
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- Create avenues for continuous dialogue and collaboration between the university and the business community.
- Support students in their pursuit of professional qualifications and certifications.
- Collaborate with professional bodies to ensure academic programs meet industry needs.
- Provide opportunities for students to network with professionals in their chosen fields.
- Engage in mutual professional development through the process such as visits, staff exchanges, and benchmarking.
- Collaborate on research projects and knowledge exchange initiatives.
- Enhance pathways for students to pursue advanced degrees or certifications.
- Establish partnerships with educational institutions to facilitate credit transfers and dual-degree programs.
- Cultivate lifelong relationships with alumni, involving them in mentoring, guest lecturing, and networking opportunities.
- Recognize and celebrate alumni achievements and contributions to society.
- Encourage alumni to support current students through scholarships, internships, and career guidance.

Engagement with External Stakeholders Elements:

Sohar University has defined a number of elements for Engagement with External Stakeholders based on its Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan, and Objectives. These elements consist of:



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SU Engagement with External Stakeholders Procedures:

Sohar University actively seeks to establish and maintain partnerships with local organizations, non-profits, HEIs and schools, government agencies, and industry bodies to facilitate community engagement.

Engagement with Community

Sohar University addresses community service and outreach through different approaches such as providing volunteer opportunities, lifelong learning courses and workshops, training, and many other initiatives as deemed needed. The University values the following as the main targets for its engagement with the community:

Educational Partnerships: provide access to higher education, and share resources and expertise.

Economic and Workforce Development: offering job training programs, supporting local entrepreneurs, and engaging in workforce development initiatives.

Cultural, Heritage, and Arts Engagement: organize events, performances, exhibitions, and collaborations with local artists cultural, and heritage-caring organizations.

To deliver impactful initiatives to the community and the industry, the University considers the following actions:

- The Community Engagement and Partnership (CEP) department requests plans for impactful community and industry engagement initiatives from all Entities/Departments/Faculties. These plans are reviewed and forwarded to the University- Community and Industry Engagement Committee (CIEC)
- The University Community and Industry Engagement Committee is to discuss, assess, and make recommendations for a university-wide community and industry engagement plan.
- The University- Community and Industry Engagement Committee may also suggest additional initiatives to address opportunities and needs.
- The committee forwards the agreed community engagement plan to the EMC for approval and oversight

➤ **Engagement with Community Procedure:**

❖ **University initiatives**

- Each Entity/Department/Faculty should suggest a community service annual plan and forward it to Community Engagement and Partnerships

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(CEP). The initiatives are reviewed, moderated and shared with the Community and Industry Engagement Committee

- The EMC receives the annual plan from the University- Community and Industry Engagement Committee that contains a description of all impactful community involvement initiatives that are planned to be undertaken by all units.
- The Community Engagement and Partnerships department reports to Global Profile, who in turn reports to the VC CEP will notify each department of the approved initiatives so that the approved initiatives become part of their operational plan.
- Each Entity/Department/Faculty has to implement their action and submit an activity report to the Community Engagement and Partnerships. These reports are reviewed and lessons learned from these are highlighted for possible future improvements.
- A full report is then prepared and put forward to the Community and Industry Engagement Committee to enable their review.
- Quarterly reports are provided to the EMC by Community Engagement and Partnerships department as part of the CEP quarterly report to the EMC.
- At the end of the academic year, the CEP provides an annual report to the Community and Industry Engagement Committee to review and make recommendations to the EMC.

❖ **Community initiatives**

- The Manager of CEP receives all requests for external community engagement.
- The department reviews the requested initiatives and makes recommendations on whether these are in line with the University's strategic plan and whether the University has the available capacity and resources to deliver these successfully.
- small and medium-sized initiatives are approved by CEP VC if there are available resources and capacity. For large-size and impactful initiatives, approval from the VC (and EMC if needed) is sought.
- Once approved, the Manager of CEP will administer the delivery of these initiatives with the support of relevant Sohar University units.
- For each event, a report is to be prepared to assess the outcome and identify any possible improvements.
- CIEC quarter-yearly reports are prepared and submitted to EMC
- In addition, the EMC receives an annual report from the CIEC that contains a synopsis of all community engagement activities carried out by all the units.

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Engagement with Industry:

Sohar University is committed to establishing and nurturing meaningful partnerships with industries and businesses in Oman and beyond. This Engagement framework outlines our approach to collaborating with the Industry and Business sectors to foster innovation, enhance student learning, and contribute to economic development. Sohar University engages with industrial and Business bodies through various means, including but not limited to:

Visits, Internships, and Work Placements: Providing opportunities for students to gain practical experience in industry settings.

Industry-sponsored Projects: Collaborating with industries on research and development projects.

Consultancy Services: Offering expertise to industries through consulting services provided by faculty members.

Professional Development Programs: Designing training and upskilling programs for industry professionals.

Applied Research and Knowledge Transfer projects

➤ Engagement with Industry Procedure:

- ❖ To facilitate Sohar University's connection with industry, businesses, and professional sectors, as well as to provide guidance and support in achieving strategic goals, the university has formalized the establishment of Faculty Advisory Boards within each academic Faculty. These Faculty Advisory Boards play a vital role in Sohar University's external industry and business engagement efforts. They serve as a bridge between the university, its faculties, and external stakeholders, such as businesses, industries, and professional organizations. Moreover, they contribute valuable insights and assistance towards the attainment of strategic objectives, while also conducting independent reviews and assessments of academic activities within relevant academic programs. These Faculty Advisory Boards are convened under the leadership of the Deans of their respective faculties, and their functions and responsibilities are outlined in accordance with the policies outlined in the Faculty Advisory Board Policy.
- ❖ Deans of the faculties together with their staff identify industry and business engagement opportunities. Plans for the engagements may take several ways including student and staff visits, delivery of workshops and extra-curricular lectures by industry and business representatives, arranging students' internships, etc. Support to the faculties is provided by the relevant units of SU.
- ❖ For projects and consultancies, these can be identified in two main ways, the first way is by receiving requests from the industry and business through different communication channels and may also be through the Ejaad platform, whereas the second approach is by direct approach to the industry

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and business and offering them our service and support. Reports, outcomes, and feedback on these engagements are provided to the AMC.

- ❖ For all paid-for consultancies and projects, the Research Development is the administrating department of these according to its procedures. The Research Development department is within the area of the ProVC R&I.
- ❖ For offered training services to the business and industry, Al-Masar training institute is the administrating department of such services according to its procedures. Al Masar Training Institute is within the area of the ProVC R&I.
- ❖ For unpaid services, these are reported to the CEP
- ❖ The Career Guidance department at SU is the department responsible for seeking training opportunities for the students as well as helping the graduates to be recruited. The career guidance department provides periodic reports to the Community and Industry Engagement Committee.

Engagement with Professions:

Sohar University recognizes the importance of engaging with professional organizations and associated bodies to enhance the academic quality, professional development, and overall success of the institution. This is part of our commitment to fostering meaningful relationships with professional entities. Sohah University engages with professional organizations and associations through various means, including but not limited to:

Membership: Active participation in professional associations, societies, and organizations related to various disciplines.

Conferences and Events: Organizing and participating in professional conferences, seminars, and workshops.

Research Collaborations: Collaborating with professional organizations on research project publications.

Benchmarking: Comparison of the new or updated programs to the current professional standards or designations.

➤ **Membership Procedure**

SU encourages its staff and students to have membership in associations, societies, and professional organizations. The Deans of the faculties are the responsible party to encourage, provide support, and maintain records of such engagements. The Deans report on a quarterly basis on the status of such engagement to the AMC.

➤ **Conferences and Events Procedure**

The procedure for this follows the same procedure of community engagement outlined in this document. The University has schemes for conference support funding which is administrated by the Research Development department.

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➤ **Research Collaboration Procedure**

The procedures applied for research development department procedures also applied to the research collaboration with the professional bodies. These procedures are administrated by the Research Development department.

➤ **Engagement with Professions Procedure:**

- ❖ The Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for identifying the outlines for the engagement with the professional bodies and recommending to acquire the professional bodies' recognitions and certifications to the academic programs at SU.
- ❖ Staff at the faculties recommend to their relevant Deans engagement initiatives such as workshops, development courses, conferences, projects, etc. that help SU to have impactful engagement with the professional bodies. The Deans review these and discuss them within the faculty and its committees to agree on these initiatives. The Deans will then forward these initiatives to the Academic Management Committee (AMC) to be discussed. The approved initiative will then be forwarded to the relevant units for implementation. Reports on these initiatives to be provided by the relevant Deans.
- ❖ For Benchmarking with professional bodies' requirements, the faculties initiate such a process once the requirement is identified. SU has a policy on Benchmarking which should be followed. The Teaching and Learning Committee is the governing body for the benchmarking and its outcome.

Engagement with Education Providers:

Sohar University recognizes the importance of collaborating with other educational institutions and providers to enhance educational opportunities, expand academic offerings, and promote knowledge exchange. This engagement with other Education Providers outlines our commitment to establishing and maintaining productive relationships with our peers in the educational sector. Sohar University engages with Educational Providers through various means, including but not limited to:

Articulation Agreements: Establishing agreements with other institutions to facilitate credit transfers, enabling students to pursue advanced degrees or certifications.

Dual-Degree Programs: Collaborating with other institutions to offer joint degree programs that provide students with credentials from both institutions.

Research Partnerships: Collaborating on research projects, publications, and academic conferences to promote knowledge exchange and research excellence.

Faculty and Staff Exchanges: Facilitating faculty and staff exchanges to promote academic and cultural exchanges between institutions.

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➤ **Engagement with Education Providers Procedure:**

- ❖ For research publications, external examinations, reviews, and evaluations of papers, programs, and proposals, SU has provided the green light to its academic staff to directly and positively respond (as much as possible) to the requests received in these scholarly issues. These engagement activities are captured via the staff appraisals.
- ❖ Sohar University staff, Faculty, department, or governor body may suggest initiating engagement with other education providers and submitting proposals through their line managers to seek the approval of the AMC/EMC to go ahead. If such engagement requires the signing of a Letter of Intent, MOU/MOA, Collaboration Program, or other sort of agreement, the relevant department will be requested to draft such agreement and seek its approval via the proper channels.
- ❖ Sohar University focuses on signing agreements with clear action plans to have more delivery impact.
- ❖ CEP is in charge of monitoring the status of signed agreements and their impact.
- ❖ CEP presents quarterly reviews to the EMC of all signed agreements to assess their status and impact and make recommendations.
- ❖ Any event that Sohar University staff members plan in conjunction with other HEIs or industry must be reported to the relevant faculty/department which in turn reports it to the CEP
- ❖ All the approved plans should be communicated with other HEIs through the focal point at SU.
- ❖ At the end of the agreements, the relevant department should provide their recommendations to the EMC via the CEP on whether there is a need to renew such agreements wherever possible.

Engagement with Alumni:

Sohar University recognizes the value of its alumni as an integral part of the university community. This Alumni Relations outlines our commitment to establishing and nurturing lifelong relationships with our graduates. Sohar University engages with Alumni through various means, including but not limited to:

Events and Reunions: Organizing alumni events, reunions, and homecoming celebrations to bring alumni back to campus and foster connections.

Career Support: Offering career counselling, job placement assistance, and networking opportunities for alumni.

Mentorship Programs: Facilitating mentorship programs that connect alumni with current students or recent graduates for guidance and support.

Recognition and Awards: Recognizing outstanding alumni achievements and contributions to society and the university community.

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➤ **Engagement with Alumni Procedure:**

- ❖ Alumni Relations office to prepare an annual activities and events plan along with a targeted budget for each academic year. The budget is discussed and approved by the relevant committee.
- ❖ At the end of each academic year, the Alumni Relation office prepares an annual report and forwards it to the Alumni Office for review and assess its impact. Recommendations are then forwarded to the Community and Industry Engagement Committee as per the committee structure of SU.
- ❖ Alumni Relations office to send a report on their proposed plan to Alumni Committee. Recommendations will then go to the Community and Industry Engagement Committee. Which in turn submits the plan with recommendations to the EMC for approval.
- ❖ The Alumni Relations office invites Sohar University staff to participate in alumni activities, either as presenters, participants, or part of the event organizing team.
- ❖ The Alumni Relation office seeks alumni feedback on all the events and activities through a survey to enable assessing its impact and help in possible future improvement plans.
- ❖ The Alumni Relations office updates the alumni database annually.

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