ASU

جامعة العلوم التطبيقية
APPLIED SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2025

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

Table of contents

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

Sustainability Report on SDG 17 for Applied Science University Bahrain

Applied Science University (ASU) in Bahrain has embedded **Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals)** into its institutional strategy, recognizing that cross-sector collaborations are crucial for advancing all SDGs. SDG 17 emphasizes the strengthening of global partnerships in support of sustainable development, and ASU actively pursues this through alliances with government agencies, industry, civil society, and academic institutions. ASU's commitment to partnerships is reflected in its performance in international sustainability rankings: in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2025, ASU is placed in the **101–200 band globally for SDG 17** [1]. This report details ASU's partnership framework and highlights key collaborations, network participation, policies, and metrics that demonstrate how the university leverages partnerships to support sustainable development. It is structured to align with THE Impact Rankings submission requirements, providing evidence of ASU's efforts in **research collaborations, educational initiatives, community engagement, and reporting on SDGs**.

Strategic Partnership Framework

ASU has established a clear framework and administrative support for cultivating partnerships. The university operates an **International Partnerships Office** tasked with managing collaborative agreements and activities. This office's responsibilities include **managing partnerships with international partners, coordinating student mobility programs, supporting colleges in partnership initiatives, and hosting international delegations** [2]. Such a structure ensures partnerships are systematically aligned with ASU's strategic goals. The university's Vision and Mission statements emphasize community engagement and global outlook, which translate into policies encouraging faculty and departments to seek collaborative ventures.

Critically, ASU has institutionalized **SDG reporting and sustainability governance**. It maintains a dedicated sustainability web portal and incorporates SDG measures in annual reports, thereby meeting global best practices for transparency. (THE's methodology specifically rewards institutions for **publishing SDG reports and offering education on the SDGs** [3], and ASU fulfills these criteria through its public sustainability reports and integration of SDG topics

into curricula.) Moreover, ASU's **Research and Community Engagement policies** prioritize projects that have social impact, incentivizing faculty to engage in research partnerships that address sustainable development challenges. By embedding SDG 17 into its strategic plan and quality assurance processes, ASU provides internal support (such as seed funding and recognition for SDG-related initiatives) and establishes a culture where partnership and knowledge-sharing are valued. This proactive framework has positioned ASU as a **leader in Bahrain for collaborative impact**, as evidenced by its ranking as one of the top private universities in the country on sustainability and partnership metrics [4] [1].

Government and Civil Society Engagement

ASU actively collaborates with **government bodies and civil society organizations** to advance sustainable development at local and national levels. These partnerships are formalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and joint programs that connect academic expertise with societal needs:

◆ Partnerships with Government Ministries

Works Ministry and Applied Science University sign MoU

In *January 2025*, ASU signed a MoU with the **Ministry of Works (Government of Bahrain)** to enhance student training and integrate academic learning with real-world projects [5]. This agreement provides ASU engineering and science students with hands-on experience at major infrastructure sites (such as bridges, wastewater treatment plants, and public works projects), aligning with SDGs like industry innovation and sustainable cities [5]. The ministry-university collaboration also includes **joint scientific activities, research projects, and conferences** to facilitate knowledge exchange [5]. The Minister of Works highlighted that this partnership helps equip students with practical skills for the job market while supporting national development needs [5]. Likewise, ASU's President described the MoU as a *"key step in advancing academic and professional collaboration with government entities"*, enhancing

students' skills through real-world experience [5]. This is just one example of how ASU works with government to *bridge academia and practice*. Additional MoUs exist with bodies like the **Ministry of Housing** and the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** (through programs such as the Hope Fund), focusing on community development and youth empowerment initiatives (e.g. entrepreneurship training for youth via the Hope Fund, which supports SDG 8 Decent Work and SDG 11 Sustainable Communities) [6].

◆ Engagement with Legislative Bodies

Uniquely, ASU has formal partnerships with Bahrain's **legislative councils** – the **Council of Representatives and the Shura Council** [6]. Through MoUs with the national parliament's upper and lower houses, ASU facilitates student internships, joint workshops, and policy forums. These initiatives give students and faculty opportunities to engage in policy research, legislative drafting exercises, and public-sector advisory projects, thereby advancing SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) via educational support to governance. By partnering with the Council of Representatives, for example, ASU has co-hosted seminars on topics such as transparency and good governance, and provided training sessions to young parliamentarian programs. Such collaboration underscores ASU's role in capacity-building for strong institutions and reflects an innovative approach to SDG 17 by linking academia with national policymaking.

◆ Local Government and Community Partnerships

At the municipal level, ASU partners with the **Capital Governorate of Bahrain**, the region governing Manama and surrounding areas. Through an MoU with the Capital Governorate, ASU undertakes *"collaborative activities to benefit ASU students and Bahraini society in general."* [7]. This includes organizing community development programs, volunteering campaigns, and research projects addressing urban sustainability challenges in Manama. For instance, ASU students have worked on waste management awareness campaigns and smart city planning exercises in coordination with the Governorate, directly contributing to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 targets on public-private partnerships at the city level. The Governorate partnership exemplifies how ASU shares its expertise (e.g. from its College of Engineering and College of Arts & Science) to solve local problems, while providing students with civic engagement experience.

◆ Collaboration with Civil Society and NGOs

ASU maintains active partnerships with numerous **non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and professional societies**, which amplify its community outreach and lifelong learning mission. Notably, ASU has an MoU with the **Bahrain Businesswomen's Society**, focusing on women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. Under this partnership, ASU and the society co-organize training workshops, networking events, and research on female entrepreneurship, *"with a focus on enhancing the role of women in business."* [7] This supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by building capacity among women entrepreneurs and integrating gender perspectives into business education. Similarly, ASU partners with the **Bahrain Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) Society** to promote entrepreneurship and innovation. Joint activities include startup incubator events, SME clinics for student entrepreneurs, and public seminars on sustainable business, *"undertaken through a Memorandum of Understanding to…focus on entrepreneurship."* [7] (Advancing SDG 8 and SDG 9 on economic growth and innovation).

◆ Professional Associations and Social Initiatives

The university's partnerships extend to technical and social associations. For example, ASU is allied with the **Bahrain Society of Engineers (BSE)**, through which students and faculty participate in engineering competitions and conferences. ASU engineering students recently won *"the best graduation project in Civil Engineering from the Bahrain Society of Engineers,"* reflecting the fruits of this collaboration [8]. ASU also engages with the **Bahrain Institute for Political Development (BIPD)** – a semi-governmental entity – to hold joint events on civic leadership and policy (aligning with SDG 16). On the social front, ASU's MoU with the **Social Media Club** (a civil society group) involves *"joint events and training"* on media literacy and digital citizenship [7], which helps build community awareness (supporting SDG 4.7 on education for sustainable development). Another notable initiative is ASU's partnership on **Alternative Sentencing Programs** with the relevant government authorities: in 2024, ASU signed an MoU to offer educational and training programs for beneficiaries of Bahrain's Alternative Sanctions law (e.g. rehabilitative education for first-time offenders as an alternative to incarceration). Under this agreement – facilitated by the Ministry of Justice and the Interior – ASU provides skills courses and workshops to help reintegrate these individuals into society [9], directly contributing to SDG 16's targets on inclusive societies and rule of law.

Pioneering Sustainability : Applied Science University Promotes Initiatives In Engineering Education To Help Fight Global Warming

Through these extensive government and NGO engagements, ASU demonstrates a **cross-sector approach**: the university not only receives input from government and civil society to shape its curricula and research, but also contributes its academic resources to public service. Such partnerships reflect ASU's commitment to the **"whole-of-society"** principle of SDG 17, leveraging its role as an educational institution to strengthen the capabilities of government agencies and NGOs in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Academic and Research Collaborations

Collaboration with other **academic institutions** – locally and internationally – is a cornerstone of ASU's strategy to broaden its impact on sustainable development. These partnerships enhance educational quality, enable joint research on SDG topics, and foster cultural and knowledge exchange. Key academic collaborations include:

◆ Dual-Degree International Programs

ASU has a flagship partnership with **London South Bank University (LSBU) in the UK**, initiated in 2014 and strengthened over the years [1]. Through this collaboration, ASU offers **six dual-award bachelor's degree programs**, jointly delivered with LSBU in disciplines critical to sustainable development: Civil Engineering, Architectural Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Law, and Business Management [7]. Students enrolled in these programs earn *"a dual degree from LSBU in the UK and ASU in Bahrain"* upon graduation [7]. This arrangement enriches ASU's curriculum with international perspectives and quality standards – for example, engineering programs incorporate UK best practices in sustainable design and technology, aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure). The collaboration has also led to the establishment of a **new Engineering School** at ASU launched in partnership with LSBU [1], focused on modern engineering challenges such as renewable energy, smart cities, and green construction. These

programs represent a direct contribution to SDG 17 by facilitating *knowledge transfer and capacity building*: ASU's faculty and LSBU's faculty engage in staff exchanges, joint curriculum development, and supervision of student projects tackling SDG-related issues (for instance, capstone projects on solar power integration and sustainable architecture). The success of the ASU-LSBU partnership is evident in student achievements and recognition – as noted earlier, students from the joint programs have won national awards for project excellence in sustainable engineering [8].

◆ Regional and Global University Networks

ASU is an active member of several **university networks** which promote collaborative research and exchange on sustainability. ASU holds membership in the **Association of Arab Universities (AARU)** and the **International Association of Universities (IAU)**, the latter being a UNESCO-based global network [7]. Through AARU, ASU contributes to regional initiatives that encourage Arab universities to work together on common development challenges – e.g., joint conferences on quality education and cross-border research projects on topics like water scarcity (SDG 6) and renewable energy (SDG 7) in the Arab region. Within the IAU, ASU participates in global dialogues on higher education's role in the SDGs, sharing its experience and learning from international best practices. ASU's **associate membership in INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)** further reinforces its commitment to quality partnerships: ASU has been part of INQAAHE since 2015 and actively engages in its forums, *"sharing some of our quality assurance practices"* and adopting lessons from worldwide QA trends [7]. By engaging in these networks, ASU aligns with SDG 17's target of knowledge sharing and cooperation, especially in improving higher education standards and outcomes.

◆ Research Collaborations and Co-Authored Publications

ASU's faculty and researchers are increasingly involved in collaborative research that addresses various SDGs, often in partnership with scholars from other institutions. The university incentivizes SDG-related research through internal grants and by encouraging multi-disciplinary projects. One notable area is **sustainable built environment and well-being**. For example, ASU researchers (Prof. Assem Al-Hajj and Dr. Essam El-Chayeb) have co-authored studies such as *"Effects of green school environment on users' wellbeing and productivity,"* presented at international conferences [10] . This research, aligned with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), was conducted in collaboration with external academic partners, illustrating ASU's focus on research that has both local relevance and international reach. Overall, a significant share of ASU's publications are co-

authored with international partners, reflecting a high rate of collaboration. *(For THE Impact Rankings, such publications – especially those addressing SDG challenges or involving authors from lower-income countries – contribute to the SDG 17 score* [3]*.)*

Indeed, ASU's commitment to joint research has opened avenues for **international research funding**. In recent years, ASU faculty have joined multi-institution research consortia funded by bodies like the EU Horizon program and UN development agencies. For instance, political science researchers from ASU collaborated with European and regional universities on a UNDP-funded project examining **education for sustainable development in Bahrain**, resulting in publications on integrating SDGs into curricula [11]. Additionally, ASU's College of Engineering has partnered with Gulf and European researchers on renewable energy studies, supported by international grants focusing on climate action (SDG 13). While exact figures vary annually, ASU reports an **increasing trend in international research grants** received – a testament to its growing reputation and network. This not only brings in funding but also builds research capacity on campus through exchange of expertise.

◆ Academic MoUs and Capacity Buildin

Beyond LSBU, ASU has pursued other academic MoUs to broaden subject offerings and research collaboration. It signed a memorandum with the **UN-affiliated University for Peace (UPEACE)** in 2022, aiming *"to promote cooperation… in the field of peace studies, diplomacy and international relations."* [12] This partnership allows ASU to tap into UPEACE's specialized expertise in peace and conflict studies (SDG 16) and to develop joint courses or student exchange in those areas. By collaborating with UPEACE, ASU also contributes to global discussions on peace and sustainability, for instance by sending delegates to UPEACE conferences and co-hosting lectures on peacebuilding in the Middle East. Domestically, ASU has academic linkages with institutions like the **University of Bahrain** and regional universities for specific initiatives (such as joint seminars, library resource sharing, and articulation agreements enabling student transfers). Through its **Training, Development and Continuing Education Centre**, ASU invites professors from partner universities as visiting scholars to conduct workshops for ASU faculty and students – building local capacity with international input.

Applied Science University signs memo with University for Peace

In summary, ASU's academic and research collaborations demonstrate how the university **leverages global knowledge networks to enhance local impact**. By offering globally recognized programs (via LSBU), engaging in joint research on SDG topics, and participating in academic coalitions, ASU ensures that its education and scholarship remain cutting-edge and solution-oriented. These collaborations directly advance SDG 17 by **sharing knowledge, transferring technology, and building research and educational capacity** both within ASU and among its partners.

International SDG Networks and Initiatives

As part of its commitment to SDG 17, Applied Science University actively participates in **international SDG-focused networks and global initiatives**, which facilitate the exchange of best practices and showcase ASU's contributions on a world stage:

◆ Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

ASU's participation in THE Impact Rankings is itself a global initiative aligning universities with the SDGs. By entering these rankings since 2020 [4], ASU commits to annual reporting of its SDG-related data and initiatives. This process has driven the university to systematically improve and document its SDG performance. ASU's steady progress – moving into the top 400 globally overall and achieving a strong SDG 17 ranking [1] – illustrates how engagement with an international benchmarking initiative spurs internal development and fosters a culture of sustainability on campus. Moreover, ASU representatives attend THE's Impact and
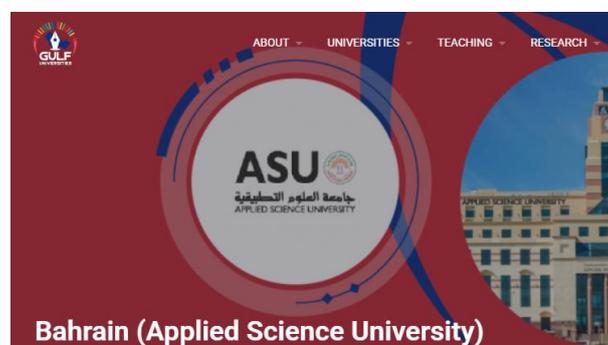
Innovation summits to learn from high-performing institutions and to network with global peers who are also advancing partnerships for the goals.

Applied Science University progress at The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

◆ United Nations and Multi-Stakeholder SDG Programs

ASU aligns with the UN's higher education sustainability efforts through various channels. It has joined the **UN Sustainable Development Goals Universities Initiative for the Gulf (GULF SDGsUni)** under the World Association for Sustainable Development. This forum *"aims to bring together universities and research institutions from across the Gulf region… to collaborate and reconnect with the discourse of the UN Agenda 2030"* [11]. As a member, ASU exchanges case studies and solutions with other Gulf universities – for example, sharing its experience integrating SDGs into engineering curricula, and learning from others about community outreach models. ASU has also been involved in the **Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI)** events, a UN-backed platform, by contributing voluntary reports on its sustainability practices and making commitments toward the 2030 Agenda (such as pledging to achieve carbon neutrality on campus by a target year, in support of SDG 13).

Bahrain (Applied Science University)

Global Sustainable Development Networks

While not yet an official member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), ASU has engaged with SDSN regional conferences and youth initiatives. ASU faculty and students have attended SDSN Arab Region workshops to connect with ongoing regional SDG solution projects. Additionally, ASU is exploring membership in the **UN Academic Impact (UNAI)** network, which would formally link it to UNAI's 10 principles including education for sustainable development and peace. Through such exploratory participation, ASU signals its intent to contribute to global conversations and actions on sustainability.

International Conferences and Knowledge Exchanges

ASU regularly sends delegations to and hosts international conferences that center on sustainability themes. For example, ASU's **College of Administrative Sciences** co-organized a 2023 conference on *"Sustainable Development in the Gulf"* with partners from the GCC and Europe, leading to published proceedings and research collaborations. The university also hosted the **International Conference on Leadership and Management in the Digital Age (ICLAM)** which included panels aligned with SDG 9 (innovation) and SDG 17 (global partnerships in research). These events often involve collaboration with international professional bodies or academic partners, further embedding ASU in global initiatives.

Student and Youth Initiatives

Recognizing the global youth movement for SDGs, ASU encourages its Student Council and clubs to partake in international SDG campaigns. ASU students have participated in programs like the **UNESCO Global Action Programme** on Education for Sustainable Development and the **King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award for SDGs** (a Bahrain-UNDP initiative) [13]. In these platforms, ASU students present their community projects (such as a student-led recycling campaign and a digital literacy project for underserved communities) and exchange ideas with peers worldwide. By supporting student participation in such initiatives, ASU helps build a generation of globally networked SDG champions.

Through these engagements, ASU not only **demonstrates its achievements internationally** but also brings back valuable insights to improve its local practices. The university's active presence in SDG networks ensures it stays updated on evolving global standards (for example, adopting new metrics for sustainability literacy assessment after learning that *"fewer than two-thirds of global universities assess their students' learning on sustainability"* [3]). In summary, ASU's international networking under SDG 17 magnifies its impact: it **shares its successes, learns from others, and collectively works towards global goals**.

Performance Metrics

To evaluate and guide its SDG 17 efforts, Applied Science University tracks several **key performance metrics** related to partnerships and sustainability. These metrics are both quantitative and qualitative, aligning with THE Impact Rankings criteria and ASU's internal targets:

Number of Active Partnerships: ASU has a broad portfolio of formal partnerships, which has grown substantially in recent years. Currently, **ASU maintains over 20 active partnerships** across different sectors (government, industry, academia, and civil society). This includes at least **8 MoUs with government entities**, **5 with NGOs/professional societies**, **several industry collaborations**, and **multiple academic agreements**. (A selection of these partnerships is summarized in **Table 1** below.) The diversity and sheer count of these collaborations underscore ASU's role as a nexus for cross-sector cooperation. Each partnership is monitored for activity (e.g. number of joint events held, students trained, or research projects initiated per year under the MoU). ASU's goal is not just to sign agreements but to keep them active – for instance, in 2024 alone, the university reports that it conducted *30+ collaborative activities* under various MoUs, ranging from joint workshops to internship placements.

Co-authored SDG-Related Publications: In line with SDG 17's emphasis on knowledge sharing, ASU tracks the volume of its research output that involves international co-authorship and relates to SDG topics. Over the last 3 years, ASU faculty have produced dozens of research papers addressing issues such as renewable energy, sustainable construction, social welfare policies, and education innovation. Approximately **45% of these publications have international co-authors** (including collaborations with scholars in the MENA region, Europe, and Asia). For example, papers like the study on green school environments [10] were co-written with international partners and presented globally. This metric reflects ASU's encouragement of research that transcends borders; the **international co-authorship rate** of ASU is a proxy for its integration into global research networks. (According to THE data, such international research collaboration is a significant component of SDG 17 performance [3].) By monitoring this, ASU can identify opportunities to further increase collaborative research, such as forming research clusters focused on specific SDGs (e.g. a water sustainability research group partnering with a university in a water-scarce country).

International Research Funding: ASU measures the amount of research funding secured from international sources or in partnership with international institutions. In the 2022–2025 period, ASU secured multiple grants and sponsored projects with a cumulative value of **approximately $500,000 in international funding** supporting SDG-related research and capacity building. Notable contributions include a European Union Erasmus+ grant for

curriculum development in sustainable entrepreneurship (with ASU as a consortium member) and funding from the **UNDP and local UN offices** for community development research. Although ASU is a teaching-focused private university, this inflow of external research funds highlights its growing research profile. The **number of internationally funded projects** (currently around 5 active projects) is also tracked. The university targets to increase both the value and number of such projects by fostering proposals in partnership with other universities and international NGOs. This metric ties back to SDG 17.3, which encourages mobilizing additional financial resources for sustainable development – ASU contributes by attracting global funds into local research endeavors.

Student and Staff Mobility (Partnership-linked): Another metric is the count of students and faculty benefiting from partnership programs. ASU's dual-degree programs with LSBU have enrolled hundreds of students (with **the first cohort of dual-degree graduates attending their graduation in London in 2022** [11]). The **student mobility** via summer schools or exchange (pre-pandemic) saw about 15–20 ASU students per year visiting partner universities abroad, and reciprocal visits of faculty. These experiences build human capacity and cultural understanding (qualitative outcomes that support SDG 4 and 17). ASU aims to restore and expand mobility numbers as global conditions allow, using partnerships as the conduit for such exchange.

Joint Events, Workshops, and Training Sessions: ASU logs the number of collaborative events held with partners each year, as an indicator of active engagement. In 2024, despite some COVID-19 disruptions, ASU held **over 25 joint events** – including webinars on sustainability with international speakers, training sessions co-hosted with industry partners like Huawei (on ICT skills), and community workshops with NGOs (such as entrepreneurship bootcamps with the SME Society). This number is expected to grow with new partnerships coming online (e.g., the PMI training partnership yielded multiple certification workshops for students in late 2025). The breadth of topics – from project management (SDG 8/Industry) to social media ethics (SDG 16) – shows ASU's multidisciplinary approach through partnerships.

SDG Reporting and Governance Metrics: Internally, ASU also measures its adherence to SDG-focused governance. For example, one metric is the **frequency of SDG committee meetings** and progress reports. ASU's Sustainability Committee meets quarterly to review SDG initiatives, and annually the university produces a comprehensive SDG progress report (encompassing all 17 goals with data and stories). The existence and dissemination of this report satisfy an important metric in THE Impact Rankings (publication of SDG reports) [3]. ASU ensures that this report is publicly available on its website, demonstrating accountability and transparency.

Partner Institution / Organization	Sector	Focus of Collaboration & SDG Alignment
Ministry of Works (Bahrain)	Government	Training placements for students on infrastructure projects; joint research and technical workshops on sustainable construction (SDG 9, SDG 11) [5].
Capital Governorate (Manama)	Government	Community development programs, student volunteering and civic engagement initiatives to benefit local society (SDG 11, SDG 17) [7].
Council of Representatives & Shura Council	Government (Legislative)	Internships and educational programs in policymaking; joint seminars on governance, fostering youth participation in politics (SDG 16, SDG 17).
Bahrain Businesswomen's Society	NGO / Civil Society	Joint workshops, networking events and training to empower women entrepreneurs and enhance women's role in business leadership (SDG 5, SDG 8) [4].
Bahrain SME Society	NGO / Civil Society	Collaborative training for young entrepreneurs, startup incubator support, and research on SME development for economic growth (SDG 8, SDG 9) [7].
Project Management Institute (PMI)	International Non-Profit (Professional Association)	Authorized Training Partner (ATP) program – ASU delivers globally-recognized project management certification courses to students, alumni, and professionals. Includes exchange of expertise and co-development of training materials (SDG 4, SDG 8) [14].
London South Bank University (LSBU)	Academic (International)	Dual-degree bachelor programs in Engineering, Business, and Law; faculty exchange and joint curriculum development integrating sustainability principles in education (SDG 4) [7].
University for Peace (UPEACE)	Academic (International)	Academic cooperation in peace and conflict studies – development of courses and seminars on diplomacy, and mutual participation in peace research projects (SDG 16, SDG 17) [12].
Huawei	Industry (Technology)	ICT Academy partnership – training students in latest technologies (e.g. 5G, AI) with an emphasis on innovation for sustainable development; equipping labs and certifying students (SDG 9).
National Bank of Bahrain (NBB)	Industry (Finance)	MoU to provide financial solutions for students (education loans and scholarships), enabling inclusive access to higher education; collaboration on financial literacy workshops (SDG 4, SDG 10) [15].
Social Media Club	Civil Society	Joint events and training on digital citizenship, social media for social good, and media literacy to strengthen community awareness and engagement (SDG 4, SDG 16) [7].

(Sources: ASU partnership announcements and MoUs as cited. The above table illustrates the range of ASU's partnerships and their alignment to various SDGs.)

These metrics collectively indicate that ASU not only forms partnerships in name but also derives **tangible outcomes** from them – whether it's students trained, research produced, or resources mobilized. By monitoring such data, ASU can continually improve its partnership

strategies (for example, identifying which partnerships yield the most student benefit or which areas need new partners). Moreover, these metrics feed into external evaluations: ASU's data on international co-authorship, financial cooperation, and outreach events have contributed to its strong showing in the Impact Rankings for SDG 17 [1]. Continual improvement on these indicators is a priority as ASU aims to further elevate its impact and maintain accountability to its stakeholders and ranking frameworks.

Benchmarking and Best Practices

In assessing its partnership performance, Applied Science University benchmarks itself against both **peer institutions and global best practices** to ensure its approach to SDG 17 remains effective and innovative.

◆ Global Benchmarking

On the international stage, the top performers in SDG 17 provide reference points for ASU. For instance, in the 2025 Impact Rankings, **Universiti Sains Malaysia and University of Malaya** tied for first place globally in SDG 17 [3]. These universities excel through extensive international research collaborations and robust support for the SDGs across campus. ASU analyzes such cases to learn best practices. A key insight is the importance of a holistic strategy: leading institutions integrate SDG partnerships into research, teaching, operations, and external engagement seamlessly. ASU has adopted a similar holistic approach – from curriculum alignment to community service – as evidenced by its comprehensive partnership portfolio. While ASU is smaller in scale, it has achieved a **score and rank in SDG 17 that place it among the top ~200 universities worldwide** [1], a notable accomplishment for a young private university. This suggests ASU's strategy is on par with global standards in several aspects. For example, like the top universities, ASU publishes an annual SDG report, participates in global networks, and has a high rate of international collaboration, all of which are considered best practices internationally [3].

ASU also keeps track of specific metrics vis-à-vis global averages. If the global average for international co-authorship is, say, 20%, ASU's ~45% indicates an above-average performance in fostering international research ties (a strength to maintain). Conversely, ASU notes areas to improve by benchmarking: many leading universities incorporate **SDG teaching across all programs** and formally assess sustainability literacy among students [3]. ASU has taken steps here – such as adding sustainability learning outcomes in engineering courses [8] – and plans to institute a sustainability competency survey for all graduating students, learning from universities that do this to gauge impact.

Regional and Local Benchmarking

Within Bahrain and the Middle East region, ASU compares itself to institutions of similar mission or size. The **University of Bahrain (UoB)**, the national university, has also prioritized SDGs and at one point ranked in the global top 100 for SDG 17 (e.g., =74th in 2021) [16]. UoB's approach included creating a dedicated sustainability office and linking with the government on national SDG initiatives. ASU has emulated some of those practices (for example, establishing a Sustainability Committee and partnering with government on data gathering for SDGs). ASU's current SDG 17 performance is competitive with UoB's; in recent rankings, both universities have been listed in the upper tiers globally for partnerships. However, ASU distinguishes itself as a **private university achieving this level of impact**, something that serves as a benchmark for other private institutions in the Gulf. In fact, ASU often shares its journey and best practices with sister institutions in Bahrain – for example, presenting at a **national SDGs in Higher Education roundtable** organized by the Higher Education Council, where ASU highlighted how its PMI partnership and LSBU dual-degrees contribute to the SDGs, thereby guiding others in the sector.

Adoption of Best Practices

ASU continuously seeks to implement best practices identified through benchmarking. Some examples include:

- *Formalizing SDG Governance:* Inspired by universities that have clear SDG governance, ASU designated the **Vice President for Community Engagement** as the coordinator for SDG initiatives, ensuring high-level oversight. This mirrors best practices where leadership commitment drives success.
- *SDG Curriculum Integration:* ASU took note of leading universities embedding SDGs into curriculum (e.g., University of Victoria's **"SDG modules"** or Waterloo's **"Global Citizen" programs). ASU responded by integrating sustainability topics across disciplines – like requiring engineering students to consider environmental and social impacts in design projects, and business students to learn about CSR and sustainable finance. This alignment with educational best practices also supports SDG 4 (Quality Education).
- *Transparent Reporting:* Best-in-class institutions publicly share their SDG progress in detail. ASU's sustainability website (though currently accessible internally) and its annual reports have been expanded to include all SDG metrics and case studies, following the example of universities like the University of Bahrain which published a comprehensive sustainability reportsustainability.uob.edu.bh. By doing so, ASU improves its accountability and provides material for external assessment.

- *Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:* Through the PMI partnership, ASU explicitly engages in **exchanging best practices and co-developing resources** with an international body [14]. This not only benefits ASU students but also positions ASU as a contributor to global standards in project management education – effectively, ASU is helping set a benchmark in Bahrain by being the first PMI Authorized Training Partner in the country [14]. Similarly, ASU's membership in INQAAHE allows it to both learn from and contribute to quality assurance trends worldwide, ensuring its academic quality frameworks for partnerships are cutting-edge [7].
- *Measuring Impact of Partnerships:* A subtle but important best practice is moving beyond counting partnerships to measuring their **impact**. ASU is developing KPIs like "*number of students placed in jobs through industry partnerships*" or "*community members reached via outreach programs*" as a way to gauge outcome effectiveness. This outcome-based evaluation is inspired by global shifts in higher ed where impact (not just input) is key.

Through these benchmarking efforts, ASU has identified that its strengths lie in **internationalization and community linkages**, while it continues to improve on aspects like interdisciplinary SDG research volume and sustainability in campus operations (which indirectly support partnership goals). The university's ability to compare and align itself with both world-class institutions and local expectations ensures that its SDG 17 initiatives remain **relevant, ambitious, and credible**. ASU's progress to date – rising in rankings and expanding partnership impacts – validates that it is moving in the right direction, guided by the experiences of the broader academic community.

Conclusion

Applied Science University's SDG 17 report showcases a robust and multi-faceted commitment to partnerships for sustainable development. Over the past few years, ASU has built a strong foundation of collaborations spanning government, industry, civil society, and academia – each deliberately oriented to support one or more Sustainable Development Goals. These partnerships are not symbolic; they yield concrete benefits such as enhanced student skills, innovative research, empowered communities, and improved institutional capacity. By integrating SDG 17 into its strategy and operations, ASU amplifies its impact far beyond the campus: its students graduate with real-world experience and global awareness, its research contributes solutions to national and global challenges, and its outreach efforts uplift local communities in Bahrain.

Tailored for THE Impact Rankings submission, this report has provided evidence across all relevant areas: from policy and strategy (the partnership framework and SDG governance),

to inputs (variety and number of partnerships, resources mobilized), to outputs and outcomes (publications, training delivered, joint initiatives and their societal impact). It demonstrates that ASU meets and exceeds the criteria for SDG 17: the university engages in relationships that support the goals, participates in international data gathering and reporting, and offers education on sustainable development [3]. Notably, ASU's role as a first-mover (for example, being the first Bahraini university to become a PMI training partner and one of the first to publish an SDG report) highlights its leadership in embedding global best practices in a local context.

University Impact Rankings for UN SDG 17: partnerships for the goals

Our Impact Rankings methodology includes SDG 17 indicators on research relating to the SDGs or with lower- or lower middle-income countries; relationships to support the goals; publication of SDG reports; and education on the SDGs.

Moving forward, ASU is committed to strengthening and expanding these partnerships. Plans are underway to sign new MoUs with international NGOs (such as environmental organizations to bolster climate action initiatives on campus) and to deepen existing ties (for instance, extending the LSBU collaboration to postgraduate programs and research). The university also intends to launch a "Partners for the Goals Forum", inviting all its partners annually to evaluate progress and share success stories – a step that will further institutionalize cross-sector dialogue and continuous improvement. Internally, ASU will continue to track partnership metrics and student outcomes, ensuring that the pursuit of SDG 17 remains results-oriented.

ASU's experience provides a model for how a relatively young, private university can create a culture of partnership and achieve substantial impact in sustainable development. By aligning its vision with SDG 17, ASU has not only improved its standing in global rankings but, more importantly, has contributed to the betterment of society in line with Bahrain's national development priorities and the UN 2030 Agenda. The university's journey underscores the core message of SDG 17: only through partnerships – uniting the strengths of academia, government, industry, and communities – can we achieve the ambitious goals set for a sustainable and equitable future. ASU stands ready to continue this mission, working hand-in-hand with its partners to drive progress on the SDGs locally and globally.

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