KHAZAR UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2030

Contents

Executive Summary

Khazar University's Strategic Development Strategy 2025-2030 sets out an ambitious and coherent transformation to become a research-intensive, innovation-driven, and globally connected university. It brings together research excellence, next-generation academic programs, AI-enabled education, internationalization, innovation and entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and institutional sustainability into one integrated agenda with clear priorities and measurable outcomes.

This unified framework positions Khazar University as:

- a national leader in advanced academic programs and academic quality;
- a regional hub for AI and the digital economy, neuroscience, and sustainability-focused education and research;
- a globally networked university with strong double-degree and joint-program ecosystems; and
- a socially engaged institution aligned with Azerbaijan's priorities for human capital development and digital-economic growth.

1. Vision

To be a globally recognized, research-intensive and innovation-driven university that shapes future knowledge, empowers ethical leaders, and contributes to sustainable societal development in Azerbaijan and beyond.

2. Mission

Khazar University advances knowledge through research excellence, transformative education, and societal engagement preparing students and scholars to lead in a digital, interconnected, and rapidly evolving world.

3. Core Values
- **Integrity** – Academic honesty and ethical responsibility
- **Excellence** – High standards in research, teaching, and service
- **Innovation** – Creativity, AI integration, and openness to change
- **Inclusivity** – Equity, diversity, and accessibility
- **Engagement** – Meaningful contribution to society
- **Collaboration** – Global and local partnerships

4. Strategic Pillars Overview

To translate the University's vision into measurable progress, the Strategy is structured around a set of interlinked strategic pillars. Each pillar consolidates a focused set of priorities, initiatives, and performance indicators, ensuring that implementation remains coherent, resourced, and monitorable across the 2025-2030 period.

While each pillar has distinct objectives, they are designed to operate as an integrated system. Progress in one area (for example, digital transformation) enables acceleration in others (such as research excellence and AI-enabled education). Together, the pillars provide a clear roadmap for institutional decision-making, investment prioritization, and accountability.

Pillar	Focus	Key Outcomes
I. Research Excellence	High-impact interdisciplinary research	40% publication growth
II. Teaching & Learning	AI-driven education	85% employability
III. Innovation	Entrepreneurship & industry	20 startups
IV. Internationalization	Global partnerships	25% international students
V. Digital Transformation	Smart campus	80% digitization
VI. Governance	Sustainability & QA	30% external funding

5. Strategic Pillars

5.1 Pillar I. Research Excellence & Global Scientific Impact

Strategic Goal. Transform Khazar University into a leading research university with strong international visibility, interdisciplinary strength, and open science leadership.

Rationale

Research excellence underpins institutional reputation, international rankings visibility, and national socio-economic development. Khazar University will prioritize interdisciplinary clusters where Azerbaijan and the region have strategic demand, and will strengthen open science, research integrity, and international grant competitiveness.

Strategic Directions

A. High-Impact Research Clusters

High-Impact Research Clusters are developed through a coordinated approach that concentrates expertise, infrastructure, and partnerships in priority areas with strong potential for international visibility and measurable impact. The University organizes research growth around thematic clusters, including Artificial Intelligence and Data Science; Cognitive and Behavioral Sciences; Neuroscience and Neurotechnology; Energy, Climate, and Sustainability; Digital Economy, Finance, and Business Analytics; and Education, Learning Sciences, and AI in Teaching. These clusters provide a structured platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, targeted investment, competitive grant activity, and the translation of research into societal and economic value.

B. Research Infrastructure & Open Science

Research infrastructure and open science are strengthened through coordinated measures that improve the quality, accessibility, and integrity of research outputs. The University modernizes the institutional repository (DSpace) to enhance discoverability, metadata standards, and long-term preservation of publications and research materials. Open-access publishing and research data management practices are expanded to support compliance, transparency, and wider dissemination of research. In parallel, responsible AI and research ethics frameworks are institutionalized to ensure that research activities meet high standards of integrity, confidentiality, and ethical practice.

C. Human Capital in Research

Human Capital in research is advanced through a set of coordinated measures. Key measures include AI-based research training; Postdoctoral and visiting scholar programs; and international mentoring and fellowships for early-career researchers.

D. International Research Collaboration

The University strengthen**s** international research collaboration through a coordinated set of initiatives and partnership mechanisms. Priority efforts focus on expanding engagement with major competitive funding and cooperation platforms, including Horizon Europe, ERC, NSF, TÜBİTAK, and Erasmus+. In parallel, the University develop**s** joint research centers and shares laboratories with strategic partner institutions to enable sustained collaboration, joint projects, and higher-impact outputs.

E. Research-Program Integration

Research-Program integration is strengthened through a coordinated set of institutional measures that connect research capacity directly to teaching and curriculum development. Priority actions include the establishment and development of neuroscience laboratories, the Computational Mathematics & Modeling Center, and the Digital Economy & Innovation Policy Observatory as platforms for research-led learning, student engagement in projects, and interdisciplinary program enhancement.

KPIs (targets by 2030)

- Scopus/WoS-indexed publications: 30-40% increase
- Share of publications in Q1/Q2 journals: 50% growth
- International research grants: 10+ awarded
- Interdisciplinary research laboratories: 3 established and operational
- Open-access repository: 1,000+ items deposited

5.2 Pillar II. Transformative Teaching, Learning & Student Success

Strategic Goal. Deliver future-oriented, AI-driven, student-centered education aligned with global standards and labor-market needs.

Rationale

Transformative teaching aligns academic quality, student satisfaction, and employability outcomes. The University will embed digital and AI competencies in all programs, scale experiential learning, and strengthen advising and learning analytics to improve retention, completion, and graduate success.

Strategic Directions

A. New-Generation Academic Programs (2026-2030)

Khazar University introduces 8-10 forward-looking academic programs that respond to emerging labor-market demand, national development priorities, and global disciplinary trends. This initiative positions the University as a national leader in academic innovation, strengthening research-teaching linkages, interdisciplinarity, and graduate employability**.**

Flagship degree programs
1. BSc in Neuroscience
2. BSc in Computational Mathematics
3. BSc in Digital Economy
4. BSc in Data Science & Applied Analytics
5. BSc in Fintech & Financial Engineering
6. BSc in Behavioral Economics & Decision Sciences
7. BA in Global Communication & Digital Media
8. BSc in Cybersecurity & Information Assurance

B. International Dual-Degree Pathways

Double-degree and dual-degree pathways are used as a strategic mechanism to deepen international academic integration and position Khazar University as a regional leader in globally aligned education. Priority development focuses on scalable program pairings in high-demand fields, including Business Administration with Digital Economy, Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence, Mathematics with Computational Science, Psychology with Cognitive Neuroscience, International Relations with Global Public Policy, and Tourism Management with Sustainable Destination Analytics. Progress is monitored through the KPI framework set out in this Strategy.

C. Curriculum Transformation

Curriculum transformation is advanced through a coordinated set of measures that modernize teaching and learning across the University. This includes the adoption of AI-enhanced pedagogy, the development of personalized learning pathways, and the deployment of learning analytics dashboards to support evidence-based improvement. Digital competencies are embedded across all programs to ensure consistent graduate readiness for a rapidly evolving labor market.

D. Experiential & Research-Based Learning

Experiential and research-based learning is strengthened through a coordinated set of measures that embed real-world practice and inquiry-led learning across academic programs. Core approaches include capstone projects that integrate disciplinary knowledge with applied problem-solving, structured internships and industry placements that deepen workplace readiness, and undergraduate research modules that develop research skills and academic integrity. Simulations and fieldwork are expanded to provide discipline-appropriate practical exposure and to enhance graduate competencies.

E. Faculty Development

Faculty development is strengthened through coordinated measures that enhance teaching quality, assessment, and innovation in pedagogy. Central to this work is the Center for Teaching & Learning Innovation, which serves as the institutional platform for professional learning, peer exchange, and instructional improvement. In parallel, targeted training in AI-enabled pedagogy and assessment is implemented to build staff capability in responsible and effective use of emerging technologies

F. Student Success Ecosystem

The Student Success Ecosystem is delivered through a coordinated set of measures that support students from entry to graduation and a successful transition into employment. It includes structured academic advising and mentoring to guide progression, targeted support, and timely interventions. Digital retention and performance analytics are deployed to identify risk patterns early and to enable data-informed academic support. A stronger career readiness and employability focus is embedded across the student journey through enhanced career services, skills development, and sustained employer engagement.

KPIs (targets by 2030)

- Double/dual-degree portfolio: 6+ active programs
- Student participation: 20% of students engaged in joint or double/dual-degree programs
- Joint research infrastructure: 3-4 joint research centers established with strategic partners
- Student experience: ≥90% overall satisfaction
- Graduate outcomes: ≥85% employment within 6 months of graduation
- Curriculum integration: 100% of programs include defined digital and/or AI-enabled learning components

5.3 Pillar III. Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Industry Collaboration

Strategic Goal. Establish Khazar University as a national hub for innovation and applied research.

Rationale

Innovation and entrepreneurship convert research capacity and human talent into economic value, improved public services, and scalable societal solutions. Through this Strategy, Khazar University strengthens the institutional pathways that move ideas from laboratory and classroom into practice by building a coherent innovation ecosystem. This includes structured incubation and acceleration, technology transfer and intellectual property management, and systematic industry co-creation that increases the relevance, uptake, and impact of applied research while enabling student and graduate entrepreneurship.

Strategic Directions

A. Khazar Innovation & Entrepreneurship Hub

The University develops the Khazar Innovation & Entrepreneurship Hub as the central institutional platform for innovation programming, partnership coordination, and venture support.

B. Start-up Incubators and Accelerators

Start-up incubators and accelerators are established to provide structured mentoring, prototyping support, market validation, and investor readiness for students, staff, and alumni.

C.Technology Transfer & IP Office

A Technology Transfer & IP Office is created to manage invention disclosure, IP protection, licensing, and commercialization, and to support contract research, joint development activities, and spin-out formation.

D. Industry Co-Creation Partnerships

Industry co-creation is expanded through strategic partnerships with organizations such as SOCAR, BP, PASHA, Deloitte, EY, Visa, and Mastercard via joint applied projects, innovation challenges, internships, and collaborative innovation laboratories.

KPIs (targets by 2030)

- Start-up pipeline: 20 start-ups incubated through university supported mechanisms
- Industry-funded portfolio: 50+ industry-funded applied projects delivered
- National convening: an Annual National Innovation Summit hosted to showcase innovation outputs, strengthen partnerships, and mobilize the ecosystem

5.4 Pillar IV. Internationalization & Global Engagement

Strategic Goal. Build a globally connected academic community that advances academic quality, research collaboration, and the University's international reputation.

Rationale

Internationalization strengthens teaching and learning through global perspectives, raises research capacity through collaborative networks, and increases institutional relevance in an interconnected knowledge economy. The University deepens strategic partnerships, expands student and staff mobility, and implements targeted international recruitment and branding to increase diversity and international experience across the academic community.

Strategic Directions

A. Global Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships are expanded and diversified across key regions and systems, including the EU, Türkiye, the UK, China, Korea, Singapore, and the USA, with a focus on high-impact collaboration in priority academic and research areas.

B. Mobility and Exchange Pathways

Mobility is scaled through established schemes and networks, including Erasmus+, Fulbright, and DAAD to increase inbound and outbound exchanges and strengthen joint academic activity.

C. International Recruitment and Brand Positioning

International recruitment and institutional branding are strengthened through coordinated outreach, digital marketing, partner-channel development, and clear value propositions for prospective students and staff.

D. International Academic Convening

The University increases its convening role by hosting international conferences, thematic workshops, and summer schools that reinforce academic networks, visibility, and knowledge exchange.

KPIs (targets by 2030)

- Global Strategic Partnerships: 15 new strategic MoUs concluded and activated

- Mobility and Exchange Pathways: 25-30% international students as a share of total enrolment
- International Recruitment and Brand Positioning: year-on-year growth in international applications and conversion rates
- International Academic Convening: ≥30% of the University's annual academic events portfolio is internationally oriented (international conferences, workshops, and summer schools), tracked through the KPI dashboard.

5.5 Pillar V. Digital Transformation, Smart Campus & Open Infrastructure

Strategic Goal. Build a next-generation digital learning and research ecosystem that enables high-quality teaching, advanced research workflows, and efficient, transparent university operations through modern infrastructure and trusted data

Rationale

Digital transformation strengthens the University's capacity to deliver student-centered, technology-enabled education while improving institutional effectiveness and accountability. A smart campus model supports data-informed management, streamlined services, and better experience for students and staff. At the same time, strengthened cybersecurity and data governance protect institutional assets and ensure compliance, while responsible AI safeguards academic integrity and builds trust in the use of emerging technologies.

Strategic Directions

A. Smart Campus and Analytics

The University deploys smart campus systems that support automated attendance, safety and access management, and real-time operational and academic analytics to improve decision-making and service delivery.

B. Immersive Learning and Simulation

VR/AR laboratories are developed to expand hands-on, simulation-based learning and applied research, particularly in disciplines that benefit from high-fidelity environments and practical skill development.

C. Digital Knowledge and Open Scholarship

Digital library services and open scholarship centers are strengthened to broaden access to high-quality resources, improve digital research support, and increase the visibility and usability of institutional research outputs.

D. Cybersecurity, Data Governance, and Responsible AI

The University institutionalizes cybersecurity controls, clear data governance standards, and responsible AI practices to ensure secure operations, reliable data for decision-making, and ethical adoption of AI across learning, research, and administration.

KPIs (targets by 2030)

- Smart Campus and Analytics: Full smart campus implementation achieved by 2029, with integrated analytics dashboards supporting core operational and academic decision-making.
- Immersive Learning and Simulation (VR/AR): 3–5 VR/AR laboratories established and operational, with VR/AR-enabled learning integrated into priority programs.
- Digital Knowledge and Open Scholarship: 24/7 remote access to core digital library services, with expanded digital collections and research support.
- Cybersecurity, Data Governance, and Responsible AI: 100% of core systems covered by formal data governance and a documented responsible-AI review process for AI-enabled tools.
- Digital Operations: ≥80% of core administrative and academic processes digitized end-to-end.

5.6 Pillar VI. Institutional Excellence, Governance & Financial Sustainability

Strategic Goal. Ensure robust governance, human capital excellence, and financial resilience to support sustainable institutional growth and effective delivery of the Strategy.

Rationale

Institutional excellence depends on clear governance, transparent decision-making, and accountable performance management supported by reliable data. Financial resilience requires diversified and predictable revenue streams beyond core tuition income. This strategic area strengthens quality assurance and accreditation, modernizes human capital systems, and expands external funding and philanthropic capacity to enhance institutional stability, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Strategic Directions.

A. **Transparent, Digital Governance**

Governance processes are modernized through transparent and digitally enabled systems that improve efficiency, traceability, and evidence-based decision-making.

B. **Performance-Based Faculty Development and Evaluation**

Faculty evaluation and development are aligned with institutional priorities and academic standards through clear performance expectations, fair review mechanisms, and targeted professional support.

C. **International Accreditation**

International accreditation pathways are pursued for priority schools and programs (e.g., AACSB, FIBAA, ABET) to strengthen global credibility, academic quality, and stakeholder confidence.

D. Diversified Revenue and Partnerships

Financial resilience is reinforced through endowments, alumni philanthropy, and corporate partnerships that support scholarships, research, and strategic initiatives.

KPIs (targets by 2030).

- External funding: 30% increase
- Endowed support: 10 endowed chairs and/or scholarships established

- International accreditation: 2 accreditations achieved
- Staff satisfaction: ≥85%

6. Implementation & Monitoring Framework

Implementation is operationalized through annual action plans developed by schools, academic departments, research/administrative centers and other units ensuring that strategic priorities are translated into measurable initiatives with clear ownership and timelines. Oversight is provided by a Strategic Steering Committee chaired by the Rector, which reviews delivery progress, addresses cross-unit dependencies, and ensures institutional alignment. Performance is monitored through the KPIs that provide transparent, up-to-date tracking of targets and milestones, supported by biannual KPI audits to verify data integrity and consistency of measurement. An Annual Strategic Report consolidates results, highlights evidence of improvement, and sets priorities for the next implementation cycle.

7. Alignment with Global Frameworks

The Strategy is designed to maintain strong alignment with internationally recognized frameworks that guide quality, relevance, and global engagement in higher education. It contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by embedding sustainability, inclusion, and societal impact across education, research, and partnerships. It is aligned with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through principles of academic standards, transparency, and quality assurance. It also reflects OECD Education 2030 priorities by strengthening future-oriented competencies, digital transformation, and lifelong learning readiness.
Finally, the Strategy supports international cooperation and research competitiveness through engagement with Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, which serve as key platforms for mobility, collaboration, and external funding.

8. Expected Outcomes by 2030

By 2030, Khazar University is positioned as a globally recognized institution with demonstrable progress in academic quality, research performance, and international engagement, including recognition among the world's top 800 universities.

Global Positioning and Reputation

- Recognized among the world's top 800 universities
- Established international academic brand with visibility in QS/THE indicators
- Recognized regional knowledge hub linking Europe, Türkiye, and Asia

Academic Quality & Student Outcomes

- Internationally benchmarked programs aligned with EHEA and OECD Education 2030
- consistently high level of graduate employability within six months of graduation
- High student satisfaction, retention, and completion rates
- Research-led, experiential learning embedded across all programs
- Graduates equipped with digital, analytical, and global competencies

Research Performance & Impact

- Sustained growth in Scopus/WoS and Q1-Q2 publications
- Strong interdisciplinary research footprint in Artificial Intelligence & Data Science, Digital Economy & Fintech, Neuroscience & Cognitive Sciences, Sustainability & Climate Systems
- Active participation in major international research frameworks
- Measurable research impact on policy, industry, and innovation

Internationalization & Global Connectivity

- Fully operational double-degree and joint-program ecosystem
- Significant inbound and outbound student and faculty mobility
- International graduates competitive in global labor markets
- Long-term strategic partnerships with leading global universities

Leadership In Ai, Digital Economy & Neuroscience

- National and regional recognition as a center of excellence
- Flagship programs producing high-demand graduates for digital sectors
- Strong integration of teaching, research, and innovation
- Active innovation pipelines linking labs, industry, and start-ups

Digital Maturity & Student-Centered Operations

- Fully digitized academic and administrative services
- Trusted institutional data supporting governance and quality assurance

- Smart campus systems enhancing efficiency, safety, and learning support
- Inclusive, accessible, and student-centered learning environment

Societal & Economic Impact (Azerbaijan)

- Demonstrable contribution to national human-capital development
- Applied research addressing digital economy, education reform, sustainability
- Strong partnerships with industry, government, and civil society
- Graduates and research outputs aligned with national development priorities
- Recognized role as a knowledge anchor institution for long-term growth

9. Risk Management

Khazar University maintains an active Strategic Risk Management system to protect delivery of the Strategic Development Strategy 2025–2030 and to ensure that performance commitments, quality standards, and compliance obligations are met. Risk management is integrated into the University's governance and implementation architecture, directly aligned to the Strategic Pillars, annual action plans, and the KPI framework, so that risks are identified early, managed consistently, and monitored through evidence-based reporting.

A Strategic Risk Register is maintained as a live instrument. Each material risk is documented with a clear risk statement, defined impact pathways on pillar outcomes and KPI achievement, a named risk owner, existing controls, and time-bound mitigation actions with measurable deliverables. The Strategic Steering Committee (chaired by the Rector) reviews the Strategic Risk Register at least biannually, assesses risk movements (likelihood/impact), validates mitigation progress, and escalates priority risks for Executive decision where thresholds are exceeded or where cross-unit intervention is required.

To support consistent decision-making, the University defines risk appetite statements across key risk themes, including academic quality, research integrity, financial sustainability, compliance, cybersecurity and data protection, reputation, and health and safety. Risk appetite levels guide whether risks are accepted, mitigated, transferred, or avoided and provide a common basis for escalation and de-escalation as conditions change. Where risks fall outside the agreed risk appetite, corrective actions are prioritized within implementation plans and resources accordingly.

A concise risk dashboard using RAG status is used in routine leadership meetings to provide visibility of: (i) risk trajectory and emerging risks, (ii) overdue mitigation actions and accountability gaps, (iii) data gaps that affect KPI credibility, and (iv) risks that require strategic trade-offs or re-phasing of initiatives. All strategic projects and major initiatives include risk and issue logs, ensuring that delivery risks are managed at project level and aggregated into institutional oversight, with mitigations embedded into schedules, budgets, and change-management plans.

Risk management is linked to institutional assurance mechanisms, including internal quality assurance reviews, accreditation and compliance monitoring, and internal audit processes where applicable. Lessons learned from risk events are translated into policy updates, staff training, and process improvements, strengthening institutional resilience and reducing recurrence.

Strategic Risk Summary (aligned to pillars and KPI delivery)

Risk	Potential Impact	Primary Mitigation
Funding volatility and delays in external grants	Slows delivery of pillar outcomes and jeopardizes KPI achievement, particularly in research, labs, and internationalization.	Diversify funding sources; strengthen pre-award/post-award grant support; prioritize initiatives with scalable resource profiles and staged delivery.
Talent attraction and retention challenges	Limits capacity to deliver new programs, research outputs, and international initiatives; increases operational bottlenecks.	Competitive development pathways; performance-based recognition; international mentoring; targeted recruitment for priority fields; retention actions linked to HR analytics.
Technology, cybersecurity, and service continuity risks	Disrupts digital services and undermines trust; creates compliance exposure; delays smart-campus and digital transformation milestones.	Formal data governance; strengthened cybersecurity controls; periodic security reviews and penetration testing where appropriate; staff awareness training; incident-response readiness.
Change management and adoption gaps	Low uptake of new systems and processes	Structured communication and training; phased

	reduces impact and weakens KPI performance despite technical implementation.	rollouts; clear ownership; user feedback loops through the QA cycle; adoption metrics on the KPI dashboard.
Partnership delivery and compliance risks	Joint programs, mobility, and industry co-creation may underperform or create legal/QA exposure.	Standardized MoU and joint-program governance; legal and QA review; partner accountability, milestones, and exit clauses; periodic partnership performance reviews.
Data quality and KPI inconsistency	Weakens credibility of reporting and slows corrective action; prevents accurate performance management.	Standard KPI definitions ("KPI passports"); digital dashboard; biannual KPI audits; evidence requirements; corrective actions and data stewardship responsibilities.