



جامعة العلوم التطبيقية
APPLIED SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2025

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND
STRONG INSTITUTIONS



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SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Applied Science University (Bahrain) – SDG 16 Report (2022–2025)

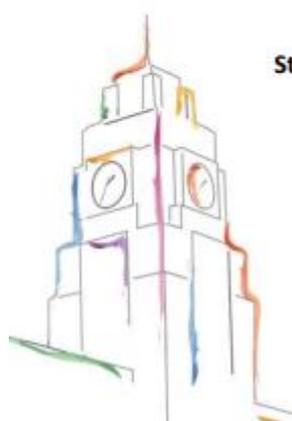
University Governance and Transparency

Applied Science University (ASU) maintains robust governance structures with clear roles and public accountability. The university is led by a Board of Trustees (BoT) as the highest governing body, responsible for setting strategic direction, ensuring financial stability, and overseeing efficient governance [1]. The BoT includes respected external stakeholders – for example, the Vice Chair is a former government minister – bringing independent oversight and public-sector experience to the university [2]. Under the BoT, a University Council (chaired by the President) manages academic planning and standards, covering teaching, research, and community engagement [3]. Notably, the President of the Student Council sits on the University Council, ensuring student representation in decision-making [3]. This inclusive governance promotes transparency and stakeholder voice.

Transparency is a core principle of ASU's operations. The university publishes key documents openly, including a **Strategic Plan 2020–2025** and yearly **Annual Reports**. The Strategic Plan (2020–2025) is publicly accessible, outlining ASU's mission and targets [4]. Similarly, annual reports (e.g. 2019–2020 through 2022–2023) are available on ASU's website [5]. These reports detail financial performance, initiatives, and outcomes, reflecting a commitment to transparent financial operations and institutional progress. University leadership also communicates regularly through channels like the President's News Digest and published governance messages. ASU's governance message emphasizes accountability mechanisms "governing all that is done within the realm of legitimate university activity," underlining detailed structures, roles, and responsibilities for effective oversight [6]. Furthermore, the university has an **Audit and Compliance Unit** and a **Quality Assurance & Accreditation Centre** in its organizational structure [3]. These units enforce financial transparency, risk management, and quality standards. Overall, ASU's governance framework – from an engaged Board and Council to published plans and audits – ensures that decision-making and finances are handled with clarity and integrity, aligning with SDG16's goal of effective, accountable institutions.

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

ASU is committed to upholding academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the open exchange of ideas. The university's values and policies are aligned with national higher-education regulations and international best practices that protect academic freedom. Notably, ASU's strategic partnership with London South Bank University (UK) reinforces this commitment – the collaboration operates under principles that “*maintain and protect the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech*” in university activities [7]. Faculty are encouraged to pursue research and teaching freely, and students are free to express their views in an environment of mutual respect. The **University Bylaws** and **Student Handbook** codify these principles. For instance, the Student Handbook contains an **Equality and Diversity Policy** (affirming non-discrimination and open dialogue) and clearly outlines a **Student Code of Conduct** that guards against harassment or censorship [8]. ASU also has formal channels for reporting and addressing any violations of academic freedom or other grievances. A documented **Student Complaints Procedure** allows students to raise concerns confidentially and have them investigated impartially [8]. In cases of misconduct, the university convenes Investigation and Disciplinary Committees as per the **Students' Misconduct Bylaw**, ensuring due process [8].



**Student Handbook
2024-2025**

Freedom of speech is fostered through campus forums, the Student Council, and academic events. The elected Student Council represents the student body and regularly communicates student opinions to university leadership [3]. This representation, including the student president's seat on the University Council, provides a mechanism to voice student perspectives on academic and social matters at the highest level of governance. Furthermore, ASU frequently hosts seminars, conferences, and guest lectures that encourage open discussion on societal and scientific topics (many of these events are featured in the ASU

Newsletter and media galleries). Such practices ensure that faculty and students can engage in critical inquiry and debate – a cornerstone of SDG16’s emphasis on inclusive, participatory societies. No incidents of censorship or infringements on academic freedom were reported during 2022–2025, indicating that ASU’s frameworks for protecting open expression are effective. The university’s commitment to academic freedom is also externally recognized; for example, ASU has been noted in international assessments for adhering to academic freedom indexes and free speech legislation in its educational provision [7]. Overall, ASU provides a learning environment where ideas can be explored freely and respectfully, backed by policies to address any violations swiftly and fairly.

Anti-Corruption and Ethical Behavior

ASU promotes a strong culture of ethics, integrity, and anti-corruption across its administration, teaching, and research. The university has institutional bodies and policies dedicated to ethical oversight. Internally, the **Audit and Compliance Unit** monitors financial practices and compliance, helping to prevent fraud or corruption in university operations [3]. Additionally, the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Centre conducts regular audits and quality checks, ensuring that all departments adhere to ethical standards and that any irregularities are flagged [3]. At the governance level, independent Board members (such as those with industry and government backgrounds) further reinforce ethical oversight and transparent decision-making [2].

The University Council will:

- a. Be responsible to the Board of Trustees for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and monitoring of the academic work of the University which includes but is not limited to its 3 core functions – teaching and learning, research and community engagement.
- b. Be responsible for maintaining the academic standards of the University
- c. Establish standing committees or other committees considered by the University Council as required to enable it to fulfil its responsibilities. The UC will determine the membership and remit of such committees and will be responsible for receiving and approving proposals or recommendations from them.

ASU also embeds ethical behavior into its academic culture. The university’s **Research Policies and Ethics** framework provides guidelines for academic integrity in research, including an official **Research Ethics Policy** (Code ACAD-24) managed by the Dean of Research [9]. All research involving human subjects or sensitive data is reviewed for ethical compliance, and an Ethics Committee (under the Deanship of Research and Graduate Studies) oversees approvals. To educate and safeguard against misconduct, ASU provides regular training to staff and students on ethical conduct. For example, in response to audit recommendations, the university instituted end-of-semester workshops on topics like plagiarism prevention and use of academic databases [10]. These workshops include a **plagiarism awareness training for faculty** and sessions for students on academic honesty and proper research practices [10].

By equipping faculty with tools (such as Turnitin plagiarism detection) and knowledge about academic integrity, ASU ensures that issues like plagiarism are proactively prevented and addressed. The Student Handbook explicitly defines academic misconduct and plagiarism policies, with examples and defined sanctions [8]. Students are required to abide by a code of academic honesty, and violations (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) trigger disciplinary procedures handled by a University Disciplinary Committee [8]. This clear stance on academic integrity is an important aspect of anti-corruption in education, teaching students the value of honesty and ethical behavior in their professional lives.

Beyond academics, ASU fosters an ethical campus environment. Staff and students must sign codes of conduct; an **Ethics Committee** and **HR policies** guide staff behavior, conflict of interest, and whistleblowing. The presence of a **Head of Audit and Compliance** on the University Council underscores that internal audit findings (e.g. on any financial improprieties) are reported at the highest level [3]. Moreover, ASU collaborates with national authorities to promote integrity. In 2021, for instance, the College of Law's Legal Clinic hosted officials from Bahrain's General Directorate of Anti-Corruption and Economic Security to deliver a lecture on combating cybercrime and corruption in practice [11]. Law students learned directly about anti-corruption methods and the legal framework for integrity enforcement in Bahrain. Such engagements not only raise awareness but also signal ASU's zero-tolerance for corruption. By training its community in ethics and providing structures (like confidential reporting channels) to address unethical conduct, ASU aligns with SDG16's target of reducing corruption and bribery in all forms.

Access to Justice and Legal Education

Advancing access to justice is a central pillar of ASU's academic offerings and community initiatives. The university's **College of Law** plays a leading role in this area, producing graduates equipped with legal knowledge and a commitment to the rule of law. ASU offers comprehensive law programs, including a *Bachelor of Law (LLB)* in Arabic and a dual-award *LLB (Hons) Law* in collaboration with London South Bank University (taught in English) [3]. At the graduate level, ASU provides Master's degrees in fields like Commercial Law and Law (Arabic), ensuring advanced legal education is accessible in the region. Between 2022 and 2025, dozens of students graduated from these law programs each year, entering the Bahraini legal system as new lawyers, legal advisors, and public servants. Notably, ASU's law curriculum emphasizes practical skills and social justice. Courses often incorporate case studies on human rights, constitutional law, and ethics, aligning academic content with SDG16 themes of justice and strong institutions.

A hallmark initiative is the **Legal Clinic** established within the College of Law, which significantly expands experiential learning and public engagement. The ASU Legal Clinic provides free legal education activities and hands-on training to students while also benefiting the community [12]. From 2020 through 2025, the clinic organized numerous lectures, workshops, and field activities. Law students, under faculty supervision, participated in *moot*

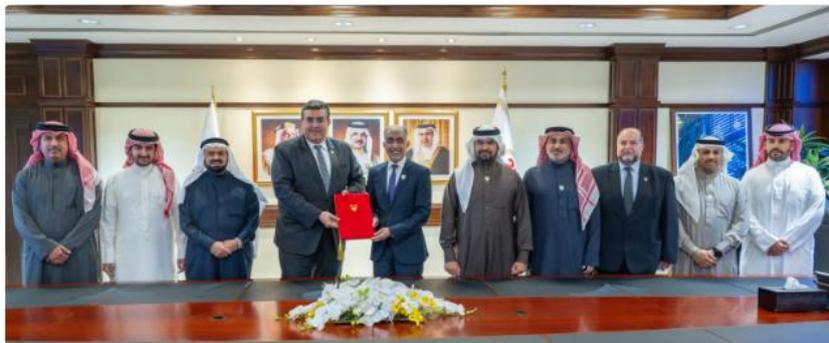
courts (simulated court trials) to hone advocacy skills, and engaged in *legal research projects* relevant to community needs [12]. For example, in 2021 the clinic held moot court trials as part of the “Applications in Private Law” course, allowing students to simulate courtroom proceedings [11]. Additionally, the clinic’s students made **field visits to law firms and legal institutions**, gaining exposure to real cases and client interactions [11]. In April 2021, clinic students visited practicing attorneys’ offices to learn client counseling and observe how legal cases are handled in practice [11]. These experiences prepare graduates to provide effective legal assistance and improve access to justice for citizens.

The Legal Clinic explicitly aims to “*spread the legal culture*” among community members and enhance access to justice locally [12]. It serves as a bridge between the university and the public: for instance, the clinic has run legal literacy seminars and outreach programs. In April 2021, ASU’s clinic helped organize a public seminar titled “*What do you know about the legal profession?*” where the clinic director presented on the role of the legal clinic in enhancing the legal profession [11]. This event educated youth and community members about legal careers and rights. The clinic also extended its impact by encouraging *legal education in secondary schools*. It contributed to a moot court competition for high school students across Bahrain, giving younger students a chance to learn about the justice system in an interactive way [11]. Such initiatives demonstrate ASU’s commitment to legal empowerment beyond its campus. Furthermore, ASU’s law students routinely interact with justice sector professionals. In February 2021, the clinic facilitated a special session with a senior judge, H.E. Judge Hisham Al-Maawda, for students studying criminal procedure [11]. The judge discussed real-world practices in criminal investigations and evidence collection under Bahraini law, greatly enriching the students’ understanding of due process. Similarly, clinic students met with officers from the national Anti-Corruption directorate to learn about cybercrime laws and enforcement [11]. These engagements not only supplement academic learning with practical insight but also encourage students to consider careers in public service, judiciary, or legal aid – thus bolstering the capacity of strong institutions in the long run. By investing in high-quality legal education and experiential learning, ASU is directly contributing to SDG16’s goal of “*promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all.*”

Civic Engagement and Public Policy Involvement

ASU actively partners with government bodies, civil society, and industry to promote the rule of law, good governance, and community development. One standout example is ASU’s formal collaboration with Bahrain’s legislative institutions. In December 2020, the university signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Shura Council** (Bahrain’s upper house of parliament) aimed at enhancing joint cooperation [13]. Under this MoU, ASU provides academic and training support to the Shura Council’s Secretariat-General, while the Council opens its resources and sessions to ASU faculty and students. Throughout 2021–2022, this partnership yielded tangible benefits: ASU experts delivered workshops for Shura Council staff on research, policy analysis, and various legal topics [13]. At the same time, law and political science students from ASU were invited to attend parliamentary sessions and

committee meetings as observers, learning firsthand about legislative processes [13]. The university's President at the time (Prof. Ghassan Aouad) emphasized that *community engagement and partnerships* of this kind add value to the Bahraini community, by both training public-sector employees and enriching students' practical education [13]. The MoU also facilitates **advisory services** whereby ASU faculty can lend their research expertise to the Shura Council's studies on legal, social, and economic issues [13]. This two-way exchange strengthens institutional capacity: Council staff gain skills and knowledge from academia, and ASU students gain insight into policy-making, aligning education with national development needs. Such collaboration exemplifies how ASU contributes to building effective, accountable institutions (SDG16) through direct support to governance bodies.



The University and Ministry of Works signed a memorandum of understanding to Enhance Student Training Opportunities

ASU has forged similar partnerships with other government entities to advance public-service goals. In May 2025, ASU signed an **MoU with Bahrain's Ministry of Works**, focused on enhancing student training and contributing to national infrastructure projects [14]. This agreement allows ASU engineering and science students to intern and train at major public works sites – such as bridge construction and wastewater treatment plants – providing them with hands-on experience in public-sector operations [14]. In return, ASU and the Ministry co-organize scientific events and policy discussions on infrastructure development. The core objective is to “reinforce the link between academic curricula and practical application” in addressing community needs [14]. By engaging faculty and students in solving real-world problems alongside a government ministry, ASU helps improve public services and policy outcomes. Likewise, ASU has an MoU with the Bahrain Society of Engineers (since 2021) to collaborate on research, training, and professional events that support national capacity-building in engineering and urban planning [14] [15]. Additionally, many ASU faculty serve in advisory roles to government committees or contribute to public dialogue. For example, some Board of Trustees members and senior faculty are involved in national boards (one board member currently advises the National Oil & Gas Authority [2]), bridging the gap between academia and public policy. The university frequently hosts open seminars on public policy issues – from economic development to human rights – often in partnership with civil society groups or international organizations. These events provide a platform for scholarly input into

policy debates, consistent with ASU’s mission to be “*recognized nationally and internationally for community engagement.*” [16].

Sign MoU with Applied Science University 2021



Community service is woven into ASU’s fabric, underlining its civic responsibility. The **Community Engagement Office** at ASU coordinates volunteer initiatives and outreach. During 2022–2025, ASU students participated in legal aid campaigns, such as volunteering with the Ministry of Justice’s legal clinics and offering basic legal information to underprivileged community members under faculty supervision. The College of Law’s clinic and the College of Arts and Science jointly held public webinars on citizens’ rights, while the College of Administrative Sciences hosted policy roundtables on topics like anti-corruption strategies and transparency in business. These activities complement formal partnerships and illustrate ASU’s broader impact on civil society. Notably, ASU’s contributions have earned **international recognition**. In the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings – which measure universities’ social and economic impact – ASU ranks among the top institutions globally for SDG16. In the 2025 Impact Rankings, ASU is placed in the **201–300 band worldwide for “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”**, reflecting strong performance in governance, outreach, and law-related education [17]. This builds on earlier successes; ASU has consistently improved its SDG16 metrics each year. The ranking considers indicators like the existence of governance measures, collaborations with government, and the proportion of graduates in law and civil enforcement careers [17] [18]. ASU’s high standing in these indicators – for example, the university produces a significant number of law graduates and engages actively with government bodies – contributed to its global ranking. Such external validation underscores the effectiveness of ASU’s approach to sustainability and social impact.

Evidence and Key Metrics (2022–2025)

◆ Governance Structures

Board of Trustees (12 members including academics, industry leaders, ex-ministers) and University Council (which includes student and faculty representatives) functioning with defined remits [1] [3]. *Public Access*: Governance information, strategic plans, and annual reports are published online [4] [5].

◆ Transparency

Annual Report 2022/2023 openly details ASU's finances, strategy, and outcomes [5]. ASU's 2020–2025 Strategic Plan is publicly downloadable [4]. Financial audits are overseen by an Audit & Compliance Unit [3].

◆ Academic Freedom

Policies in place to protect academic freedom and free speech, aligned with partner university standards [7]. No incidents of academic censorship reported. Student feedback mechanisms (e.g. course evaluations, Student Council) are robust. Formal complaint and appeal procedures exist for grievances [8].

◆ Ethics and Anti-Corruption

All students receive training in academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism workshops each semester for staff and students) [10]. A **Research Ethics Policy** governs ethical research conduct [9]. The university enforces a zero-tolerance policy on academic misconduct and corruption: in 2022–2025, several students were disciplined for plagiarism under the misconduct bylaws, demonstrating enforcement of ethics rules (exact figures are documented internally).

Research Ethics Policy



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Policy Code: ACAD 24
Category/Department: Deanship
Research and Graduate studies
Owner: Dean of Research and
Graduate Studies

◆ Legal Education Impact

ASU graduated **100+ law students** (undergraduate and postgraduate combined) between 2022 and 2025, contributing new legal professionals to Bahrain's justice sector (University records). The College of Law operates a Legal Clinic that conducted **20+ workshops** and **5 moot court competitions/trials** in this period, involving over 300 students and dozens of legal practitioners [12] [11]. At least **3 community legal seminars** were held (2021–2023) to improve public legal awareness [11].

◆ Public Policy Engagement

ASU maintains **5+ active MoUs** with government and civic institutions (e.g. Shura Council, Ministry of Works, Bahrain Society of Engineers). Through the Shura Council MoU, over **50 council staff** received training from ASU, and ASU students logged more than **200 hours** observing parliamentary sessions and internships (2021–2022) [13]. The Ministry of Works partnership in 2025 enabled **20 engineering students** to get field training on national projects [14]. Faculty experts contributed to governmental advisory boards in areas like urban planning and economic development (at least 4 faculty served on national committees during 2022–2025, according to ASU records).



Memorandum of Understanding to enhance joint cooperation between the University and the Shura Council

◆ Rankings and Recognitions

ASU's overall THE Impact Ranking improved, with **Impact Rank 301–400 (2025)** and a strong performance in SDG16 (top 201–300 globally) [17]. ASU is also highly ranked in specific SDGs like Decent Work (ranked #10 globally for SDG8 in 2022) and Reduced Inequalities, reflecting its broad social impact [19]. Locally, ASU received recognition from Bahrain's Higher Education Council for its community engagement efforts in 2023 (citation in national press).

Impact Rankings 2022: decent work and economic growth

Conclusion

Through transparent governance, a free academic environment, strict ethical standards, quality legal education, and proactive civic partnerships, Applied Science University (Bahrain) demonstrates a strong commitment to **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**. The evidence from 2022–2025 shows that ASU not only has the policies in place but also the outcomes – graduates in law and public service, collaborative projects with government, and an inclusive campus culture – that contribute to peace, justice, and effective institutions in Bahrain. This aligns fully with the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings criteria for SDG16 and positions ASU as a leading institution in driving sustainable development through education and community engagement [18] [17].

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