

Five-Year Strategic Plan for Al-Quds University Law School



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I. Introduction

Throughout its history, Jerusalem (Al-Quds) has played a central role in educating Palestinians. Its schools and faculties have boasted a vibrant academic and scholarly community for many generations. Many notable scholars, including Al-Ghazali, published important manuscripts while at Al-Quds.



During the course of the twentieth century, the desire to re-establish Jerusalem as an academic center was revived, and faculties that had been separately created over the years were consolidated into one institution, Al-Quds. Al-Quds University, the only Arab university in Jerusalem, provides higher education and community services to the Jerusalem area as well as neighboring towns, villages and refugee camps.

The law school, founded in 1992, now provides legal education to more than 700 students and employs 30 faculty members. Along with the rest of Al-Quds University, the law school maintains a universal and inclusive vision in a city that is important to millions of people worldwide.

II. Methodology in Creating Strategic Plan

This five-year strategic plan is the result of a collective effort undertaken by a Strategic Planning Committee composed of members of the administration, faculty and student body of Al-Quds Law School. It has been created in order to bring to fruition the full potential of the law school, utilize its resources in the most productive manner, and integrate it into the global academic community.

III. Vision Statement

According to the law school message that aims to promote the quality of education in compliance with domestic and international standards, and providing a teaching

environment characterized by freedom and creativity, the faculty came to contribute in providing educational opportunities in the field of legal science, and to attract qualified students for higher education in Palestine for the development of qualified and staff that are capable of building and giving. This will be undertaken through the provision of curriculum and a distinct academic environment that enriches the theoretical and practical legal knowledge of students, and helps in developing their thinking and research capacity, as well as creativity, criticism, and analysis skills. Promoting use of modern technology and enhancing legal training will also help refine student's personality, inspire the spirit to communicate with others and work within a team.

Because the student is the core of the educational process, the law school has allocated part of its program to support and enhance their legal knowledge through establishing a Legal Clinic, Moot Court, and provide the required guidance.

In addition, because enhancing the scientific research and graduate studies are the law school's top priorities the law school is encouraging faculty research, the involvement of students and faculty members in specialized legal conferences and seminars, as well as sending them abroad to pursue their higher studies.

At for the public relations efforts, the law school is continuing its on-going efforts to connect students and faculty members with local and international institutions in order to support the objectives of the curriculum development and enhancing the learning process.

Consistent with its motto "Preparing for the Future, Building on a Unique Palestinian Foundation," Al-Quds Law School strives to:

1. Offer its students a curriculum that fully prepares them for a wide variety of careers in private and public law, the world of diplomacy, and national and international organizations.
2. Produce graduates who are sought after by national and international employers.
3. Be recognized around the world for the high quality of its faculty and student body.
4. Attain a position of prominence and respect in the global academic community for its



ability to produce innovative research that contributes to solving problems of concern to the Palestinian and global communities.

IV. Five year Strategic Plan

Understanding that there are many needs, a limited budget and difficult circumstances in the current environment, Al-Quds recognizes that it has the potential to serve a very important role in the Palestinian community at this time. Only seven other law schools exist in Palestine, and each year nearly ten times more students apply for admission to Al-Quds than can be accepted. The need for legal education continues to grow.

This Strategic Plan focuses on six areas of priority that have been identified as most critical to advancing the law school's overall vision during the next five years.

Objective 1: Create and maintain a strong curriculum that gives graduates the tools they need to enter the career of their choice.

A large percentage of the law school's graduates use their legal degrees for purposes other than working in law firms. The law school's curriculum will continue to prepare students to work in legal fields of their choice, whether that means joining a law firm, practicing international law, serving in the world of law and diplomacy or working in international, national or local organizations.

To meet this goal, the faculty will advance its use of the most modern educational strategies, focusing on interactive, experiential teaching methodologies.

Key activities to achieve this objective

- Maintain the broad range of courses currently offered to give students the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the legal career of their choice.
- Strengthen the emphasis on practical lawyering skills. Provide training in ethics, legal research and writing, oral and written advocacy,



interviewing and advising skills, drafting letters, pleadings, legal documents and memoranda, negotiation strategies, and moot court programs.

- In order to improve the quality of teaching, conduct a mandatory workshop on modern teaching methodologies, including interactive and experiential strategies, for all faculty members.
- Periodically review the curriculum to ensure that it includes courses students need and want. Maintain flexibility so that new courses can be added as necessary.
- In order to more effectively position Al-Quds Law School in the global academic community and allow faculty and students to take better advantage of fellowship and scholarship opportunities and exchange programs, continue to offer (and perhaps require) English language classes for all faculty and students.
- Create syllabi and course plans for all classes and post them on-line at least one month prior to the beginning of classes so that students can select their classes in an informed manner.
- Implement the use of anonymous course evaluations, to be completed by students at the conclusion of each course. Student evaluations provide useful feedback to professors about the content and teaching style of courses. Professors are not permitted to read them until after they have finalized and submitted course grades.
- Strengthen the usefulness of the recently-opened computer lab by continuing mandatory training of faculty and students in legal information technology.

Objective 2: Increase and Strengthen Law School Programs

In recent years, Al-Quds Law School has initiated a number of innovative programs that are consistent with those offered by the most well-respected law schools in the world. The law school is committed to strengthening and improving these programs while adding others that will continue to elevate its profile and build its stature in the local and global community.



Key activities to achieve this objective

- Expand and improve the law library. Strengthen on-line research capacity by adding computers, subscribing to on-line legal research services and providing training to faculty and students on conducting on-line research.
- Strengthen and improve the moot court program and make it an integral part of the law school's programs. Invite other law schools to participate in moot court competitions; even if those law schools do not currently have moot court programs, invitations from Al-Quds may stimulate them to be created.
- Explore participation by Al-Quds students in the Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.
- Expand and strengthen the Women and the Law Program and introduce courses relating to women and the law as part of the general curriculum. Consider creating a Women's Law Association, which might sponsor activities, guest speakers and special events.
- Strengthen and improve the LLM programs. Separate curricula for the private and public law LLM programs. Implement an LLM program in International Human Rights Law.
- Explore the feasibility of an international LLM exchange program, whereby one Al-Quds law graduate per year would receive a scholarship to attend an LLM program in another country in return for a graduate of that law school receiving a scholarship to attend one of Al-Quds' LLM programs.
- Engage in international faculty exchanges, which would position Al-Quds faculty as members of the global legal community and provide opportunities for joint research projects.



- Activate and strengthen the Alumni Association. Alumni represent a potential source of revenue for the law school and can provide job opportunities for graduating students.
- Create an alumni mentoring program to provide students with support and job guidance from alumni.
- Expand programs in the Legal Aid Clinic. This clinic presents an excellent opportunity to provide law students with concrete learning opportunities while delivering much-needed legal services to the local community. High-profile legal cases that generate international publicity routinely arise in the East Jerusalem/Ramallah area; if the law school positioned itself to take on representation in some of these cases (such as the recent eviction cases), it would share the international publicity. This would increase opportunities for faculty publication and exchanges, and provide strong resume entries for law students who are entering the job market.
- Add a Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC), with a branch office in Ramallah (an important commercial hub). The purposes of the Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC) are to give students who have taken Business Associations real-life experience handling transactional legal problems and to provide assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs in Palestine. Client work is done by students under the close supervision of a faculty member with substantial experience in private law practice. No litigation or contested proceedings are handled. The program is operated in the same way as in a corporate law firm: the student participant and a faculty supervisor meet together with the new client; both ask questions about the proposed venture or legal problem facing the client; both prepare notes of the meeting. Following the meeting, the student drafts a letter to the client summarizing the points discussed at the initial conference and estimating SBLC fees and official charges. The letter is then reviewed by the faculty supervisor and is sent to the client over the student's name with a copy to the supervisor.



If the client elects to have the SBLC undertake one or more of the items outlined in the first letter, the student does all of the required research and drafting under faculty guidance and supervision. When the engagement is complete, the student prepares a statement for services and expenses and a letter transmitting it to the client. Once a week all student participants and faculty supervisors meet as a group to review the accomplishments and challenges of the prior week and to discuss matters of common interest. SBLC student participants are graded on the quality of their work and on the amount of responsibility they assume for meeting clients' needs.



- Add an Arbitration Center to the Law School Clinical Program, with a branch office in Ramallah (an important commercial hub). Student participation in the Center should be on a competitive basis, with students receiving academic credit for participation. Students can be trained in principles of arbitration and work under the supervision of faculty members. Such a program would provide much-needed legal services to the local business community, whose members are often reluctant to submit their disputes to the court system, while at the same time providing practical education to students in commercial law. Services could include providing arbitration services, giving legal opinions during the drafting of international commercial and investment contracts, providing pre-contractual advice on avoiding disputes, and delivering training courses on topics relating to international commercial transactions. Periodic conferences and workshops on topics relating to commercial law and arbitration could be organized, to which the public could be invited. Student arbitrators would be trained and certified before taking on their responsibilities. Collaboration with the Harvard Mediation Project, which has worked with other international arbitration projects, could be explored. A library and database of materials on trade, investment and commercial dispute

resolution topics in Arabic and English could also be created.

- Explore the creation of a career counseling office in order to provide law students with career and internship counseling services. This activity could be linked to the Alumni Association; alumni could serve as mentors and provide career support and guidance to students.



Objective 3: Create Strong Administrative Structure that Effectively Supports Work of the Law School.

A well-respected academic institution capable of carrying out its mission must be managed well. Al-Quds is committed to engaging, supporting, training and retaining faculty and staff that will allow it to meet its goals and carry out its strategic priorities over the next five years.

The law school is also committed to exploring ways to increase space for offices and classrooms so that it can continue to grow to meets its goals and objectives.

Key activities to achieve this objective

- Create a formal written management plan and administrative framework, with clearly set out job descriptions, responsibilities and reporting lines for all faculty, administrators and staff.
- In order to improve administration of the law school and allow faculty to focus on the important job of teaching, separate administrative and faculty responsibilities. If necessary, create an interim rotating plan, whereby those in charge of administration are relieved of teaching duties during the time they have administrative responsibilities.
- Create an Administrative Handbook, setting out administrative protocols and guidelines.

- Create a Faculty Handbook, setting out guidelines and information on issues such as academic policies and procedures, class scheduling and registration, examination policies and procedures, and course evaluations. [A sample Faculty Handbook Table of Contents is attached.]
- Analyze the work of existing committees in order to strengthen their work and eliminate inefficiencies.
- Create a filing and archiving system so that law school documents are properly stored and can be easily located.
- Analyze whether additional faculty is needed and whether resources are sufficient to hire them. If so, create hiring protocols. Consider creating a Hiring Committee to review applications.
- Explore funding opportunities to enlarge and improve facilities and infrastructure. Consider conducting a seminar on grant proposal writing so law school administration has the skills to approach funders for assistance with building needs.

Objective 4: Maintain Functional and Attractive Website that Facilitates Teaching, Research and Teacher-Student Interactions while Showcasing the Accomplishments of the Law School, Faculty and Student Body.

An attractive, functional interactive website is the most effective way to facilitate internal communication between faculty, administration and students within the law school community, and external communications with the world outside the law school. It also represents the best way for Al-Quds Law School to heighten its profile in the eyes of the international community.

Key activities to achieve this objective

- Improve the law school's on-line presence in the local and international community by creating an attractive website with photographs and links leading to information about law school activities. On the cover page post photographs, updates and stories about events of interest, including significant cases handled by law students, the work of law school clinics, recent faculty scholarship and activities, and general announcements.

Use the webpage to issue statements by faculty about noteworthy cases of interest to the community.

- To facilitate access and publicity outside Palestine, translate the website and its contents into English and other relevant languages.
- Implement a program similar to Blackboard for each course so that class readings and assignments can be posted on-line. This would reduce photocopying costs, allow students to access course materials and assignments from off-campus and increase the interactive nature of teaching, consistent with goals set forth under Priority 1.
- Create individual faculty profile pages that feature educational background, courses, publications, public lectures and presentations, photographs and other material of interest for each faculty member. This would provide information useful to students while heightening the profile of faculty in the local and international communities.
- Explore the feasibility of creating an on-line law journal. This would improve the academic reputation of the law school, faculty and students in the international community and increase opportunities for collaboration and exchanges. When academics in other countries cite to article in this journal, the reputation of Al-Quds faculty will be elevated. [Note: this activity is currently under development.]
- Create a website for the Alumni Association. Provide Association members with individual e-mail addresses to facilitate communication among themselves and with current students.



Objective 5: Improve Communication within the Law School and Between the Law School and Outside Communities.

Clear communication between all members of the law school community – faculty, administrators, students and alumni – can help maintain a vibrant intellectual life. Frequent communications between the law school and local and international communities can help showcase the law school’s work and ensure that it remains relevant and useful.

Key activities to achieve this objective

- Create a law school handbook, containing historical information about the law school as well as information about its programs, departments, faculty and curriculum, and post it on the law school’s website.
- Create a communications protocol, setting forth guidelines for student – faculty and faculty –administration communications, will be created.
- Create a Student Handbook setting forth policies relevant to students will be created. [A sample Student Handbook Table of Contents is attached.]
- In order to create additional opportunities for Al-Quds students to obtain scholarships for international LLM programs, strengthen relationships with agencies and organizations that provide funding for these programs.
- In order to more effectively communicate with outside communities, consider appointing a Director of Communications, whose responsibility it would be to post articles on the law school’s website, issue press releases about faculty and student accomplishments and high-profile cases handled by clinical programs, and facilitate communication between media seeking comment on current legal issues and faculty members with the expertise to make public comments.

Objective 6: Become a Significant and Respected Presence in Local and Global Communities.

The law school is in a unique position to provide much-needed legal assistance to local communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem areas while at the same time serving as a vital link with the rest of the world. Through the work of its faculty and students, Al-Quds is committed to using its valuable resources to serve local citizens and increase global awareness of its work and legal challenges facing this region.

Key activities to achieve this objective

- Continue to create collaborative relationships with other academic institutions around the world in order to create a rich international network and increase the number of resources available to faculty and students. The law school has already set up relationships with several law schools in other countries, including American University and Bard College. These partnerships have laid the foundation for joint courses and programs which can provide students and faculty with valuable resources and opportunities. Additional relationships would further network Al-Quds in the global academic community and provide greater opportunities for faculty and students.
- In order to attract significant and high-profile cases to the Legal Aid Clinic, advertise their services in the West Bank and East Jerusalem communities.
- Conduct regular meetings and events relating to issues of local concern with faculty and members of the community and NGOs. Publicize the schedule for these meetings and issue press statements afterwards on the law school website.
- Continue the current practice of having each law department sponsor one public



workshop each year. Advertise these workshops in the local press and on the law school's website. Solicit input from local citizens on topics of interest.

- In order to integrate the law school into the international law school community, explore joining the International Law School Association. ILSA sponsors an annual international meeting and offers scholarships to schools that would not otherwise be able to attend.
- Encourage faculty to publish in international law journals, including but not limited to Arab law journals. International publication would facilitate exchange and collaboration opportunities.
- Continue to participate in activities of regional organizations such as the Arab Law School Association.

