

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR DETERMINING QUALITY STANDARDS FOR GRADUATE COMPETENCIES IN IMPROVING SOFT SKILLS IN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Improving the quality of education in higher education is an urgent need for immediate improvement, especially in the soft skills of graduates. The purpose of this research is to find out an overview of what Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor does in designing principles and strategies for determining the quality standards of graduate competencies in soft skills. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study with data analysis techniques following the concept of Milles and Hubberman. The results showed that in building graduates' soft skills, Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor based it on a religious foundation, by teaching Islamic studies that must be taken by students for four semesters. Students are equipped with teaching and understanding of *aqidah*, sharia, morals, and Islamic Worldview. In addition, students are also strengthened spiritually by participating in a mandatory activity, "*Bina Baca Al-Qur'an Intensif*" to improve their relationship with the Al-Qur'an and also improve the quality of their worship. All activities are monitored directly under the supervision of the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

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INTRODUCTION

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia (2005) has made reference standards for graduate competencies for educational institutions. These graduate competency standards are used as assessment guidelines in determining the graduation of students from each educational unit. The competencies expected of graduates include attitudes, knowledge and skills. In Pasal 26 point 4, the competency standards for graduates at the higher education level aim to prepare students to become members of society who have noble character, knowledge, skills, independence, and attitudes to

discover, develop, and apply science, technology, and art, which are beneficial to humanity. The government authorises each university to set competency standards for its students.

Government regulations that give universities the authority to develop the competencies of their graduates are an opportunity that must be utilised properly, especially for Islamic universities (Kemendikbud, 2021). Graduates of Islamic universities should be better than other universities because basically education in Islam has a speciality in determining the competence of graduates. Education in Islam

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sees humans as objects of education not only in terms of skills and intelligence, but also in terms of the three elements that exist in humans, namely body, mind, and spirit. These three elements must be educated proportionally in the education process (Tafsir, 2012).

However, in reality, many universities prioritise the quality of their graduates to be quickly absorbed by the world of work or companies. Thus, a student is expected to work immediately after graduating from college. On the other hand, there is still a gap between what the industry expects and the competencies possessed by students who have graduated. Some competencies need to be improved in a research report, namely, English, computers, teamwork, written communication, oral communication, community empowerment, and leadership (Darwis, 2018; Rofaida & Gautama, 2019).

However, there are important things that need to be taken more seriously, precisely in Islamic universities are still weak in soft skill competencies, the formation of good attitudes and character (Siswadi, Radiman, Jufrizen, & Muslih, 2020). The formation of good attitudes and character is a competency that cannot be ignored. It is useless for a college graduate to have excellent expertise, but he does not have a good attitude and character. So, the formation of soft skill competencies must be a concern for university managers.

Nowadays, companies do not only look at the high scores of college graduates who apply for jobs. Many considerations are seen by the company to be able to accept the person to become one of its employees. A survey published by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, USA, in 2002 in large companies listed competencies that are seen as beneficial to the company, namely communication skills, honesty/integrity, cooperation skills, interpersonal skills, ethics, motivation/initiative, adaptability, analytical power, computer skills, organizational skills, detail orientation, leadership confidence, friendly, polite, thoughtful, achievement index, creative, humorous and entrepreneurial skills ([Program Studi Manajemen UAD], 2012).

The importance of soft skills as a fulfilment of the labour market encourages universities in various countries to support the academic success of their first-year students (Emanuel, Ricchiardi, Sanseverino, & Ghislieri, 2021). Another study revealed that soft skills are favoured over hard skills in many energy sector companies in the United States (Lyu & Liu, 2021). Soft skills are starting to be integrated into teacher education programs in Malaysian public universities (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015).

Other research reveals the importance of Higher Education Institutions needing to work together not only to raise students' awareness of the importance of soft skills but also to guide them in taking individual responsibility for acquiring and developing these essential skills in order to continuously adapt to the ever-changing labour market and improve their employability (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Seeing the importance of soft skills as a competency that every student must possess, this research investigates the practice of determining principles and strategies in determining the quality standards of graduate competencies at the Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study, in which the researcher analyses and examines the principles and strategies of Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor, one of the oldest Islamic universities in Bogor, in determining the quality standards of its students' graduate competencies. The researcher tried to explore related phenomena in the field to get accurate and reliable information about the research theme. The researcher analysed documents and interviewed several informants to obtain information.

To support the validity of the data, researchers went directly and tried to be one with the object of research to make observations related to the phenomenon that became the topic of research. The data analysis technique was carried out following the concept of Miles and Huberman (1994). Data analysis was carried out in stages, starting from data collection, namely the collection of some

data consisting of the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, the data is reduced according to the needs or focus of the research so that it can be presented adequately. The final step is research conclusions as research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor

Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor (IKUB) is one of the Private Islamic Universities in Indonesia that has been founded by scholars in Bogor and is the oldest Islamic Campus in Bogor City. The campus is located at Jl. K.H. Sholeh Iskandar Raya Km. 2, Kedung Badak, Bogor 16161, West Java. This campus was established on 7 Dhul Qaidah 1380 Hijri coinciding with 23 April 1961 AD in accordance with the Decree of the Executive Board of the Ibnu Chaldun Foundation Jakarta No. 31/DPP/1961 dated 23 April 1961. The founders of IKUB are Dr Marzuki Mahdi, KH Sholeh Iskandar, R.H Soelaeman Affandi Kartadjoemena, Ir Prijono Hardjosentono, Djunus Dali, Ir Imam Rahardjo, RSA. Suwigyo, and H.M. Djunaedi.

Ibn Khaldun University has a vision to become a superior Islamic and technology-based university for the benefit of Indonesian and global communities. The missions formulated are: (1) organising an excellent higher education programme based on Islamic

values; (2) organising an excellent higher education programme based on Islamic values; (3) developing and applying science, technology and art for the welfare of society as a manifestation of Islamic values; (4) developing Islamic da'wah to increase faith, knowledge and charity in realising and Islam as a blessing for all nature; and (5) developing cooperation in national, regional and international scope in the implementation of the University's Caturdharma programme (Mujahidin, Sa'diyah, Muniroh, Supriadi, & Susetyo, 2022).

The objectives to be achieved by Ibn Khaldun University are: (1) Producing intellectuals who are superior, noble, creative, innovative, relevant, and become a driver of the dynamics of community progress; (2) Producing science, technology, and art that can improve the quality of community welfare in accordance with Islamic teachings; (3) Producing methods and actions of Islamic da'wah from all University residents in campus life and in society; (4) Establishing cooperation in national, regional, and international scope in the implementation of the University's Caturdharma programme (Mujahidin et al., 2022).

Currently Ibn Khaldun University Bogor has 6 Faculties and 1 Postgraduate School with 33 study programmes, the details are as follows:

Table: 1 Faculties and Study Programmes at Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor

No	Faculty	Study Programmes
1	Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	Out of School Education Study Programme English Education Study Programme Education Technology Study Programme Fashion Design Vocational Education Study Programme
2	Faculty of Law	Law Study Programme
3	Faculty of Economics	Management Study Programme Accounting Study Programme Digital Business Study Programme International Trade Study Programme Finance and Banking Study Programme

4	Faculty of Islamic Studies	Ahwal Al Syakhshiyah Study Programme Islamic Education Study Programme Islamic Broadcasting Communication Study Programme Islamic Economics Study Programme Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Programme Counselling and Islamic Education Study Programme Al-Quran and Tafsir Science Study Programme Hajj and Umrah Management Study Programme
5	Faculty of Engineering	Civil Engineering Study Programme Mechanical Engineering Study Programme Electrical Engineering Study Programme Informatics Engineering Study Programme Information System Study Programme Agriculture and Biosystem Engineering Study Programme Environmental Science Study Programme
6	Faculty of Health Sciences	Public Health Study Programme Nutrition Science Study Programme
7	Graduate School	Master of Islamic Education Study Programme Master of Islamic Economics Master of Management Study Programme Master of Education Technology Study Programme Doctor of Islamic Education Study Programme Sharia Economics Doctoral Study Programme

The name Ibn Khaldun University was inspired by the name of a Muslim scientist who lived in the 14th century AD. The full name of the Muslim scientist is Abu Zaid Abdurrahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, born in Tunis on 1 Ramadan 732 Hijri / 27 May 1332 AD and died in Cairo, Egypt, on 25 Ramadan 808 Hijri/19 March 1406. Ibn Khaldun is known to the world as a pioneer of the Philosophy of History and Sociology which led him to world recognition as a pioneer of the Philosophy of History and the Father of World Sociology. Ibn Khaldun also has extensive knowledge in other fields, such as economics, education, logic, mathematics, astrology and others. His monumental book and recognised by world scientists is *Mukkadimah*, which is the first volume of the book *Al-I'bar*. The uniqueness of Ibn Khaldun is that he did not recognise homeland and nationality in a narrow sense. As a "cosmopolite" destined to be born for all nations of the Islamic world. The definition of

homeland for him is very broad. Wherever it is in the vast Islamic region, there is its homeland (M. R. Ahmad, 2011; Z. Ahmad, 2003)

Quality Principles of Graduate Competencies at Ibn Khaldun University

The main principle that needs to be considered in preparing graduate competencies is the attitude and values of piety and faith in God Almighty. Piety and faith are the foundation in developing graduates' soft skills that are needed in the world of work. If the value of piety and faith is weak, what happens is the imperfection of other competencies. It can be said that the value of piety and faith is the core of the quality of graduates, especially in Islamic universities. This is certainly in accordance with the ideology of the State and the culture of the Indonesian Nation which cannot be separated in the education process. This is also in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the

Republic of Indonesia Number 3 (2020) concerning National Higher Education Standards.

The quality of graduates is a serious concern of campus officials. Didin Hafidhuddin as chairman of the IKUB Senate always pays attention to the quality of graduates. He always relates the quality of graduates to be achieved at Ibn Khaldun University is to become a figure of Ulil Albaab. His view is based on three considerations: First, in terms of Islamic teachings, knowledge is learned in order to improve the quality of faith, charity (including worship) and service to society. Second, in terms of institutional aspects, Ibn Khaldun University is an Islamic university that has the motto of faith, knowledge and charity, Third, in terms of community conditions, improving student

competence on campus is expected to have strong implications in social life (Hafidhuddin, 2021).

The figure of Ulil Albaab, in Hafidhuddin's view, describes a superior person, a scientist who has deep knowledge, and has strong personal integrity and *akhlakul Karimah*. He detailed this by taking the explanation of the term Ulil Albaab in the Quran. Ulil Albaab is a figure who has the ability to combine thinking and dhikr well, thus giving birth to a strong awareness of faith that is implemented in daily life, this is based on QS Ali Imran verses 190-194. Ulil Albaab is also a figure who is able to distinguish the good (*thayyib*) from the bad (*al khobits*) and always sides with the good, even though the dominant condition is the bad. This is based on QS. Al Maidah verse 100.

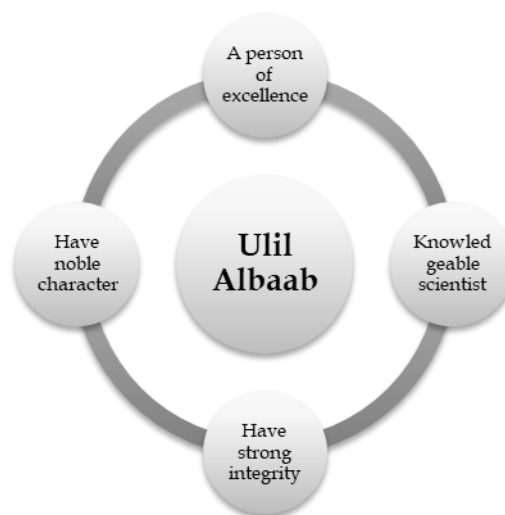


Figure 1: Human figure of Ulil Albaab

Another figure of Ulil Albaab is to have a strong commitment to preach to improve his society, this is based on QS. Ibrahim verse 52. The so-called Ulil Albaab also has a seriousness in studying science, *tanziliyyah* (sharia sciences) and *kauniyyah* (natural and social humanitarian sciences) based on QS Ali Imran verse 7, using part of his night time, in addition to rest, also for *qiyaamul lail*, dhikr, prayer, reading the Qur'an hoping for the pleasure of Allah SWT. and the salvation of life in the eternal Hereafter based on QS. az-Zumar verse 9, and always willing to listen to various opinions, tolerance and *tasamuh* towards various views despite differences

(not in the field of faith and religious principles) and trying to find the best alternative based on QS Az-Zumar verse 18 (Hafidhuddin, 2021).

The quality principle of graduate competence at Ibn Khaldun University is implemented in learning activities based on the Core Curriculum (National Curriculum) and Institutional Curriculum. A core curriculum is a group of study materials and lessons that must be covered in a study program formulated in a nationally applicable curriculum, consisting of a group of Personality Development courses and contains educational objectives, knowledge

content and minimum abilities that must be achieved by students in completing a Study Program. The institutional curriculum is part of the higher education curriculum, which is an addition prepared under the circumstances and needs of the environment and the characteristics of the university concerned. The structure of curriculum materials at the Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor, under educational objectives, is grouped into five groups, consisting of: First, the Personality Development Course Group, which consists of courses that are relevant to the purpose of enriching insight, deepening the intensity of understanding and appreciation. Second, the Scientific and Skills Group of courses consists of courses relevant to strengthening mastery and broadening the horizons of scientific competence based on competitive and comparative advantages of implementing the study program. Third, the Working Expertise Group of courses consisting of relevant courses aims to strengthen mastery and broaden the horizons of scientific competence

based on competitive and comparative advantages of the study program concerned (Mujahidin, 2018).

Strategy for Improving Graduates' Soft Skills at Ibn Khaldun University Bogor

In order to improve the spiritual quality of graduates, Ibn Khaldun University Bogor has formulated several strategies to strengthen students' spirituality in several steps, including the obligation to attend Islamic studies lectures for eight semesters, participating in "*Bina Baca Al-Qur'an Intensif*" activities and other religious activities. Islamic studies lectures are divided into four courses consisting of Islamic Studies of creed, sharia, morals, and Islamic disciplines. The four courses must be followed by undergraduate students and will not graduate if they do not pass one of these courses. The material content in the four courses is as follows:

Table 2: Islamic Studies courses at Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor

No	Course Content	Material Topic
1	Islamic Studies Aqidah	The Concept of Creed in Islam The Scope of Islamic Faith Tawhid And Its Application in Life Things That Can Damage Faith The Essence of Syirik The Concept of Religious Tolerance in Islam Faith In Allah and Its Application in Life Faith In Angels and Its Application in Life Faith In the Book and Its Application in Life Faith In the Messenger and Its Application in Life Faith In the Last Day and Its Application in Life Faith In Destiny and Its Application in Life
2	Sharia Islamic Studies	The Universality of Islamic Law Basis and Source of Islamic Law Maqoshid Shari'ah Pillars of Islam Thaharoh, Fard Prayers, sunnah and its wisdom Zakat Fasting (obligatory and Sunnah) and its Wisdom Hajj, Umrah and its Wisdom Islamic family law The concept of leadership in Islam

		Basic Concepts of Akhlak in Islam
		Akhlak and Their Implementation towards Allah
		Akhlak and its Implementation towards the Quran.
		Akhlak and their implementation towards the Prophet Muhammad.
		Akhlak and Implementation towards Both Parents
		Akhlak and Implementation towards Family
		Akhlak and Implementation towards Nature
3	Islamic Studies Akhlak	Akhlak and Implementation towards oneself.
		Akhlak and Implementation as a Knowledge Seeker
		Akhlak and Implementation towards Lecturers
		Akhlak and Implementation towards the Community.
		Akhlak and Implementation in Research and Scientific Writing.
		Implementation of Good Akhlak (Honesty, Justice, Generosity, Courage and Responsibility) in Life.
		The Impact of Mazmumah Akhlak in Life.
4	Islamic disciplines	Studying various disciplines in the Islamic perspective

The Islamic studies course of *akidah* is compulsory for all undergraduate students in the first semester. The purpose of this course is to form a firm belief in Allah Swt., so that students are faithful and pious. Islamic studies courses in sharia, morals, and Islamic disciplines are compulsory for all students, except students from the faculty of Islamic studies. Sharia Islamic studies courses provide provisions for students to become good servants of God, who carry out what is commanded by God and stay away from what is prohibited. Islamic studies courses in morals aim to equip students to be good human beings with other creatures in this world with religious demands. Islamic disciplines courses are a form of Islamisation in various aspects of the scientific field. As for the master and doctoral levels, the compulsory courses that must be taken are Islamic worldview and *Tafsir Hadist Maudhu'i*.

As for the "Intensive Al-Qur'an Reading Development" activity, it must be followed by all regular class undergraduate students. This activity is in the form of improving the recitation of the Qur'an and the practice of Fardhu 'Ain worship guidance. Students will be grouped into several categories in reading the Qur'an: advanced category, skilled, basic level, pre-basic level 2 and pre-basic level 1. The advanced level is a group of students who can read the Qur'an

with *tartil*, master and apply practical *tajweed*, master the theory of *tajweed*, and pronounce letters according to their exit (*Makhorijul huruf*). The skilled level is a group of students who can read the Qur'an with *tartil*, master practical *tajweed* relatively correctly, do not know/know little *tajweed* theory, and can pronounce letters in accordance with their exit (*Makhorijul huruf*). Meanwhile, the basic level student group is those who can read *hijaiah* letters fluently, practical *tajweed* is wrong a lot, and there are still many mistakes in pronouncing letters (*Makhorijul Huruf*). The pre-basic level 2 student group is those who can read the connected *hijaiah* letters, read them slowly or stammer, read the connected *hijaiah* letters, and the *makhraj* is not correct. The pre-basic level 1 group of students are those who do not know the connected *hijaiah* letters, can read the independent *hijaiah* letters but are still confused, and can read the independent *hijaiah* letters (Al-Wahid, 2023; Basri, 2023).

In realising the quality standards of graduates, Ibn Khaldun University Bogor has created a special institution to carry out quality assurance and internal audits. In the Quality Standards document that has been published (2021) it is explained that graduate learning outcomes must refer to the description of learning outcomes, Indonesian National Qualification Framework (INQF)

graduates; and have equivalence with the qualification levels in INQF. The strategies carried out by Ibn Khaldun University Bogor are (1) developing Guidelines for the Formulation of Graduate Learning Outcomes in accordance with National Higher Education Standards and Islamic Education Guidelines. (2) The Education Development Institute (EDI) or similar units coordinate and oversee the process of formulating the Graduate Learning Outcomes of study programmes to match the qualifications and levels of study programmes. (3) EDI or similar units conduct socialisation to all stakeholders related to academic standards. (4) Study programmes and the Faculty Quality Assurance Unit/Group organise annual Monitoring and Evaluation for monitoring and measurement. (5) The Quality Assurance Agency conducts internal quality audits annually.

Quality assurance aims to maintain and improve the quality of higher education on an ongoing basis, which is carried out internally to realise the vision and mission of higher education, and to meet the needs of stakeholders through the implementation of the *tridharma* of higher education. In the higher education quality assurance system, the need to implement quality control management is absolute. One of the quality control management models applied now is PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, and Action)-based quality control management. As the spearhead of the basic academic unit of higher education, the leadership of the Head of the study programme in the higher education quality assurance system is partly manifested as a control task for the implementation of lecturer duties within the framework of implementing higher education quality assurance (Bancin, 2017).

What Ibn Khaldun University has done in improving the quality of graduates is appropriate. Quality improvement in higher education can basically be done with a strategy to change one of the sub-systems: people, structure, technology, and organisational processes (Asmawi, 2005). Humans in relation to the study of strategies to improve quality graduates in higher education are students who are educated to become good human beings in all three

aspects: knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on Islamic teachings.

Quality assurance and internal audits are essential to realizing graduates' quality standards and exceptionally soft skills. The importance of quality assurance and internal audit in this regard is as follows: (1) Improving the consistency and quality of learning: Quality assurance and internal audits ensure that the teaching and learning methods are consistent and aligned with set standards. This ensures that graduates have equal opportunities to develop relevant soft skills. (2) Monitoring and evaluating student progress: The quality assurance process and internal audits involve continuous monitoring and evaluation of student progress and development. This helps identify areas for improvement or enhancement in developing their soft skills. (3) Improving curriculum design: In the context of quality assurance and internal audit, continuous curriculum evaluation is conducted. If deficiencies are found in developing soft skills, improvements and enhancements to the curriculum can be made to ensure that graduates have skills that match the demands of the world of work. (4). Maintaining relevance to industry needs: Through quality assurance and internal audits, universities can obtain feedback from stakeholders, including the industry. This ensures that education and teaching programs remain relevant to the needs of the world of work, including the soft skills expected by industry. (5) Improving accountability and transparency: Quality assurance processes and internal audits help increase the college's accountability in achieving graduate quality standards. They also ensure transparency in the college's efforts to develop and enhance students' soft skills (Chung Sea Law, 2010; Januszewski & Molenda, 2010; Taba, 1962).

Overall, quality assurance and internal audit play an essential role in realizing the quality standards of graduates, including in the aspect of soft skill development. Through this process, universities can continue to improve and enhance learning approaches following the demands of the world of work and produce graduates who are competent and ready to face future challenges.

This research reinforces the critical role of soft skills as part of students' competencies. This research also corroborates the research of Emanuel, Ricciardi, Sanseverino, & Ghislieri (2021); Lyu & Liu (2021); Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim (2015); Succi & Canovi (2020). Thus, soft skills in faith and good moral values can help students succeed in the future.

CONCLUSION

In determining the principles and strategies of quality standards for graduate competence, Ibn Khaldun University is based on Islamic teachings as the main foundation, because the motto built is faith, knowledge and charity. The strategy carried out in the formation of soft skills of graduates, Ibn Khaldun University designs Islamic Studies learning which is taken in four semesters which are divided into four courses: Islamic Studies *Aqidah*, Islamic Studies Sharia, Islamic Studies *Akhak*, and Islamic Science disciplines. To improve the spiritual quality of graduates, Ibn Khaldun University also created the "Intensive Al-Qur'an Reading Development" program to strengthen students' interaction with the Al-Qur'an and improve the quality of worship to Allah SWT.

Author's declaration

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

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