



Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC)

Office of Quality Assurance

Guidelines on Data Reporting for Academic Programs

1. Introduction

The purpose of this guideline is to standardize data reporting of cohort analysis, retention rate, and graduation rates for academic programs at Alfaisal University. Accurate tracking of student progress and graduation outcomes is critical for institutional planning, accreditation reporting, and continuous improvement initiatives. The document outlines the standard procedure for cohort formation, monitoring protocols, calculation formulas, and analytical frameworks to create harmony across all academic units at Alfaisal University.

Cohort analysis is a powerful analytical approach that tracks groups of students (cohorts) from the time they enter through to graduation or departure from the institution. This longitudinal analysis allows the university to understand student patterns of progress, identify drivers of academic achievement, and implement targeted interventions to improve student performance. The principal benefits of robust cohort analysis are as follows:

- **Data-informed decision making:** Providing administrators and faculty with concrete data to inform curriculum planning, resource planning, and support service planning
- **Early identification of students at risk:** Enabling timely academic intervention before students fall behind irretrievably
- **Benchmarking performance:** Facilitating legitimate comparisons across programs, colleges, and peer institutions nationally and internationally
- **Accreditation compliance:** Adhering to the reporting requirements of organizations such as the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), Ministry of Education (MOE), and international accreditation agencies
- **Strategic planning:** Supporting the development of evidence-based retention and completion activities that complement institutional strategic goals

2. Definitions

- **Cohort:** A specific group of students who enter university during the same academic year and are tracked over time for graduation or other outcomes.
- **Retention Rate:** The percentage of first-year undergraduate students who continue at the program the next year to the total number of first-year students in the same year
- **Graduation Rate:** The percentage of a cohort of undergraduate students who complete their degree program within a defined period (typically 100%, 150%, or 200% of the expected program time). This is also often referred to as the **Completion Rate**.
- **First-Time Undergraduate Students:** Students entering a degree program for the first time (excluding transfer students).
- **Fall Cohort:** Students who enroll for the first time in the Fall semester (primary cohort for reporting).
- **Cohort Analysis:** Refers to tracking a specific group of students who begin a given year in a program and follow them until they graduate (How many students actually started the program and stay in the program until completion).

3. Cohort Analysis

Cohort analysis enables the university to:

- Monitor student progression, retention, and completion trends over time.
- Identify patterns among different student groups (e.g., by college, program, gender, nationality).
- Support academic advising, intervention programs, and policy development.

Common Metrics in Cohort Analysis:

- First-year retention rate
- Second-year retention rate
- Average time to degree completion
- Graduation rates at 4, 6, and 8 years
- Attrition rates

4. Retention Rate Calculation

- Retention rates are calculated based on the number of students who started the program and continued in the program in the following year as shown in the below formula.

Formula:

$$\text{Retention Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of students continued in the program to the next year (Fall of 2nd year)}}{\text{Number of first-year students admitted to the program (Fall of 1st year)}} \times 100$$

5. Graduation Rate Calculation

- Graduation rates are calculated based on the number of students who graduate within a specific timeframe:
- **100% Timeframe:** Graduate within the program minimum time (e.g., 4 years for a standard 4-year bachelor's degree programs and 6 years for applied programs such as Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery).
- **150% Timeframe:** Graduate within 6 years for a standard 4-year degree program.
- **200% Timeframe:** Graduation within 8 years for a standard 4-year degree program.

Formula:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of students graduated from the program within the timeframe}}{(\text{Number students graduated} + \text{Number of active students})} \times 100$$

6. Reporting and Benchmarking

- Graduation rate data should be calculated, updated, and reported annually for each program.
- Benchmarking against national, regional, and international standards is encouraged to assess performance and competitiveness.
- Reports should be prepared for internal use (academic departments, senior leadership) and external stakeholders (MOE, accreditation agencies).

7. Quality Assurance and Review

- Data collection processes will be audited regularly for accuracy and consistency.
- Methods of cohort tracking and graduation rate calculation should be reviewed periodically to align with best practices and regulatory requirements.