

June
2026



**Friends of
Palestinian
Universities**

FRIENDS OF PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES HANDBOOK

**Building international
academic partnerships with
Palestinian higher education**

Acknowledgements

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Friends of Palestinian Universities would like to thank Chandni Desai and Amir Khalil for their comments, corrections and feedback. Friends of Palestinian Universities is also grateful to the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, the Palestinian academics, university staff, partners and colleagues whose work, advice and collaboration have informed the examples and principles included in this handbook.

Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza

The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza is keen to hear from representatives of universities wishing to partner with Palestinian universities in Gaza in the areas of teaching, research and technical support. Please contact info@gazauniversities.org.

Friends of Palestinian Universities

Since 1978, Friends of Palestinian Universities, previously Fobzu, has worked to support higher education in Palestine. Today, we do this through building international links with Palestinian universities, facilitating academic partnerships, supporting advocacy and awareness, and our scholarship programme. For further guidance and support in establishing partnerships with Palestinian universities, please contact us. Email info@friendsofpalunis.org.

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01

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This handbook is intended for university leaders, international office staff, academics, professional associations, and others seeking to build meaningful cooperation with Palestinian universities. It is written at a critical moment for higher education in Palestine, and especially in Gaza, where universities have continued to teach, organise and defend their institutional existence under conditions of scholasticide.

The handbook focuses on Palestinian higher education as a whole, while giving particular attention to partnership with universities in Gaza in light of the existential nature of their immediate emergency. Gaza's universities have been systematically attacked and physically destroyed in one of the most severe assaults on a higher education sector in living memory. In the West Bank Palestinian universities also face major and escalating needs, including movement restrictions, military violence, arrests, financial pressure, disruption to teaching, restrictions on international staff and students, and deepening fragmentation.

The current reality

This handbook is written amid ongoing Israeli military attacks in Gaza despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement in October 2025. In September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israeli authorities and security forces had committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, including acts of killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, and imposing measures intended to prevent births. The continued military violence, displacement and land seizure indicate this campaign has not halted.

The destruction of Palestinian education is a central part of this reality. The international report published by Friends of Palestinian Universities, **Scholasticide in Gaza: The Systematic Destruction of Palestinian Higher Education and the Continuation of Collective Resilience** documents the damage and destruction of all university campuses in Gaza, the killing of students and academics, the razing of libraries, laboratories, archives and research centres, and the wider assault on the intellectual and institutional foundations of Palestinian society.

Yet Gaza's universities have not ceased to exist. They continue through their students, staff, faculties, records, committees, online teaching, examinations, graduations, admissions and institutional coordination. They remain living academic communities.

This was the message sent by Gaza academics and administrators in their May 2024 unified open call to the international academic community. They wrote: "The Israeli occupation forces have demolished our buildings but our universities live on." They also emphasised that

reopening Gaza's education institutions was not only about current students, but about the long-term survival of the sector: "Education is not just a means of imparting knowledge; it is a vital pillar of our existence and a beacon of hope for the Palestinian people."

International support should respond to the priorities Palestinian universities have articulated themselves: institutional survival, continuation of teaching, student support, academic partnerships, research collaboration and eventual rebuilding through existing Palestinian institutions. The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza serves as the primary coordination mechanism for these efforts.

Formed by formal mandates from the leading public non-profit universities in Gaza, Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza, and the Islamic University of Gaza, and their affiliated colleges: the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), Al-Azhar College of Intermediate Studies, and Al-Aqsa Community College for Intermediate Studies, the Committee provides a unified framework for mobilising international cooperation with the higher education sector in the Gaza Strip.

Since our annual conference 2024

This innovative handbook contributes to an already growing conversation about practical and principled academic cooperation with Palestinian universities, much of it stimulated by the Fobzu annual conference held in London in 2024, **Overcoming Barriers, Building Links** **Conference 2024: Emergency Support for Palestinian Higher Education**. At this first public event to be addressed by members of the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, the collective priorities for higher education support were launched. **Fobzu's Partnerships with Palestine** guide subsequently echoed the core message representatives of higher education institutions in Palestine were collectively sending: international support must be developed with Palestinian universities, not around them.

Since then, there has been a visible shift towards institutional partnership and support for the continuation of higher education in Gaza and across Palestine. National coordination mechanisms such as NorPal, the Norwegian Consortium for Higher Education in Palestine, and UK-Pal, the UK Consortium for Palestinian Higher Education, have begun to organise sector-level support. New institutional partnership agreements have been signed between universities in the Global North and universities in Gaza. Research collaborations, multi-institutional projects, disciplinary partnerships, scholarship pathways and virtual fellowship schemes have been launched and new projects reoriented towards supporting institutional resilience of universities in Gaza have begun to take shape.

Isnad, the emergency scholarship programme established by Taawon in partnership with the Emergency Committee's member universities and affiliated colleges, and the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education, has stood out as one of the most significant support programmes for the sector in Gaza. Since 2024, Isnad has supported 6,274 students, with 2,261 students graduating and joining the job market. By supporting students enrolled in Gaza universities, it also helps sustain the universities' ability to teach, pay staff and remain operational. The programme's significance has also been recognised internationally, including through the 2025 Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Academic Freedom Award, which was awarded to the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and the Isnad programme for their role in defending the right to education amid scholasticide.

Another important development has been the emergence and growing uptake of virtual fellowship pilots. First highlighted in the **Partnerships with Palestine** guide, this has been promoted as a practical vehicle for supporting academics in Gaza without severing their relationship to their home universities. Since then, with the leadership of the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, and support of Friends of Palestinian Universities, several institutions have begun testing the model. These pilots offer a concrete route for income, affiliation, research time, library access and academic exchange, while enabling Palestinian academics to remain connected to their universities and contribute to the continuity of academic life in Gaza.

This positive development reflects an important shift away from the dominant orientation of Global North higher education towards the academic community in Palestine and has begun to have some material impact. It has been driven by Palestinian universities themselves, which have continued to teach, coordinate and articulate their priorities under extreme conditions. Nevertheless, international support remains far below the scale of need and the level of potential assistance. It is uneven across geography, institutions and disciplines, and much of it is still small, underfunded or dependent on individual initiative, with limited institutional support.

This handbook responds to that changed landscape. Many models that were previously discussed as possibilities are now being tested through real partnerships. The task now is to expand, coordinate and resource this work, while keeping it grounded in the priorities and leadership of Palestinian universities themselves.

The role of global academia

Universities around the world have a responsibility to respond to the calls issued by Palestinian academic institutions and communities. This is especially relevant for universities in the Global North, which hold significant power in global higher education and have access to resources, networks and funding frameworks that can support Palestinian academic continuity.

This work also advances the core aims of universities' internationalisation and global engagement strategies. Partnerships with Palestinian universities create opportunities for meaningful and innovative research collaboration, ethical global learning, curriculum development, staff and student engagement, and work on urgent global challenges. The tools are already familiar: institutional partnerships, memoranda of understanding, research collaboration, student mobility, virtual fellowships, library access, digital learning, curriculum support, co-supervision, global challenge funding and sectoral consortia. The task is to use these tools in ways that respond to Palestinian priorities, strengthen institutional resilience, and build reciprocal academic relationships under conditions of extreme disruption.

International academic partnerships have been mobilised in other contexts of war, displacement and institutional attack. This includes the UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative, scholar protection and fellowship programmes such as the Council for at-Risk Academics (Cara), Scholars at Risk (SAR) and the Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund, and European mobility and research cooperation frameworks.

The principles required for supporting higher education in Palestine are not unfamiliar to academic institutions. At the same time, the wider question of institutional consistency cannot be ignored. Universities cannot credibly defend academic freedom while remaining indifferent to the destruction of Palestinian academic life. Nor can global cooperation continue as normal while Palestinian universities face scholasticide. This handbook does not attempt to resolve every political or legal question this raises, but it does insist that partnership with Palestinian universities is part of the academic responsibility of the global higher education sector, not a charitable add-on.

How to use this handbook

This handbook is organised around the main forms of partnership and support currently available to universities, academics and sector bodies. Chapter 2 provides the political and institutional context for Palestinian higher education in the current moment, with particular attention to scholasticide in Gaza, the continuing work of Gaza's universities, the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and the principles of equitable partnership.

Chapter 3 examines sectoral partnerships, including national consortia, academic unions, professional associations and coordinated digital infrastructure initiatives. Chapter 4 focuses on institutional partnerships, including memoranda of understanding, twinning models and multi-institutional collaboration. Chapter 5 considers departmental, disciplinary and research partnerships, including teaching support, co-supervision, research clusters, technical partnerships and virtual fellowships. Chapter 6 examines student support and scholarship

pathways, including overseas scholarships, institution-anchored scholarships, Isnad, home-based support, certificate release funds and learning infrastructure. Chapter 7 outlines European cooperation frameworks, especially Erasmus+ and related research routes. These models are shown across the handbook not as a technical funding manual, but as a guide to how existing mechanisms can be used more responsibly.

The examples are included in this handbook because they show that action is possible, and because they help illustrate different routes through which institutions can move from concern to structured support. The range of support needed is wider than this handbook can cover. The situation, especially in Gaza, is also changing rapidly. For that reason, this handbook is intended as a helpful starting point and cannot replace direct coordination with Palestinian universities, representative structures and relevant institutional partners.

02

CONTEXT: PALESTINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Context: Palestinian higher education landscape

The Palestinian higher education sector has been built over six decades under conditions of dispossession, occupation, fragmentation and repeated attack. Palestinian universities are relatively young, with fully fledged institutions of higher learning emerging from the 1970s onwards, many built from earlier teacher-training colleges, community institutions and further education colleges. Since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, higher education in the occupied Palestinian territory has operated within a national regulatory framework that combines institutional autonomy with public oversight.

Palestinian universities have played an integral role in the building and sustaining of Palestinian society. They have trained generations of teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, researchers, public administrators and cultural workers, while also serving as civic institutions that preserve cultural memory, sustain intellectual life and provide access to higher education under occupation.

Palestinian higher education institutions are classified into four main categories: governmental, public non-profit, private for-profit and UNRWA-administered. Most universities are public non-profit institutions, sustained through limited public funding, charitable contributions and, most significantly, tuition fees. Academic oversight is provided through national structures including the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Higher Education Council and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission, which regulates accreditation through self-assessment, peer review and external examination.

The Palestinian higher education landscape is shaped by political and territorial fragmentation. Universities and colleges operate across the West Bank, Gaza and the wider Palestinian condition of displacement and exile. Their development has been constrained by occupation, closure, movement restrictions, military orders, underfunding, student arrests, restrictions on international faculty and students, and repeated attacks on educational infrastructure. While Gaza faces a struggle for sectoral survival, universities in the West Bank also face major needs linked to mobility restrictions, military violence, financial pressure, disruption to teaching and barriers to international engagement.

There are 52 accredited higher education institutions across Gaza and the West Bank, serving more than 221,000 enrolled students, with female students comprising approximately 62% of the student population. The sector includes universities, university colleges, community colleges and polytechnic institutes. Gaza's higher education sector forms a vital part of this wider landscape, serving tens of thousands of students across medicine, engineering, education, science, information technology, agriculture, humanities, social sciences and professional fields.

Scholasticide in Gaza

Since October 2023, Gaza's higher education sector has faced systematic destruction. A growing body of international legal, academic and UN expert analysis has recognised the destruction of education in Gaza as scholasticide. In April 2024, [UN experts](#) warned of the "systematic obliteration" of education in Gaza and expressed grave concern over scholasticide. The international report, **Scholasticide in Gaza**, finds that the destruction of Gaza's universities and higher education infrastructure constitutes scholasticide: the deliberate and systematic destruction of educational institutions and the intellectual life they sustain.

All university campuses in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, severely undermining the Palestinian higher education system and devastating the educational trajectories of tens of thousands of students. Campuses have been bombed or rendered inoperable. Laboratories, libraries, research centres, lecture halls, computer labs and administrative offices have been destroyed. Archives, cultural institutions and repositories of historical memory have also been attacked.

More than 246 academics, researchers and university staff have been killed, among them senior university leaders, including the sitting President of the Islamic University of Gaza, Professor Sufyan Tayeh. Thousands of students [have been killed](#), injured or displaced, and many academics have lost homes, research materials, income and institutional support. The consequences will extend far beyond the immediate destruction. Universities train the professionals required for social functioning and reconstruction. The destruction of higher education, therefore, threatens a generational rupture in educational attainment, professional development and institutional capacity.

Scholasticide is therefore not incidental damage to education. It is the destruction of the institutions through which a society teaches, researches, remembers, trains and renews itself.

Gaza's universities live on

Gaza's academic community has repeatedly insisted that the destruction of campuses does not mean the disappearance of universities. In their May 2024 [open call](#) to the world, Gaza academics and administrators wrote: "The Israeli occupation forces have demolished our buildings but our universities live on." They continued: "We reaffirm our collective determination to remain on our land and to resume teaching, study, and research in Gaza, at our own Palestinian universities, at the earliest opportunity."

In spring 2024, Gaza's universities began the difficult process of returning to online teaching. This was not a return to normal distance education, but an emergency effort to prevent the

collapse of an entire higher education system. Academic staff worked with limited or no salaries, unreliable internet access, damaged communications, displacement, loss of homes and the killing of colleagues, students and family members. Students attempted to rejoin classes while living in tents, shelters, crowded homes or areas far from their original campuses. Despite this, universities rebuilt teaching schedules, restored or adapted digital platforms, organised online assessment where possible, and sustained communication with students through improvised and uneven channels.

Since then, Gaza's universities have conducted six academic terms. Across this period, many students have been able to complete courses, sit examinations and graduate. More recently, after the delayed holding of Tawjihi, the Palestinian general high school examination, new students have also been able to join Gaza's universities, allowing the sector not only to graduate students but to admit another cohort into higher education. This continuity is evidence of extraordinary institutional labour under impossible conditions.

The current situation remains an emergency. The "ceasefire agreement" has created limited space for some universities to move beyond fully online emergency teaching, but it has not produced the conditions of normal academic life. Israeli attacks and killings have continued, while blockade, insecurity, displacement, destroyed infrastructure and the collapse of ordinary living conditions continue to shape the sector. Some universities have been able to introduce voluntary hybrid teaching formats by renting spaces outside destroyed campuses or refurbishing classrooms and venues that were not completely destroyed.

Many standing buildings remain unsafe, inaccessible or occupied by displaced families. Many students and staff cannot afford transport to physical teaching locations. Others remain displaced far from the areas where classes are held. Electricity, internet access and devices remain unreliable. Academic staff continue to work under extreme financial and personal pressure. Physical attendance is therefore voluntary because compulsory attendance would exclude many students and impose burdens they cannot meet.

This continuity matters as Gaza's universities have not waited to be erased. They have continued to operate, sustaining teaching, assessment, graduation and admission under such extreme conditions.

The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza

The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza was established after the May 2024 open call issued by Gaza academics and university administrators. It was created by formal mandate from the presidents of Gaza's non-profit public universities: Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza and the Islamic University of Gaza. Together with their affiliated colleges, these universities represent more than 83% of Gaza's university students and constitute the sector's largest research hubs and academic employers.

The Emergency Committee provides a collective framework for mobilising international support, coordinating academic partnerships and aligning external responses with the priorities of Gaza's higher education system. It does not replace the work of its member universities. Rather, it provides a unified route for coordination at a time when fragmentation and externally imposed projects could further weaken the sector. Through its collective leadership Isnad was created, the emergency scholarship programme launched by Taawon in partnership with the Committee's member universities, which supports students while also helping universities continue to function.

In their open letter, published in July 2025, the presidents of Gaza universities stated,

"we formally established the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, representing our three institutions and affiliated colleges. The Emergency Committee exists to resist the erasure of our universities and offer a unified voice for Gaza's academic community. It has since established subject-focused subcommittees to serve as trusted and coordinated channels for support. We call upon academic communities around the world to coordinate themselves in response to this call. The time for symbolic solidarity has passed. We now ask for practical, structured, and enduring partnership."

03

SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS

Sectoral partnerships

Sectoral partnerships operate above the level of a single university. They bring together universities, national higher education bodies, academic associations, trade unions, professional societies, funders and international organisations around a shared framework of engagement.

This model is especially important because the attack on Gaza's universities has been sector-wide. Gaza's universities have responded at sector level through establishing the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, creating a collective structure for defining priorities, coordinating support and engaging international partners. Their call to the international academic community is therefore not only a call for individual solidarity, but for academic sectors elsewhere to coordinate themselves in response.

Sectoral partnerships can map activity, align priorities, reduce duplication, mobilise multiple institutions and create routes through which universities can move from individual expressions of concern to sustained support. They are also familiar to universities. National consortia, professional associations, digital access schemes and coordinated sector initiatives already exist across global higher education. The task is to use these mechanisms in ways that strengthen Palestinian universities and respond to priorities identified by Palestinian institutions themselves.

National academic consortia

National academic consortia have been established in response to Gaza university coordination through the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and the need for greater coordination within international higher education sectors. By leveraging the collective commitment of multiple institutions, a consortium can mobilise resources and support that individual universities cannot achieve alone. It can also provide a framework through which member universities share learning, map existing initiatives, connect academic interests, promote institutional twinning and build sector-wide thematic collaborations.

Established in 2025, [NorPal](#), the Norwegian Consortium for Higher Education in Palestine, brings together Norwegian universities and student actors in a coordinated commitment to Palestinian higher education. The consortium represented a pioneering sectoral commitment within Norway's academic landscape to support Palestinian higher learning, initially uniting 14 higher education institutions and subsequently expanding its membership to 19.

NorPal is structured with governance and thematic working groups, and its work is grounded in needs defined by Palestinian institutions. A key example is its engagement with the Emergency Committee's medical and health sciences subcommittee. Following its inaugural

conference, the consortium funded nine joint Palestinian-Norwegian networking projects, showing how a national consortium can connect sector-level coordination with specific academic and disciplinary collaboration.

The UK Consortium for Palestinian Higher Education, UK-Pal, provides another example of this model. Launched in 2026, UK-Pal is a three-year commitment with a focus on Gaza and in partnership with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza in its first two years. In its third year, the scope of its work will extend to the wider Palestinian higher education sector. Its thematic areas are aligned with the priorities and subcommittees of the Emergency Committee, creating a direct link between Gaza university coordination and UK sector-level support.

UK-Pal is formed by eleven inaugural member universities, with expectations of further expansion. Its member universities commit to senior-level participation, sustained multi-year contribution and active engagement in at least one area of collaboration identified by the list of priority needs identified by the Emergency Committee. The consortium is supported by observer members with relevant sectoral expertise, including Friends of Palestinian Universities, Universities UK International, the Council for At-Risk Academics, and the British Council.

Taken together, UK-Pal and NorPal show that national consortia can provide a practical architecture for long-term support. They help universities move from isolated activity to coordinated engagement, while retaining the central principle of equitable partnership between higher education sectors and that the universities in Gaza should determine the priority areas of support.

Unions, learned societies and academic associations

Academic unions, learned societies and professional associations play a different role from university administrations. They do not usually sign institutional partnership agreements or deliver academic programmes. Their role is to mobilise members, defend academic freedom, raise funds, support Palestinian-led priorities and press universities to make commitments to Palestinian higher education.

Staff networks, unions and professional bodies can help move the conversation from symbolic solidarity to concrete institutional support. They can also encourage universities to align local action with the priorities of Palestinian institutions, including the Emergency Committee's Higher Education Priorities for Universities in Gaza.

In the UK, University and College Workers for Palestine and University and College Union (UCU) branches have helped publicise these priorities and encouraged branches to connect campaigning with practical support for Palestinian higher education. The [Campus Voices for Palestine Solidarity Tour](#), which ran its third tour this year, has also brought Palestinian academic voices into UK universities, helping connect advocacy with the institutional question of how universities can support the higher education sector in Palestine.

Learned societies and professional associations can also make commitments to building solidarity with Palestinian higher education. The American Historical Association's 2025 "[Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza](#)" offers an example of how learned societies can use their disciplinary authority to respond to the destruction of Palestinian education.

The resolution affirmed that the AHA supports "the right of all peoples to freely teach and learn about their past," condemned Israeli violence in Gaza as undermining that right, called for a permanent ceasefire to halt scholasticide, and proposed that the association form a committee to assist in rebuilding Gaza's educational infrastructure. Although the AHA Council later vetoed the resolution, its passage by members at the 2025 business meeting remains significant: it shows how a learned society can connect academic freedom, disciplinary responsibility and material support for the rebuilding of Palestinian higher education.

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) has similarly issued [statements](#) calling attention to the destruction of Palestinian educational institutions and the need to defend academic freedom. It has also supported Isnad [fundraising](#), showing how learned societies can connect academic solidarity with direct support for students and institutional continuation.

MESA's [2025 Academic Freedom Award](#) to the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and the Isnad programme is another important example. MESA recognised the Emergency Committee and Isnad for their role in defending the right to education amid the destruction of Gaza's higher education sector.

The importance of these interventions is practical as well as symbolic. They can clarify that academic freedom includes the right of Palestinian universities to teach, conduct research and maintain institutional life. They can also create pressure, funding routes and professional legitimacy for partnership work that strengthens Palestinian higher education.

Coordinated digital infrastructure initiatives

A third model of sectoral partnership concerns shared infrastructure. In the present context, digital platforms, virtual learning environments, research collaboration systems, library access and connectivity support are part of the infrastructure of academic continuity.

The [UNESCO Gaza Virtual Campus](#) aims to support Gaza's universities by enabling online learning environments, digital classrooms, management systems, assessment tools and temporary learning spaces. Its ambition to reach students across Gaza's higher education sector demonstrates the scale at which digital infrastructure needs to be approached. Such initiatives are not a replacement for universities or for rebuilding physical campuses. They can, however, support continuity while institutional recovery and reconstruction are pursued.

[Research4Life](#) is another important digital access route. It provides Palestinian universities with access to academic and professional peer-reviewed content, including journals, books and databases, through programmes covering health, agriculture, environment, applied sciences and law. For Palestinian universities, access to research literature is essential for teaching, supervision, curriculum continuity and research activity, especially where libraries, laboratories and physical infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed.

[H-Gaza](#), developed by UNIMED, is useful to note as evidence of a wider shift of European university networks towards recognising the need for coordinated support for research in Gaza. Its value lies in signalling that research support for Gaza requires organised, sector-level attention and connection between European universities, Palestinian academics and institutional recovery efforts.

This kind of infrastructure work should be approached as part of institutional partnership. Sector-wide digital initiatives should strengthen teaching, research, assessment, library access and academic administration within Palestinian universities. They should also connect to longer-term institutional partnerships rather than remaining short-term technical interventions.

04

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Institutional partnerships

Institutional partnerships are formal university-to-university collaborations, usually established through memoranda of understanding or twinning agreements. Their value is that they move support beyond individual academic goodwill into recognised institutional commitments, with senior leadership backing, named contacts, agreed areas of cooperation and mechanisms for developing work over time. In the case of Palestine, and especially Gaza, this model responds directly to the call from Palestinian universities for support that strengthens existing institutions rather than creating parallel structures. Selected examples of institutional partnerships with Palestinian universities are included in **Appendix I**.

Twinning

Institution-to-institution partnership is not a new or unusual demand on universities. It was the cornerstone of the major higher education mobilisation, for example, in response to the war in Ukraine, where twinning became a guiding framework for connecting Ukrainian universities with international partners. The [UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative](#) achieved more than a hundred institution-to-institution partnerships. Its stated aims included preserving the integrity of Ukraine's higher education system, preventing brain drain and helping universities emerge from the crisis with strengthened resources, skills and international experience.

In practice, twinning has supported online teaching, digital infrastructure, equipment, library access, English language provision, mental health support, research collaboration, mobility, joint programmes and institutional planning.

Twinning also has a longer history in UK-Palestine civil society links. Town and friendship links between British and Palestinian communities, including those connected through the [Britain-Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network](#), have created relationships of solidarity, exchange and public education over many years. In higher education, twinning can build on this civic tradition while giving it an institutional academic form. A university twinning agreement can create a framework for shared teaching, research collaboration, staff exchange, student support, administrative cooperation, digital access, fundraising and longer-term rebuilding support.

Memoranda of understanding

Another framework for institutional partnership is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). While an MoU may not produce an immediate project, it establishes the formal groundwork necessary for future initiatives. These agreements help define mutual goals, designate official liaisons, and identify academic synergies, providing a functional roadmap for departments, faculties, and research hubs.

The University College London, UCL, Institute of Education's three recent MoUs with the Faculties of Education at Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza and the Islamic University of Gaza provide an important example. Developed through engagement with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and its Education and Arts Subcommittee, the agreements formalise cooperation around intellectual exchange, collaborative research and teaching support in education and the social sciences.

The MoUs recognise that the three Gaza universities have faculties whose subject areas correspond to departments and centres at UCL's Institute of Education, IOE, and frame the relationship as a strategic partnership linking IOE's research strengths to the rebuilding and strengthening of higher education in Gaza. The importance of this example lies not only in the signing of MoUs, but in the way a university faculty used existing academic structures to establish direct, institutionally recognised cooperation with Gaza's universities.

Multi-institutional collaboration

Multi-institutional collaboration can include research consortia, externally funded projects, regional networks and international programmes involving several universities at once. These models can be useful where the scale of need is beyond the capacity of a single bilateral partnership. They can pool expertise, widen access to resources and connect Palestinian universities to broader research and teaching infrastructures.

The FORWARD project, an Erasmus+ programme coordinated by Oslo Metropolitan University, illustrates this kind of multi-institutional collaboration. It partners the Islamic University of Gaza and An-Najah National University with European universities to develop online training modules in urban resilience and open science. Its relevance lies not only in its subject matter, but in the model it offers: Palestinian universities are part of a structured European partnership that links digital access, curriculum development, research collaboration and institutional recognition. For readers looking for practical routes into partnership, FORWARD shows how existing European cooperation frameworks can be used to include Palestinian universities in multi-partner academic work.

05

RESEARCH EXCHANGE AND VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIPS

Research exchange and virtual fellowships

Research exchange typically operates at the level where academic work is most often organised: within departments, faculties, schools, research centres, laboratories, clinical teams, and scholarly networks. A departmental or disciplinary partnership connects these academic units around a field of work, often centred on a research project, output, or grant led by one or more academics. These partnerships can include a wide range of activities such as teaching, curriculum support, postgraduate research support, seminars, methods training, co-authorship, access to infrastructure, and grant development.

This model is important because it allows academics and departments to act without waiting for a full university-wide agreement. A department can swiftly convene a research cluster, support curriculum continuity, host a virtual fellow, or create space for Palestinian colleagues as co-investigators, co-authors, or research partners in an existing grant. These forms of collaboration can move quickly, respond to specific disciplinary needs, and often become the basis for longer institutional partnerships.

Such collaborations are strongest when linked to Palestinian departments, faculties, and universities, and when they support institutional priorities as well as individual academic collaboration.

Teaching, curriculum and professional continuity

Teaching and curriculum partnerships can support academic continuity through shared modules, guest teaching, online seminars, curriculum support, practical teaching resources, clinical education. These models are especially important where Palestinian universities continue to teach but face severe limits on infrastructure, equipment, library access, connectivity or specialist facilities.

Such partnerships should support Palestinian academics to sustain and adapt their own teaching. Curriculum support is strongest when it is co-designed with Palestinian faculties and respects local accreditation, assessment, language, disciplinary priorities and student needs. It can provide immediate continuity while also contributing to longer-term academic development.

Oxford Crisis Education, OxCRED, provides one example in medical education. Based at Oxford Lifelong Learning, it began as a one-year pilot in January 2025 and has focused on urgent healthcare education needs in Gaza. Its medical work has included two online courses in trauma and orthopaedics, developed through direct consultation with academic leadership and faculties at local universities, including the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Azhar University-Gaza. This kind of initiative is valuable where clinical and practical training has been disrupted.

The next step for this type of support is for such projects to become embedded in sustained collaboration with Gaza's universities, with clearer institutional benefit and wider disciplinary links where possible.

Other teaching partnerships can also make visible the academic contribution of Palestinian universities. The collaboration between the Islamic University of Gaza and the University of Glasgow includes an online Palestinian Arabic course that places Palestinian culture, language and pedagogy at the centre of the partnership. This matters because Palestinian universities are not only institutions requiring support. They are also sources of academic, cultural and pedagogical expertise.

Co-supervision and technical support partnerships

Postgraduate research in Gaza has been disrupted by the destruction of libraries, laboratories, archives, funding and ordinary academic infrastructure. This does not mean that Palestinian universities lack researchers or supervisors; in most fields, academic research and supervision remains anchored in Palestinian institutions. The need is different: to strengthen postgraduate research by widening access to resources, methods support, writing feedback, software, data analysis, research design advice and wider scholarly communities.

Co-supervision and postgraduate research support can provide a practical route for this kind of collaboration. It might include joint supervision meetings, dissertation workshops, methods training, writing groups, publication support, doctoral seminars, digital library access, remote lab demonstrations, research expenses or support for data analysis. The role of international academics should be supplementary and collaborative, while the Palestinian university remains central to the student's degree, supervision and academic progression.

Technical support partnerships connect laboratories, clinical units, engineering teams, medical education centres, environmental science groups, software teams or other practice-based academic units. They can involve shared protocols, virtual demonstrations, methods training, remote lab teaching, simulation resources, equipment advice, collaborative supervision, data analysis, software access and joint research design.

The Twin Labs initiative developed by Palestinian Scholars and Students at Risk in Canada offers a useful precedent. It provides a model for direct partnerships between Palestinian scholars and counterpart laboratories or research groups, including joint research, co-authorship, seminars, curriculum development, mentorship, collaborative supervision and shared methodologies. Lab twins and technical partnerships can support continuity now, while also contributing to the longer-term rebuilding of Palestinian laboratories, clinics and research infrastructure.

Research clusters and collaborative grant development

Research clusters bring together academics around a shared theme, problem or field. They can support joint publications, grant applications, workshops, research training, policy outputs, methods development, postgraduate supervision and public engagement. This model allows academic collaboration to move beyond event-based support and towards sustained knowledge production.

The UCL project [Learning with Gazan Scholars About Reconstructing Home](#) provides one example. Developed through engagement with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, the project followed sector priorities, coordinated on design and structure, and circulated the call through Gaza university networks. Its significance lies in the position of Gaza scholars as co-investigators and intellectual partners, rather than as research subjects, consultants or sources of testimony. The project's focus on home, reconstruction and institutional recovery makes it relevant not only as a social science project, but as a model of co-designed research in which Gaza-based academic leadership helps shape the work from the outset.

Other research collaborations, **listed in Appendix II**, show the breadth of fields through which such partnerships can operate, including food insecurity, law, energy, cultural heritage, disability studies, medical devices and urban reconstruction. These examples show that research partnership with Palestinian universities is already possible across disciplines. They also show that collaboration need not be limited to emergency response. It can support knowledge production, curriculum development, technical innovation, postgraduate training and institutional capacity over time.

Virtual fellowships

Virtual fellowships offer one of the most practical forms of research exchange for academics affiliated with Gaza universities. They are formal remote academic positions that allow scholars to engage in research, teaching, institutional collaboration and international academic networks without needing to relocate. In the context of Gaza, where universities have faced systematic destruction, severe financial crisis and the loss of normal academic infrastructure, this model can support academics while helping maintain academic continuity within their home universities.

This model emerged directly from the priorities identified by Gaza's universities. The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza has called for international academic support that strengthens the continuity, resilience and recovery of Gaza's higher education

institutions. **Fobzu's Partnerships with Palestine** guide highlighted virtual fellowships as one practical route for responding to that call. Since then, Friends of Palestinian Universities, Gaza university colleagues and academics in the UK and beyond have worked to promote paid, remote fellowship models that combine material support for faculty with research collaboration, institutional affiliation and academic exchange.

The purpose of virtual fellowships is not only to offer individual opportunity. Many academics affiliated with Gaza universities continue to teach, supervise and conduct research while receiving little or no salary, often while displaced and without reliable access to electricity, internet, libraries or research materials. A paid virtual fellowship can therefore provide material support while helping academics remain connected to their universities. It can support a fellow's own research, but it can also help them continue teaching students, supervising postgraduate work, developing curricula, participating in research clusters and maintaining institutional academic life.

The strongest models are paid, remote, institutionally linked and designed with Palestinian universities. They provide fellows with access to academic resources, structured mentoring, research communities and clear but flexible outputs. A virtual fellowship is also useful when it provides access to email, libraries and seminars. But affiliation alone does not meet the material need identified by Gaza universities. Payment, research expenses and, where possible, support that also benefits the home institution should be treated as core design features.

Virtual fellowships should also be understood as academic partnerships, not only emergency support. They can enable co-produced research, joint authorship, seminars, teaching contributions, public engagement and future grant development. They can also bring important intellectual value to host institutions by connecting them with Palestinian scholars whose work, analysis and experience are central to understanding education, reconstruction, displacement, urban life, public health, law, culture and social survival under conditions of scholasticide. The relationship should therefore be based on mutual academic exchange, not a one-way model of assistance.

Several current initiatives show how this model can work. The University of Bristol's Gaza Education Research Virtual Fellowship was developed in collaboration with the Emergency Committee and Gaza universities, and supports three fellows from the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Aqsa University. The University of Alberta's Disrupted and Displaced Palestinian Scholars and Students initiative provides a broader institutional model connecting student bursaries, scholar support, public lectures, symposia and coordination with the Emergency Committee. Further examples are listed **in Appendix III**.

Council for at-Risk Academics, Cara, has an emerging Palestine Programme which is also significant. Its planned virtual fellowship framework for Palestinian academics at risk signals an important shift from individual initiatives towards dedicated programme infrastructure.

Such a programme can help connect Palestinian scholars with host departments, mentoring, risk governance, resource mobilisation and wider coordination across the UK higher education sector. This reflects growing recognition that virtual fellowships should not remain ad hoc acts of individual hospitality. They can become a structured form of academic partnership and material support for faculty whose work is central to the survival of Palestinian higher education.

For universities developing virtual fellowship programmes, several design principles are especially important. Programmes should be developed with Palestinian universities and relevant Emergency Committee subcommittees, and should recognise the fellow's home university affiliation in publications, talks, events and project materials. Selection processes should be transparent, accessible and coordinated with Palestinian institutions. Funding should include direct support for academic labour, and, where feasible, research expenses or institutional contributions. The aim is not to create a single fixed model, but to build fellowships that are responsive, sustainable and embedded within Palestinian academic structures.

Virtual fellowships are therefore useful because they bring together material solidarity, academic exchange and institutional continuity. They allow international universities to act quickly while still working through responsible partnership principles. They also offer a model that can begin at departmental level and grow into wider institutional collaboration over time.

06

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Student support and scholarships

Student support is one of the most visible forms of international response to the crisis facing Palestinian higher education. New scholarships for Palestinian students are important and welcome, especially for students in exile or displacement. They can provide protection, opportunity and routes into further study.

The difficulty arises when scholarships are treated as the main, or only, response to the destruction of Palestinian higher education. Gaza's faculty have clearly called for support to the sector itself and in partnership with their institutions. Students need scholarships, fees, devices, internet access and study spaces. They also need universities that remain able to teach, assess, keep records, pay staff, support progression and graduate them.

This distinction matters because international support for Palestinian higher education has historically been very limited and often poorly directed towards institutional survival. Chapter 7 of *Scholasticide in Gaza* shows that, for two decades, direct development assistance to Palestinian universities averaged less than US\$10 million per year across the entire sector in Palestine. In 2023, only 18.2% of bilateral aid to higher education in Palestine, around US\$8 million, reached Palestinian higher education institutions. Most funds classified as higher education aid were spent outside Palestine, mainly through overseas scholarships and the imputed costs of donor-country higher education systems. The report also notes UNESCO's wider finding that more than 70 per cent of international aid to tertiary education takes the form of scholarships and imputed student costs.

Still, overseas scholarships can be vital for students in exile or displacement. However, if scholarships and externally delivered initiatives replace or bypass Gaza's own universities, they can deepen institutional collapse at the very moment when the sector's survival is at stake. The central task is therefore to design student support as part of a wider strategy of institutional support, so that individual opportunity is, where possible, linked to the survival and recovery of the Palestinian academic community as a whole.

Overseas scholarships

Overseas scholarships remain necessary. They can provide vital pathways for students who are displaced, unable to continue locally, or seeking advanced study that is not available under current conditions. In some fields, mobility may be crucial for academic progression, especially at postgraduate level.

The impact of scholarships is strongest when they are designed as part of a wider partnership with Palestinian universities. This can include university nomination or endorsement,

recognition of interrupted study, support for students with missing documents, links to priority disciplines, and pathways through which students remain connected to the Palestinian higher education sector. The Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza has called for scholarship programmes to be developed in partnership with Gaza universities where possible, so that they support priority needs and do not contribute to the erasure of existing institutions.

Overseas scholarships are therefore best understood as one part of a wider student support ecosystem. They can provide life-changing opportunities for individual students, but they cannot substitute for supporting the universities where most Palestinian students continue to study.

Institution-anchored overseas scholarships

Institution-anchored scholarships offer a stronger model than general mobility schemes. They support individual students or early-career academics while also contributing to the future capacity of Palestinian universities. Their purpose is not only to provide access to study abroad, but to strengthen teaching, research and staffing within Palestinian higher education.

HESPAL, the Higher Education Scholarships for Palestinians programme, provides an established example of this approach. Developed in partnership with Palestinian universities, the British Council supports master's and doctoral study for Palestinian academic staff. Eligibility is linked to being employed by, or a member of academic staff at, a Palestinian university, being nominated by that university, and being committed to returning to work in the Palestinian higher education sector after completion. This structure matters because it connects overseas study to institutional nomination, sectoral need and future contribution.

The Palestine-Oxford Scholarship in Geography and the Environment provides a more recent, discipline-specific example. Based at the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment, it is a fully funded graduate scholarship developed in collaboration with Friends of Palestinian Universities and in conversation with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza. It is designed to support capacity building for Gaza universities by targeting current teaching assistants and early-career academics.

The significance of this model lies in its specificity. It links a defined academic field, a host department with relevant expertise, Gaza university staff development and the priorities identified by the Emergency Committee. Its value is that it connects graduate study abroad to the future staffing and research capacity of Gaza's universities.

Isnad: Gaza university scholarships and institutional continuity

Isnad is a partnership between the Emergency Committee's member universities and their three affiliated colleges, Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza, the Islamic University of Gaza, University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), Al-Azhar College of Intermediate Studies, Al-Aqsa Community College for Intermediate Studies, Taawon, and the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education. It was launched after Gaza's non-profit public universities resumed online teaching despite the destruction of their campuses and their inability to pay regular salaries to faculty and staff. The programme aims to provide 30,000 scholarships to support 15,000 students and university staff in Gaza, with a fundraising goal of 16 million dollars to cover tuition fees for two semesters.

Its institutional significance is crucial. In the context of scholasticide in Gaza, tuition support is not only student aid. It is also a mechanism for sustaining the university as an institution. When tuition support is channelled through Palestinian universities, it can help students continue their studies while also supporting the university's ability to pay staff, maintain enrolment, deliver online teaching and preserve academic continuity.

This makes Isnad different from many externally designed scholarship schemes. Its unit of concern is not only the individual student, but the relationship between student access and institutional survival. It recognises that a university cannot continue if students are unable to enrol, if staff cannot be paid, if teaching cannot be organised, and if tuition systems collapse entirely. By supporting students at their home universities, Isnad helps sustain the academic and financial relationships that allow higher education to continue in Gaza.

Isnad also provides an important model for international partners. Universities, charities, foundations, and professional associations that want to support students in Gaza could contribute to home-based tuition schemes rather than only developing overseas scholarships. This does not remove the need for mobility pathways. It places them within a broader strategy that also protects the institutions where most Palestinian students continue to study.

Other home-based student support

Other home-based scholarship models can also be useful where they are coordinated with Palestinian universities. These may cover tuition fees, registration fees, examination fees, devices, internet access, learning materials, transport where relevant, emergency study costs or contributions to university-managed student support funds. In Gaza, however, international partners should first consider how they can support existing institutional mechanisms such as Isnad before creating separate schemes.

Friends of Palestinian Universities has a long history of supporting students at Palestinian universities through scholarship programmes, including support for students at Birzeit University and past work with UNRWA to provide scholarships for Palestinian students in Gaza. Other UK and European charities and foundations have also supported students completing degrees at Palestinian universities. These models show that external funding can help students remain enrolled locally, rather than requiring overseas mobility.

The strength of home-based scholarships is that they can bring individual and institutional support together. A student receives support to continue studying which translates into income that universities receive that helps sustain teaching, administration and staff payment. This is especially important where universities remain responsible for teaching and assessment but lack normal operating budgets. Further examples of home-based scholarship and student support models are included in **Appendix IV**.

Certificate release funds

The financial crisis facing Gaza's education sector directly affects students' ability to progress. According to the Gaza Strip Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, issued by the World Bank, EU, and UN in April 2026, the education sector has endured losses valued at US\$2.36 billion. This includes a US\$578 million decline in tuition revenue across the system and US\$300 million in heightened operational expenditures linked to the emergency response.

These financial pressures translate into significant barriers for individual students: Al-Aqsa University has identified approximately 20,000 graduates who are eligible for degrees but cannot obtain their certificates due to unpaid balances. Similarly, the Islamic University of Gaza reports 4,000 such graduates, while Al-Azhar University-Gaza faces a deficit of US\$10 million in outstanding graduate fees, part of a broader US\$30–40 million in unpaid tuition. These data underscore that the release of certificates is a critical institutional challenge that directly hinders student mobility, professional accreditation, and academic advancement.

Certificate release funds are therefore an important model of student support. Students may be unable to apply for postgraduate study, transfer credits, secure employment, register with professional bodies or obtain visas because they cannot access the documents required to prove their academic status. In this sense, a student who cannot obtain a transcript may be effectively excluded from higher education mobility, even if a scholarship is available. A graduate who cannot access a certificate may be excluded from employment, professional accreditation or further study.

Certificate release funds are most effective when conducted in partnership with Palestinian universities. University coordination can help identify eligible students, prioritise cases where documentation is blocking progression, and ensure that payments are transparent, accountable and connected to wider student support mechanisms.

Digital access, learning hubs and study infrastructure

In Gaza, continued study depends not only on tuition support, but on the material conditions that make learning possible. Students need internet access, electricity, devices, quiet study spaces, digital libraries, academic advising, assessment systems and, in some fields, practical or clinical learning environments. These are part of the basic infrastructure of academic continuity.

Learning hubs, internet access points and study spaces can provide a practical response to this need. They may offer connectivity, computers, charging facilities, access to online classes, digital resources, exam spaces, or discipline-specific training. In a context where students may be displaced, without stable electricity, without reliable devices and without suitable study environments, such hubs can make the difference between formal enrolment and actual participation in learning.

The medical hub opened by the Samir Foundation and Human Smile in Gaza provides one example. Launched in Gaza City in June 2025, it is a dedicated educational space for medical students in the Gaza Strip. It offers uninterrupted electricity, high-speed internet and a stable environment where students can study, take exams and participate in workshops, and can accommodate 40 students at a time.

Similar models could be developed for other disciplines. International partners could contribute devices, connectivity, subscriptions, digital library access, solar charging, remote teaching resources or small grants to university-managed learning spaces.

These forms of support are strongest when coordinated with Palestinian universities. A learning hub that is disconnected from university teaching may provide useful study space, but its academic value is stronger when it supports enrolled students, enables assessment or helps students continue within their degree programmes.

07

EUROPEAN COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS

European cooperation frameworks

For European universities, Erasmus+ provides routes for mobility, institutional capacity building, vocational education, youth work, virtual exchange and joint programme design. Many Palestinian institutions already participate in Erasmus+ programmes. According to the National Erasmus+ Office in Palestine, Erasmus+ has supported around 6,000 student and staff mobilities involving Palestine since 2014, with around 500 mobilities each year. This means Erasmus+ is not an unfamiliar route for Palestinian universities, but an existing framework that can be used more strategically in support of Palestinian institutional priorities.

The National Erasmus+ Office in Palestine is an important starting point for Erasmus+ engagement. It is the official representative of the Erasmus+ Programme in Palestine and supports the local management of its international higher education dimension. It provides guidance to applicants, beneficiaries and organisations, promotes the results of EU-funded Erasmus+ projects, and tracks relevant developments in higher education, vocational education and training, youth and sport. Institutions can consult its website, project records and facts-and-figures materials, and contact the office at erasmus.palestine@gmail.com.

For European universities, the practical task is to use these frameworks more deliberately in support of Palestinian institutional priorities. This means working with Palestinian university international relations offices from the start, engaging the National Erasmus+ Office where relevant. The purpose is not only to secure participation in a European programme, but to make that participation useful for Palestinian universities.

Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. Its international dimension funds academic mobility and cooperation projects involving institutions in EU member states and associated countries, and institutions in non-associated countries across the world. For Palestinian higher education, Erasmus+ includes several routes: International Credit Mobility, Capacity Building in Higher Education, Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters and Design Measures, Jean Monnet activities, Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training, Capacity Building in Youth and Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange.

Capacity building in higher education

Capacity Building in Higher Education, CBHE, is one of the most relevant Erasmus+ routes for institutional partnership because it is designed around institutional development rather than individual mobility alone. CBHE projects usually last two to three years and can support curriculum development, governance, quality assurance, digital transformation, doctoral

education, professional training, applied research, internationalisation and links between universities and wider social institutions. Around 11% of the global CBHE budget is for the South Mediterranean.

For Palestinian universities, the importance of CBHE lies in its institutional focus. Unlike mobility schemes that primarily support individual students or staff, CBHE can support the systems that allow universities to continue and develop: curricula, governance, quality assurance, digital infrastructure, project management capacity and links with professional sectors.

Palestinian universities already have experience participating in and coordinating CBHE projects. Recent projects recorded by the National Erasmus+ Office show the breadth of what CBHE can support. Academia4EU, coordinated by University College of Applied Sciences, focuses on strengthening Palestinian higher education institutions' capacity in European project management and participation in international cooperation programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. It includes training and support for project design, proposal writing, financial management, quality assurance and sustainable international partnerships. This is especially relevant because access to European frameworks depends not only on academic eligibility, but on administrative labour, technical knowledge and institutional systems that are often underfunded.

Other recent CBHE projects show additional routes. Digital Bridges develops an interdisciplinary master's programme in digital governance involving Al-Quds University and Palestine Technical University Kadoorie. SHIFT-MED focuses on sustainability and digital transformation with Palestinian partners including Palestine Technical University Kadoorie, An-Najah National University and Palestine Academy for Science and Technology. Eng-Inc works on engineering education, virtual laboratories, competency-based curricula, curriculum updating and employability with Palestinian partners including An-Najah National University, Palestine Polytechnic University and Palestine Technical University Kadoorie.

For European faculty and administrators, the practical route is to begin with a Palestinian institutional partner. A useful starting point might be a jointly developed concept note with a Palestinian department, international relations office or relevant faculty; early contact with the National Erasmus+ Office; and a realistic assessment of what the Palestinian partner would need in order to participate meaningfully. This includes time for proposal development, budgeting, administrative support, digital access, project management and institutional coordination.

International credit mobility

International Credit Mobility, ICM, funds study or teaching periods abroad for students and for academic and administrative staff. Students can study abroad for two to twelve months and obtain credits recognised by their home institution as part of their degree. Shorter study periods of five to thirty days are possible when combined with online study as blended mobility. Staff mobility can last from five to sixty days.

For Palestinian universities, ICM can support student mobility, staff teaching, administrative training, credit recognition and institutional relationships with European universities. Its value is strongest when mobility is connected to the Palestinian home institution through credit recognition, staff development, departmental links and continued academic engagement. In the current context, some Gaza university students and staff may be displaced outside Palestine while still enrolled in, or affiliated with, their universities. This may create routes for participation that remain connected to the home institution. European universities should discuss such possibilities with Palestinian partners and the relevant Erasmus+ structures rather than assuming that mobility is either straightforward or impossible.

Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters provide EU-funded scholarships for master's students worldwide. Programmes usually last one to two years, involve study in at least two countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme, and lead to a joint, double or multiple degree. Institutions from partner countries can participate in the consortia that deliver these programmes, either as degree-awarding partners or as associated partners. Erasmus Mundus Design Measures support the preparation of joint programmes before they apply to become Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters.

In the current cycle, 36 Palestinian students have secured Erasmus Mundus scholarships. However, no selected Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters or Design Measures in the same cycle involve Palestinian institutions as coordinators, partners or associated partners. This means there is space for European universities to think beyond individual scholarships and consider whether Palestinian universities can be included in programme design, teaching, supervision, associated partnership roles or future curriculum development where the rules allow.

Vocational education, youth and virtual exchange

Erasmus+ also includes routes for vocational education and training, youth cooperation and virtual exchange. These frameworks matter because Palestinian higher education is connected to technical skills, employability, youth development, community resilience and professional training. They are not substitutes for university reconstruction or direct institutional

partnership, but they can complement university partnerships when connected to Palestinian educational priorities.

Recent projects recorded by the National Erasmus+ Office include work on textile and fashion education, sustainable olive-sector vocational training, dental assistant vocational education, dual vocational education, green engineering skills, sustainable tourism, TVET-business ecosystems, virtual intercultural learning, disaster preparedness, youth resilience and trauma-sensitive approaches. These examples show the range of European cooperation routes available without requiring every institution to invent a new mechanism.

Horizon Europe and research cooperation

European cooperation is not limited to Erasmus+. Horizon Europe, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, COST networks and national research funding routes can support research collaboration, staff exchange, doctoral training and thematic networks.

Palestinian universities can participate in European research frameworks, but their access is more limited than that of institutions in associated countries. Palestine remains a non-associated partner in both Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, meaning Palestinian universities typically participate as partners rather than coordinators and face more limited access to research funding. This makes the role of European institutions especially important. They often have stronger access to calls, consortium networks, proposal systems and administrative support. That access should be used to create properly resourced roles for Palestinian partners.

For faculty members, a practical route might begin with a research workshop, virtual seminar series or jointly developed concept notes with a Palestinian department. From there, partners can identify a suitable Horizon, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) or national funding route, clarify roles from the beginning, and budget for Palestinian academic labour, research assistance, administration, data management, translation where needed, digital access and institutional overheads where eligible. For administrators and international offices, the equivalent route may begin with mapping existing European partnerships, identifying where Palestinian universities could be included meaningfully, and supporting the technical work of proposal development.

Responsible research cooperation should involve Palestinian academics from the design stage. Palestinian universities should not be added only after a proposal has already been shaped, or treated only as field sites, data sources or implementation partners. Partnership design should address research governance, authorship, data ownership, intellectual property, budget distribution and the long-term benefit to the Palestinian institution.

The link between Erasmus+ and research cooperation is already visible in Academia4EU, which explicitly aims to strengthen Palestinian higher education institutions' participation in international cooperation programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. This is an important signal as participation in European research frameworks depends not only on academic quality, but also on the capacity to design proposals, manage budgets, meet reporting requirements, navigate consortium politics and secure properly resourced roles within projects.

Existing European cooperation frameworks are useful routes into action, but they are not sufficient on their own. They should be combined with direct institutional support, emergency funding, sectoral coordination and partnerships grounded in the priorities of Palestinian universities. For European institutions, the immediate opportunity is to work with Palestinian university international relations offices, use the National Erasmus+ Office as an entry point for Erasmus+ engagement, and build research and cooperation proposals that strengthen Palestinian higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION: PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIP

Conclusion: Principles for equitable partnership

Palestinian universities have been clear about the kind of international support they need. They have asked for support that helps them continue teaching, research and student progression; protects the integrity of their institutions; and contributes to the survival and rebuilding of Palestinian higher education. This means recognising that universities have been physically destroyed but have not disappeared. They continue to exist through their students, staff, faculties, leadership and collective determination to remain rooted in Gaza.

The message from Gaza's academic community is also a warning against forms of support that unintentionally weaken the sector. Gaza academics and administrators have urged international colleagues to "refuse all plans seeking to bypass, erase, or weaken the integrity of our academic institutions." The presidents of Gaza's universities later called for "practical, structured, and enduring partnership."

The examples discussed in this handbook show that institutional support is possible. National consortia, MoUs, research collaborations, virtual fellowships, Isnad and student support schemes, and European cooperation frameworks can all contribute to Palestinian higher education when they are designed with Palestinian universities, aligned with their priorities and designed in the service of institutional continuity.

In this context, equitable partnership depends on a clear set of principles defined and articulated by Gaza's academic community, its institutions and its representatives:

1. **Strengthen institutional resilience:** Support should help Palestinian universities continue to teach, assess, supervise, conduct research, pay staff, support students and preserve academic life. In Gaza, this means working with Gaza universities and, where relevant, coordinating through the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and its subcommittees. The aim is to strengthen existing institutions, not create parallel structures around them.
2. **Build reciprocal and equitable partnerships:** Palestinian academics, students and institutions should be treated as intellectual and institutional partners, not only as beneficiaries, sources of testimony or symbols of inclusion. Partnership should include shared design, shared decision-making, fair recognition, appropriate resourcing and clear institutional benefit.
3. **Respect institutional autonomy:** Palestinian universities must retain authority over their curricula, students, staff, academic priorities and reconstruction needs. International partners should not impose external governance models, curricula, research agendas or reconstruction plans under the language of emergency response, innovation or development.

4. **Align with Palestinian-defined priorities:** Alignment requires ongoing coordination, responsiveness and accountability. This means working with the relevant university leadership, faculties, departments, international offices and national bodies.
5. **Connect individual support to institutional continuity:** Scholarships, fellowships, student aid, research grants and mobility schemes should benefit Palestinian universities as well as individual participants.
6. **Resource academic labour and infrastructure:** Partnership requires material support. This includes salaries, stipends, research expenses, administrative support, digital access, library access, devices, learning spaces, laboratories, and the infrastructure that makes teaching and research possible. Symbolic solidarity alone cannot sustain a higher education sector under scholasticide.
7. **Plan for long-term collaboration:** Emergency assistance is necessary, but it should open routes towards sustained teaching, research, staffing, infrastructure, governance and reconstruction. Short-term projects are strongest when they create relationships, systems and commitments that can continue beyond a single grant, event or fellowship cycle.
8. **Coordinate rather than duplicate:** International partners should share information, learn from existing initiatives and avoid multiplying isolated projects. Sectoral consortia, university partnerships, learned societies, funders and professional associations can help reduce duplication and make support easier for Palestinian universities to engage with.

Establishing a partnership at your university

If you are interested in developing a partnership with a Palestinian university, Friends of Palestinian Universities would be glad to hear from you. We can help identify appropriate routes for collaboration, connect you with relevant Palestinian university partners and representatives, and advise of models such as institutional agreements, virtual fellowships, research collaboration, teaching support and sectoral coordination. Whether you are an academic, department, international office, learned society, union branch or university leader, there are practical and ethical ways to act.

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APPENDICES

The examples included in these appendices are illustrative rather than comprehensive. They show a range of existing and emerging models of partnership with Palestinian universities, but they do not provide a complete directory of all initiatives. Friends of Palestinian Universities welcomes further information about existing projects and partnerships for future updates. Please contact **info@friendsofpalunis.org** with details.

Appendix I: Examples of institutional partnerships with Palestinian universities

1. UCL Institute of Education MoUs with the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities

UCL Institute of Education has signed memoranda of understanding with the Faculties of Education at Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza and the Islamic University of Gaza. Developed through engagement with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and its Education and Arts Subcommittee, the MoUs formalise cooperation around intellectual exchange, collaborative research, teaching support, education and the social sciences. The agreements identify shared areas of interest including education in emergencies, international development, migration and citizenship, childhood and families in difficult contexts, language and literacy, sustainability and climate action, decolonial and critical theory, equality and social justice. This is a strong example of faculty-level institutional partnership aligned with Gaza's own sectoral coordination.

2. University of Glasgow and the Islamic University of Gaza

In February 2026, the University of Glasgow and the Islamic University of Gaza signed a memorandum of understanding focused on supporting academic continuity at IUG. The agreement includes access to recorded practical and laboratory teaching materials, including resources linked to the University of Glasgow and Glasgow Caledonian University, with a view to integrating these materials into IUG courses. It also includes faculty training, virtual seminars, online student exchange and continued coordination between the two institutions. The partnership is significant because it offers a practical example of how universities can mobilise existing teaching resources to support practical learning where laboratories and physical infrastructure have been destroyed or made inaccessible.

3. University of Glasgow and Al-Azhar University-Gaza

In February 2026, the University of Glasgow also signed a memorandum of understanding with Al-Azhar University-Gaza. The agreement focuses on access to recorded practical materials and virtual laboratory resources, joint curriculum development, faculty training, virtual seminars and future exchange opportunities. Like the IUG agreement, this MoU responds to the interruption of laboratory-based teaching by placing practical teaching support within a formal institutional framework. It is a useful example of how university-to-university cooperation can address immediate academic needs while creating a basis for longer-term collaboration.

4. FORWARD

FORWARD, coordinated by Oslo Metropolitan University, is an Erasmus+ project running from 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2028. Its partners include the Islamic University of Gaza, An-Najah National University, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, SAIH, the Polytechnic

University of Milan, Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kyiv National Economic University and Lviv Polytechnic National University. The project is managed by Rawia Awadallah at OsloMet. It focuses on urban resilience, open science, digital access, FAIR data management, online training, curriculum development and community engagement in war-affected regions. It plans to develop six training modules and 40 practical case studies, and aims to equip more than 200 participants with relevant skills. FORWARD is important because it places Palestinian universities within a structured European cooperation framework linking teaching, research, digital infrastructure and community resilience.

5. Al-Quds University and Trinity College Dublin

Al-Quds University and Trinity College Dublin renewed a five-year memorandum of understanding in May 2023 between the Al-Quds University Human Rights Clinic and Trinity's School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies. The collaboration dates back to 2016 and has been spearheaded by Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne at Trinity and Dr Munir Nuseibah, Director of the Al-Quds Human Rights Clinic. It supports joint teaching and research in human rights, student engagement, internships and wider institutional collaboration. By 2023, 16 Trinity students had completed internships through the partnership. The collaboration has also included Dr Nuseibah's Visiting Professorship at Trinity and research activity supported by an AHRC grant. It is a useful example of a long-term institutional partnership built around shared academic and human rights commitments.

6. An-Najah National University and Technological University Dublin

An-Najah National University and Technological University Dublin signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2025 to advance cooperation around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The agreement was led by Dr Deirdre Lillis, President of TU Dublin, and Professor Abdel Naser Zaid, President of An-Najah National University, with the launch attended by Ambassador Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland. The partnership covers collaborative teaching, research, capacity building, sustainability and innovation. Early activities include joint lectures on artificial intelligence in academia, collaborative research on sustainable innovation ecosystems and targeted capacity-building programmes for faculty. This partnership is useful for institutions seeking to connect cooperation with Palestine to existing university commitments on sustainability, global engagement and research impact.

7. An-Najah National University and UNIDROIT

An-Najah National University signed a memorandum of understanding with UNIDROIT, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, on 17 April 2023. The agreement was signed remotely by Professor Abdel Naser Zaid, President of An-Najah, and Ignacio Tirado, Secretary-General of UNIDROIT. It supports academic exchange and cooperation in private international law, commercial law and the unification of law, including co-organised events, research projects, study programmes and promotion of UNIDROIT's Research and Internship Programme. The partnership shows how Palestinian universities can build institutional cooperation not only with other universities, but also with international legal and professional organisations.

8. Islamic University of Gaza and Turkey's University of Health Sciences

The Islamic University of Gaza and Turkey's University of Health Sciences signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding on 13 February 2026. The agreement was signed by Professor Dr Asaad Asaad, President of IUG, and Professor Kamaledin Aydın, President of the University of Health Sciences. It covers academic exchange, medical education, clinical and student training, joint research in health and medical sciences, and the exchange of undergraduate and postgraduate students, faculty members and administrative staff for academic, research and clinical purposes. The agreement also establishes a joint cooperation committee to oversee implementation. It is an important health and medical sciences partnership at a time when Gaza's medical education and health systems face severe destruction.

Appendix II: Examples of research collaborations and disciplinary partnerships

1. **UCL, Learning with Gazan Scholars About Reconstructing Home**

The UCL project Learning with Gazan Scholars About Reconstructing Home: Lessons for anti-colonial research is part of UCL's 2025 to 2026 Social Science Plus pilot projects. Developed through engagement with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, it brings Gaza scholars into the project as intellectual partners rather than as research subjects or sources of testimony. Its focus on home, reconstruction and anti-colonial research makes it relevant both as a substantive research project and as a model for co-designed collaboration with Gaza-based academics.

2. **Oxford Crisis Education, OxCRED**

Oxford Crisis Education, based at Oxford Lifelong Learning, began as a one-year pilot in January 2025 to support students during the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Its medical work has focused on urgent healthcare education needs, including two online courses in trauma and orthopaedics. These courses were developed through direct consultation with academic leadership and faculties at local universities, including the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Azhar University-Gaza. OxCRED also curates open-access educational resources to support Gaza students and aligns with Oxford's work on digital transformation, global engagement and social responsibility.

3. **Palestinian Scholars and Students at Risk: Twin Labs**

The Twin Labs initiative, developed by Palestinian Scholars and Students at Risk in Canada, supports direct partnerships between Palestinian scholars and counterpart laboratories or research groups. It offers a model for joint research, co-authorship, seminars, curriculum development, mentorship, collaborative supervision and shared methodologies. It is particularly relevant for disciplines where laboratory access, technical methods, software, data analysis or research infrastructure have been disrupted.

4. **Glasgow Life Sciences initiative**

The Glasgow Life Sciences initiative, led through the University of Glasgow's School of Infection and Immunity, supports practical teaching continuity for Gaza universities by making recorded practical life sciences teaching resources available through an online platform. It is especially relevant in disciplines where laboratory-based learning is central, but physical labs have been destroyed, damaged or made inaccessible. The initiative shows how a school or faculty can use existing teaching resources to support disciplinary continuity in Gaza.

5. Islamic University of Gaza and University of Glasgow: The Impact of Language

The Impact of Language was a collaboration between the Islamic University of Gaza and the University of Glasgow, developed as part of the UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts. Led by Professor Alison Phipps at Glasgow and Dr Nazmi Al-Masri at IUG, the project involved an international team based in Scotland and Palestine working on the design, development and promotion of an online Palestinian Arabic course for beginners. Funded by a UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund grant, the project supported the Arabic Centre at IUG as a provider of online language education, provided technologies and infrastructure for online teaching, and created employment routes for Arabic teachers in Gaza. It is a useful example because it shows that Palestinian universities are not only recipients of support, but also sources of linguistic, cultural and pedagogical expertise.

6. LSE and Al-Azhar University-Gaza: Coping with Food Insecurity in Gaza

Coping with Food Insecurity in Gaza: The Role of Community-based Initiatives is a research project developed in collaboration with Al-Azhar University-Gaza and funded by the LSE Urgency Grant Scheme. Beginning in September 2024, the project examines the informal social support networks that Palestinians in Gaza have developed in response to acute food insecurity. It is an example of research collaboration responding to an urgent and changing humanitarian reality, while working with a Gaza university partner on questions directly connected to survival, social organisation and community resilience.

7. Birzeit University, Queen Mary University of London and the International State Crime Initiative

The partnership between the Institute of Law at Birzeit University, Queen Mary University of London's International State Crime Initiative and the Centre for Law and Society in a Global Context commits the institutions to collaboration in research and teaching, as well as future exchange of staff and faculty. The partnership emerged from Friends of Palestinian Universities's UK-Palestine Academic Links Fellowship (PALF) in 2023 and was launched in June 2024. It is a useful example of how an individual fellowship or academic link can develop into a wider institutional research and teaching partnership.

8. LSE Arab Universities Programme

The LSE Middle East Centre's Arab Universities Programme, established in 2010 with support from the Emirates Foundation, has facilitated research collaborations between LSE scholars and universities across the Arab region, including Palestinian partners. Examples included collaboration between LSE and Birzeit University on infrastructures of care during COVID-19, gendered identities and advertising cultures, and Palestinian attitudes to conflict in partnership with the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government and the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research. A collaboration involving Birzeit University's Israeli Studies master's programme, LSE's Department of Geography and Environment and Al-Marsad, the Arab Human Rights Center in the Golan Heights, also resulted in The Untold Story of the Golan Heights: Occupation, Colonization and Jawlani Resistance. The programme shows how regional university collaboration can support sustained research outputs across several fields.

9. Northumbria University, Newcastle University and An-Najah National University: Young Palestinians' Responses to House Demolitions

Young Palestinians' Responses to House Demolitions is a British Academy Global Challenges Research Grant project involving Northumbria University, Newcastle University and An-Najah National University. The project develops participatory research methods for understanding how young people in Palestine experience and respond to systematic house demolitions. It has produced reports and publications on young people's gendered experiences of home demolition and legal challenges to demolition, as well as an exhibition of visual materials produced by Palestinian youth. Its contribution lies in combining academic research with participatory, visual and multi-modal methods suitable for working with young people living through violence and dispossession.

10. Sectarianism, Proxies and Desectarianisation

Sectarianism, Proxies and Desectarianisation, known as SEPAD, is a research project based at Lancaster University's Richardson Institute for Peace and Conflict Research and funded by the Carnegie Corporation. It brings together more than sixty scholars based in the UK and the Middle East, including a partner at An-Najah National University working on Palestinian constitutional law. The project produces research and commentary on sectarianism, democratic politics, gender, securitisation, urbanisation and conflict across the Middle East, including Palestine, Syria and North Africa. It is an example of Palestinian academic participation in a wider regional research network, where Palestinian legal and political expertise contributes to broader debates on governance, conflict and social change.

11. University of Birmingham, IUG and AUG: Sustainable Energy in Gaza

Impacts of Gaza's Energy Crisis Through Sustainable Energy Generating Technology is a collaboration between the University of Birmingham, the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Azhar University-Gaza, funded by a British Academy Urban Infrastructures of Well-Being Award. The project examines the impact of sparse electrification in Gaza on infrastructure and services, while also developing a sustainable pilot plant to provide affordable solar energy. It is a strong example of research collaboration that both draws on Palestinian academic expertise and invests in practical technological solutions in Gaza.

12. Culture for Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Network Plus

The Culture for Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Network Plus, known as CUSP, is led by the University of Glasgow in partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza and other partners. It focuses on strengthening arts and cultural institutions in low- and middle-income countries, with attention to conflict transformation, women and girls' participation, environmental justice and respect for indigenous knowledge. Its activities have included collaborative projects with young people, artistic interventions and research on the contribution of the arts to societal healing. CUSP is relevant as an example of arts, culture and peacebuilding research that includes Palestinian university partnership.

13. Durham University and IUG Fellowship

Dr Nazmi Al-Masri of the Islamic University of Gaza was awarded a research fellowship at Durham University focused on Innovating a Pedagogy of Plenty in Intercultural Education. The fellowship involved a three-month residency at Durham, where Dr Al-Masri conducted qualitative research on educational methodologies that foster intercultural understanding. The work examined the impact of environmental and cultural factors on education and sought to develop pedagogies that promote mutual cultural awareness and collaboration between Palestinian and international students. The fellowship is an example of how individual academic exchange can support wider pedagogical thinking and long-term academic relationships.

14. Imperial College London and IUG: Affordable Medical Devices

The collaboration between Imperial College London and the Islamic University of Gaza focused on developing a cost-effective external fixator for stabilising fractures in areas with limited medical resources. The device developed at Imperial was designed to cost a fraction of commercial fixators while maintaining similar performance, using materials such as stainless steel and aluminium and standard manufacturing methods. The collaboration included training IUG Medical School faculty members, including Dr Sadiq Abdelall, on the manufacturing process. It is a practical example of medical engineering collaboration designed to strengthen local capacity and support future self-sufficiency in Gaza's medical sector.

15. Disability Under Siege Network Plus

Disability Under Siege Network Plus is a major research initiative involving the University of Birmingham, Birzeit University, the Islamic University of Gaza and other partners. Running from 2020 to 2025 and funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund, it addresses the challenges of educating children with disabilities in conflict-affected areas, including Palestine and Lebanon. The project brings together universities, NGOs, educators, artists, activists and people with disabilities, and integrates arts and culture into work on inclusion and social change. Researchers including Professor Rita Giacaman at Birzeit and Dr Nazmi Al-Masri at IUG have contributed expertise on psychosocial resilience and inclusive education. The project is a strong example of long-term, multi-partner research grounded in lived experience and focused on inclusive educational practice.

16. LINKS Early Childhood Development

In 2019, the LINKS research network at Queen's University Belfast and the Palestinian Child Institute at An-Najah National University formalised a partnership to advance early childhood development in conflict-affected societies. Led by Professor Paul Connolly of Queen's, the partnership connected the Palestinian Child Institute to a wider global network of early childhood development and peacebuilding expertise, including UNICEF, Yale and Harvard. The collaboration addresses challenges facing Palestinian children, including developmental delays and special needs linked to conflict, and connects research with sustainable development, social cohesion and peacebuilding.

Appendix III: Virtual fellowship models

1. University of Bristol: Gaza Education Research Virtual Fellowship

The Gaza Education Research Virtual Fellowship is hosted by the Centre for Comparative and International Research in Education at the University of Bristol. It was developed in collaboration with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, including representatives from the Islamic University of Gaza, Al-Aqsa University and Al-Azhar University-Gaza, and draws on the model of support outlined in the Fobzu guide. Led by Dr Basma Hajir, with support from Dr William McInerney and Professor Leon Tikly, the inaugural fellowship supports three scholars from Gaza: Dr Ahmed Kamal Junina from Al-Aqsa University, Professor Magdy S. Aqel from the Islamic University of Gaza and Dr Munawwar Najim from the Islamic University of Gaza. The fellowship provides virtual access to research resources, networking, mentorship and online professional development, with the first cohort focused on scholasticide in Gaza. It is also significant as a model of institutionally grounded fellowship design, using letters of intent with participating universities and fellows to clarify expectations around selection, collaboration and the aims of the fellowship.

2. University of Alberta: Disrupted and Displaced Palestinian Scholars and Students initiative

The University of Alberta's Disrupted and Displaced Palestinian Scholars and Students initiative provides a broader institutional model of support. It includes student bursaries, a restricted fund for Palestinian students and scholars, public lectures, collaborative symposia and a Virtual Scholars Program beginning in Winter 2026. The initiative is guided by a DPSS committee and works in coordination with external community partners and the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza. Its significance is that it connects student support, scholar support, research continuity and public academic engagement within a university-wide structure. It also shows how virtual fellowships can be embedded within longer-term institutional and funding frameworks, rather than operating only as short-term emergency responses.

3. University of St Andrews: Radical Urban Lab Gaza Fellowship

The Radical Urban Lab (RUL) at the University of St Andrews has piloted a virtual RUL-Gaza Fellowship for a postgraduate Palestinian scholar from Gaza. The fellowship is developed in collaboration with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza and draws on the model of support outlined in the Fobzu guide. It is designed for fields such as urban studies, decolonial thought, genocide and scholasticide studies, social and environmental justice and critical cultural geography. The pilot includes a stipend of £1,500, personalised mentorship, participation in RUL meetings, access to internal resources and opportunities to collaborate with a global network of scholars and practitioners. It is useful as an example of how a research lab or centre can begin with a targeted pilot and develop a model that may later expand into wider disciplinary collaboration.

4. University of Exeter: Virtual Scholars scheme

The University of Exeter's Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences has developed a Virtual Scholars scheme to provide remote affiliation and academic access for scholars affected by conflict, displacement or institutional disruption. Although it does not offer financial assistance, its relevance for Gaza lies in the importance of institutional email, library access, seminars and scholarly networks for academics whose ordinary academic infrastructures have been disrupted. The scheme has operated multiple rounds and currently lists around 70 virtual scholars across the faculty.

5. Cara Palestine Virtual Fellowship Programme

Cara's emerging Palestine Programme marks an important development in the virtual fellowship field. Its pilot is intended to establish a virtual fellowship framework for Palestinian academics at risk, linking Palestinian scholars facing severe disruption with the UK higher education sector and assessing the potential for a longer-term Palestine country programme. This signals a move from ad hoc virtual support towards dedicated programme infrastructure for Palestinian academic continuity, and recognises that support for Palestinian scholars requires coordination, host departments, governance and sustained institutional capacity.

Appendix IV: Examples of home-based scholarship models

1. Isnad

Insad is the most comprehensive current initiative providing scholarships to students studying at Gaza universities. It is a partnership between Taawon, the Emergency Committee's member universities, Al-Aqsa University, Al-Azhar University-Gaza and the Islamic University of Gaza, their affiliated colleges, and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Higher Education. Since 2024, Isnad has supported 6,274 students, with 2,261 students graduating and joining the job market. The programme aims to deliver 30,000 scholarships over two semesters, enabling 15,000 students to continue distance learning, with a funding goal of US\$16 million. By channeling support directly through Gaza universities, Isnad is designed to support both student access and the resilience of the higher education sector. Its importance lies in linking tuition support to institutional survival, helping students remain enrolled while supporting universities' ability to continue teaching and paying staff.

2. HESPAL

HESPAL, the Higher Education Scholarships for Palestinians programme, is an established example of an institution-anchored overseas scholarship model. Developed in partnership with Palestinian universities and supported by the British Council, it provides master's and doctoral opportunities for Palestinian university academic staff. The model links overseas study to institutional nomination, employment in a Palestinian university and a commitment to return and contribute to the Palestinian higher education sector. HESPAL is important because it treats scholarship support as part of long-term academic capacity building, rather than simply as individual mobility.

3. Palestine-Oxford Scholarship in Geography and the Environment

The Palestine-Oxford Scholarship in Geography and the Environment is a fully funded graduate scholarship based at the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment. Developed in collaboration with Friends of Palestinian Universities and in conversation with the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza, it targets current teaching assistants and early-career academics from Gaza universities. Its significance lies in the way it links overseas study to future staffing and research capacity in Gaza, while grounding the scholarship in a specific academic field and a host department with relevant expertise.

4. Friends of Palestinian Universities scholarship programme

Friends of Palestinian Universities, formerly Fobzu, has a longstanding scholarship programme supporting students at Palestinian universities. This has included support for students at Birzeit University and work in partnership with UNRWA to provide scholarships for Palestinian refugee students in Gaza. The programme is important as an example of external funding that

supports students to remain enrolled in Palestinian institutions, rather than assuming that meaningful support must take the form of overseas mobility.

5. Samir Foundation and Human Smile Medical Hub

The Samir Foundation supported medical education in Gaza through both financial aid and study infrastructure. Their financial aid initiative provides support to 361 medical students and 15 faculty members over six months, covering essential costs such as tuition fees, daily living expenses and transportation. This makes it a useful example of home-based support because it helps students remain in their programmes while also recognising the financial pressure facing faculty members who are central to continuing medical education. Alongside this, the organisations opened a medical hub in Gaza City in June 2025, described as the first dedicated educational space for medical students in the Gaza Strip. The hub provides uninterrupted electricity, high-speed internet and a stable study environment for exams, workshops and online learning. Taken together, these initiatives show how student support can combine financial aid with the practical infrastructure needed for continued study.

6. UK charities supporting scholarships at Palestinian universities

Several UK-based charities and foundations have supported students studying at Palestinian universities. The Hoping Foundation has provided grants to students completing academic courses in Palestine. The Hanoon Foundation, also known as the Al Quds Foundation for Medical Schools in Palestine, has provided undergraduate scholarships and bursaries for medical students in Palestine facing financial need. These programmes show how charitable giving can support local enrolment, professional training and student retention within Palestinian higher education.

7. Al-Quds Bard College and Education Above All Qatar Scholarship Programme

The Qatar Scholarship Programme at Al-Quds Bard College was developed through a partnership between the Education Above All Foundation in Doha and Bard College in New York. Launched in 2021, the programme provided 339 scholarships for underprivileged Palestinian students to pursue degrees at Al-Quds Bard College, part of Al-Quds University. It offers support at bachelor's and master's levels while enabling students to study at a Palestinian university and benefit from global academic exposure through the Al-Quds Bard partnership. It is useful as an example of international scholarship support that remains institutionally anchored in Palestine.

**“ We built these universities
from tents. And from tents,
with the support of our
friends, we will rebuild them
once again. ”**

— Unified Emergency Statement by Palestinian Academics
and Administrators of Gaza Universities, 29 May 2024