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# Graduate Tracer Study

(2023 COHORT)





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# Graduate Tracer Study

2023 COHORTS

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Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

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The University sincerely acknowledges the leadership and coordination of the Directorate of Advancement & International Education (DAIE) for designing, administering, and managing the tracer study, as well as for analysing the data and producing this report. Appreciation is also extended to the University Management, academic units, and support offices that facilitated access to graduate records and supported the dissemination of the survey instrument.

Finally, the University expresses its gratitude to all stakeholders whose interest in graduate outcomes and institutional improvement continues to strengthen quality assurance and strategic planning processes. The collective contributions of these stakeholders reinforce the University's commitment to continuous improvement, accountability, and the enhancement of graduate employability and institutional performance.





## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study conducted by Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, as a strategic assessment of graduate outcomes, employability, and institutional performance. The study tracked graduates approximately 15 months after completion of their programmes, generating empirical evidence to support quality assurance, curriculum review, strategic planning, and alignment with national development goals and global higher-education benchmarks. A total of 854 valid responses were analysed, providing a robust and representative dataset across faculties and disciplines.

The findings indicate that ABU continues to demonstrate strong performance in its core academic mandate. Teaching quality emerged as the University's strongest institutional asset, receiving the highest satisfaction rating among graduates. In addition, a substantial proportion of graduates (74.91%) are employed in jobs that are directly or somewhat related to their fields of study, reflecting strong degree relevance and labour market alignment. Graduates are absorbed across key sectors of the Nigerian economy, including education, healthcare, engineering, law, public administration, and technology, underscoring the University's broad socio-economic impact and national relevance.

Despite these strengths, the tracer study identified critical areas requiring strategic attention. Graduates consistently reported gaps in practical training and structured career guidance, which were reflected in comparatively lower performance ratings for these indicators. Qualitative feedback further reinforced the need for curriculum modernization, enhanced hands-on learning, improved laboratory and practical facilities, and stronger industry engagement. While income data show evidence of early career progression and salary mobility, particularly within 15 months of graduation, the findings suggest that improved practical exposure and employability support could accelerate graduate transitions into higher-quality and better-paying roles.

The study also revealed high institutional loyalty and strong alumni engagement potential, despite low levels of current formal participation in alumni activities. Graduates expressed willingness to engage in mentorship, professional networking, and institutional development initiatives if appropriate platforms are provided. This represents a significant opportunity for the University to leverage alumni as strategic partners in enhancing graduate outcomes, reputation, and sustainability.

Overall, the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study presents a balanced picture of an institution with strong academic foundations and positive graduate outcomes, alongside clear opportunities for improvement. The report concludes that by modernizing curricula in line with Industry 4.0, strengthening career services, institutionalizing alumni mentorship, and embedding tracer studies into regular governance processes, Ahmadu Bello University can further enhance graduate employability, strengthen its institutional reputation, and position itself more competitively within both national and global higher-education landscapes.





# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction and Institutional Context

### 1.1 Background of Ahmadu Bello University

Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, established in 1962, is one of Nigeria's foremost universities and a major hub for human capital development in Africa. Conceived as a developmental institution, the University was designed to produce skilled graduates capable of driving socio-economic transformation, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Guided by its philosophy of *Natural Excellence*, ABU has historically combined rigorous academic training with a strong sense of national service, producing graduates who populate key sectors of the Nigerian economy, including education, healthcare, engineering, agriculture, public administration, and governance.

Over the decades, ABU has grown into a large, multi-campus and multi-disciplinary institution offering a wide range of academic and professional programmes. Its scale, diversity of disciplines, and long-standing academic reputation make the University an ideal setting for conducting Graduate Tracer Studies. Given its role as one of the largest producers of graduates in Nigeria, understanding how ABU alumni transition into employment, further education, and professional practice is critical not only for institutional planning but also for assessing the University's contribution to national development.

In the contemporary global higher-education environment, universities are increasingly assessed not solely on enrolment or graduation rates, but on graduate outcomes such as employability, skills relevance, income progression, and societal impact. This shift has heightened the importance of systematic tracer studies as tools for quality assurance and outcome-based education. For ABU, Graduate Tracer Studies provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of its curricula, the adequacy of practical training, and the extent to which graduates' skills align with labour market demands in an era shaped by rapid technological change and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The 2023 Graduate Tracer Study therefore represents a strategic institutional exercise aimed at strengthening evidence-based decision-making within Ahmadu Bello University. By tracking the professional trajectories, perceptions, and experiences of its graduates, the University is able to identify strengths to consolidate and gaps requiring reform. The findings serve as a feedback mechanism for curriculum review, career development initiatives, alumni engagement strategies, and long-term institutional planning, reinforcing ABU's commitment to continuous improvement and sustained relevance in both national and global contexts.

### 1.2 Purpose and importance of Graduate Tracer Studies

Graduate Tracer Studies are systematic follow-up surveys that track graduates after completion of their studies in order to understand their transition into employment, further





education, and professional practice. Their primary purpose is to assess how effectively higher-education institutions prepare students for the labour market and for meaningful participation in society. By examining indicators such as employment status, job relevance, income levels, skills utilisation, and career progression, tracer studies provide concrete evidence of graduate outcomes and the real-world impact of academic programmes beyond graduation rates.

The importance of Graduate Tracer Studies lies in their role as a core quality-assurance and strategic planning tool. They provide universities with graduate-based feedback that informs curriculum review, teaching improvement, and the alignment of academic programmes with labour market needs and emerging industry trends. Tracer studies also support evidence-based decision-making for institutional management, enhance accountability to regulators and stakeholders, and contribute to reputation building through demonstrable employability and alumni impact. As such, they are essential for strengthening outcome-based education, improving graduate employability, and ensuring the sustained relevance of higher-education institutions in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

### 1.3 Objectives of the 2023 Tracer Study

- I. Assess the post-graduation employment outcomes of the 2023 cohort, including employment status, sector of engagement, income levels, and the extent to which graduates are utilizing their degrees in relevant professional roles.
- II. Evaluate the relevance and adequacy of academic programmes offered by the University by examining the alignment between graduates' fields of study and labour market requirements, with particular attention to practical training, skills acquisition, and workplace preparedness.
- III. Examine graduates' perceptions of institutional quality and support services, including teaching quality, curriculum relevance, soft skills development, career guidance, and practical learning experiences, as a basis for institutional quality assurance and improvement.
- IV. Generate evidence to inform strategic planning, curriculum reform, and alumni engagement initiatives, providing data-driven insights to guide policy decisions, strengthen university-industry linkages, and enhance graduate employability and institutional competitiveness.

### 1.4 Alignment with national development goals and global higher-education benchmarks

The alignment of university education with national development goals has become increasingly important as countries seek to harness higher education as a driver of economic growth, social transformation, and human capital development. In Nigeria, national development priorities emphasise youth employment, skills development, economic diversification, innovation, and improved public service delivery. Universities are therefore expected not only to produce graduates in large numbers, but to ensure that those graduates possess relevant knowledge, practical skills, and adaptive competencies required to





contribute meaningfully to national development. Graduate Tracer Studies provide a critical mechanism for assessing how effectively universities are fulfilling this mandate by systematically tracking graduate outcomes and labour market integration.

Within this context, the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study aligns closely with Nigeria's development objectives by generating empirical evidence on graduate employability, sectoral distribution of employment, income progression, and relevance of academic training. By identifying the extent to which graduates are absorbed into key sectors such as education, healthcare, engineering, agriculture, governance, and technology, the study offers insight into the University's contribution to priority areas of national need. Furthermore, the findings on skills gaps, practical training deficiencies, and demand for professional certifications provide actionable intelligence for curriculum reform aimed at reducing graduate unemployment and underemployment—key concerns within national policy discourse.

At the global level, higher-education institutions are increasingly assessed against international benchmarks that prioritise outcomes rather than inputs. Global ranking frameworks such as the QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings place growing emphasis on indicators related to graduate employability, employer reputation, alumni outcomes, teaching quality, and societal impact. Graduate Tracer Studies directly support these benchmarks by supplying verifiable data on employment rates, degree relevance, income trajectories, and further education pathways. As such, tracer studies have become an essential component of institutional performance measurement and global competitiveness.

The 2023 Tracer Study also reflects a broader global shift toward outcome-based education (OBE), where learning is evaluated based on what graduates are able to do after completing their studies. By linking academic experiences to post-graduation outcomes, the study enables the University to assess whether its programmes are producing graduates with the competencies demanded by a rapidly changing global labour market shaped by digitalisation, automation, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Insights from the tracer study therefore support alignment with international best practices in curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and skills-focused learning.

In addition, alignment with global benchmarks extends beyond employability to issues of accountability, transparency, and evidence-based governance. Graduate Tracer Studies demonstrate institutional commitment to continuous improvement by incorporating graduate feedback into planning and policy formulation. This aligns with expectations of accreditation bodies, international partners, and donors, who increasingly require measurable outcomes and impact indicators. The systematic use of tracer study data strengthens institutional credibility and enhances the University's ability to engage meaningfully with global academic networks and development partners.

Overall, the alignment of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study with national development goals and global higher-education benchmarks underscores its strategic importance. At the national level, it supports efforts to improve graduate employability, workforce relevance, and socio-economic development. At the global level, it positions the University within





contemporary performance frameworks that value graduate outcomes, institutional impact, and responsiveness to societal needs. Through this alignment, the tracer study serves as a bridge between academic provision, labour market realities, and both national and international expectations of higher-education performance.





## CHAPTER TWO

# Methodology and Data Integrity

### 2.1 Study design and survey instrument

The 2023 Graduate Tracer Study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive study design, aimed at capturing the post-graduation outcomes and experiences of graduates at a specific point in time. The study focused on graduates of the 2023 academic cohort and assessed their transition from university education into employment, further studies, and professional engagement approximately 15 months after graduation. This design was considered appropriate for generating a comprehensive snapshot of graduate outcomes and for identifying patterns related to employability, skills utilisation, and institutional effectiveness.

Data for the study were collected using a structured digital survey instrument, administered through an online survey platform to ensure wide reach and accessibility. The use of an online survey enabled participation by graduates located across different states within Nigeria as well as those residing outside the country. This approach enhanced response coverage, reduced administrative cost, and allowed for efficient data aggregation and analysis, while also supporting real-time monitoring of response rates.

The survey instrument comprised 22 structured and semi-structured questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information. The structured questions focused on key indicators such as demographic characteristics, faculty and programme of study, employment status, job relevance to field of study, sector of employment, income levels, and engagement in further education or professional certification. In addition, graduates were asked to rate the University's performance across several institutional Key Performance Indicators, including quality of teaching, curriculum relevance, practical training, soft skills development, and career guidance, using a standardized Likert-scale format.

To complement the quantitative data, the instrument also included open-ended questions that allowed graduates to provide qualitative feedback on their academic experiences and to suggest areas for institutional improvement. These responses provided deeper insight into graduates' perceptions of curriculum adequacy, practical exposure, mentorship, and preparedness for the labour market. The combination of structured metrics and open-ended feedback ensured that the survey instrument captured not only measurable outcomes but also the lived experiences and informed perspectives of the graduates, thereby strengthening the overall analytical value of the study.

### 2.2 Population, sampling technique, and response rate

The target population for the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study comprised all graduates of Ahmadu Bello University who completed their programmes during the 2023 academic session. This population included graduates across the University's various faculties, disciplines, and modes of study, reflecting the full diversity and scale of the institution's academic output for the cohort under review. Focusing on the entire graduating class





ensured that the study was positioned to generate institution-wide insights rather than programme-specific or limited findings.

Given the broad and geographically dispersed nature of the graduate population, the study adopted a census-based, voluntary response approach rather than a probabilistic sampling technique. All eligible graduates were invited to participate in the survey through digital channels, allowing for open and inclusive participation. The online questionnaire was distributed to the 2023 graduating class (N = 11,616) via email and SMS. A total of 841 graduates responded. Given the population size, a sample of 841 is sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, ensuring the statistical validity of the findings.

To ensure data integrity, responses were screened for completeness and authenticity, including verification through 841 unique registration numbers, which confirmed that the vast majority of submissions were from distinct individuals within the target cohort. The response size provides a robust empirical base for descriptive and comparative analysis and is considered adequate for institutional reporting, quality assurance, and strategic planning purposes.

### 2.3 Data validation, reliability, and limitations

To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the findings, several data validation procedures were applied during and after data collection. Submitted responses were systematically screened for completeness, internal consistency, and duplication. A key validation measure involved cross-checking respondents' registration numbers, which resulted in the confirmation of 841 unique registration numbers out of the 854 responses received. This process helped to authenticate the respondent pool and minimize the risk of multiple entries by the same individual, thereby strengthening the overall integrity of the dataset.

The reliability of the data is further supported by the structured design of the survey instrument and the use of standardized response formats for core indicators. Likert-scale questions were employed to assess institutional performance across teaching quality, curriculum relevance, practical training, soft skills development, and career guidance, enabling consistent measurement and comparison across respondents. In addition, the large response base drawn from multiple faculties and disciplines enhances the robustness and representativeness of the findings at the institutional level. The combination of quantitative indicators and qualitative feedback also allows for triangulation, reinforcing confidence in the patterns and interpretations derived from the data.

Despite these strengths, the study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. Participation in the survey was voluntary, which introduces the possibility of self-selection bias, as graduates who are employed or more engaged with the University may have been more likely to respond. Furthermore, the data are based on self-reported information, particularly with respect to income levels, employment status, and perceptions of institutional quality, which may be influenced by personal interpretation or recall bias. Finally, as a cross-sectional study capturing outcomes at a single point in time, the tracer study does not track long-term career progression. These





limitations notwithstanding, the data provide a reliable and valuable evidence base for institutional assessment, policy formulation, and strategic planning.

## 2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the design and implementation of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and graduates were invited to take part with the clear understanding that they could choose whether or not to respond, without any obligation or consequence. This voluntary approach respected the autonomy of participants and aligned with accepted ethical standards for social and educational research.

To safeguard confidentiality and anonymity, personal identifiers were not used in the reporting or analysis of results. Although registration numbers were collected for the purpose of data validation and to prevent duplicate responses, these identifiers were used solely for verification and were not linked to individual responses in any published outputs. All findings were presented in aggregated form, ensuring that no individual graduate could be identified directly or indirectly from the results.

The study also adhered to principles of responsible data management and use. Data were collected and stored securely and were used strictly for academic, quality assurance, and institutional planning purposes. The information generated from the tracer study was not shared with third parties in a manner that could compromise participant privacy. By adhering to these ethical considerations, the study upheld standards of transparency, trust, and accountability, thereby reinforcing the credibility of the findings and the confidence of graduates in the tracer study process.

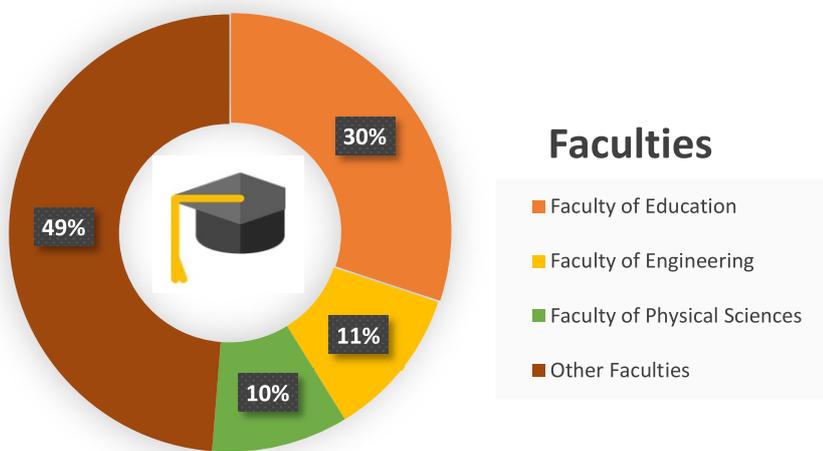




# CHAPTER THREE

## Graduate Profile and Employment Outcomes

### 3.1 Demographic and faculty distribution



*(Other Faculties include Agriculture, Arts, Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Law, Environmental Design, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and related units)*

The demographic and faculty distribution of respondents reflects the broad academic diversity and scale of Ahmadu Bello University. A total of 854 valid responses were received from graduates across multiple faculties, providing a strong institutional-wide evidence base for analysis. The distribution indicates that the tracer study successfully captured perspectives from both professional and non-professional disciplines, enhancing the representativeness and analytical depth of the findings.

The Faculty of Education recorded the highest level of participation (30.11%), underscoring the University's long-

standing strength and scale in teacher education and training. This dominance reflects ABU's historical mandate as a major producer of educators and education administrators for Nigeria's basic, secondary, and tertiary education systems. The strong response from this faculty also highlights the central role of education graduates in the national workforce and public sector.

The Faculty of Engineering (11.10%) and the Faculty of Physical Sciences (10.04%) recorded the next highest levels of participation. These faculties represent key science, technology, and infrastructure-oriented disciplines, which are critical to





Nigeria’s industrial development and technological advancement. Their substantial representation provides valuable insight into graduate employability, income progression, and skills relevance in technical and applied fields.

Overall, the faculty distribution demonstrates that the tracer study

captured a balanced cross-section of ABU’s academic output, enabling meaningful assessment of graduate outcomes across diverse disciplines. The presence of respondents from a wide range of faculties strengthens the validity of institutional-level conclusions and supports the use of the findings for curriculum review, strategic planning, and quality assurance across the University.

### 3.2 Geographic location of graduates

The geographic distribution of graduates from the 2023 cohort indicates that 95.55% of respondents are currently based within Nigeria, highlighting Ahmadu Bello University’s strong contribution to the national workforce. This high level of domestic retention reflects the relevance of the University’s academic programmes to local labour market needs and underscores ABU’s role as a major supplier of skilled human capital to key sectors such as education, healthcare, engineering, public administration, and related professional fields.

Within Nigeria, a significant proportion of graduates are concentrated in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), accounting for 15.46% of respondents. This pattern points to the strong presence of ABU graduates in the nation’s administrative and policy centre, where employment opportunities in government institutions and corporate organisations are prominent. While the limited proportion of graduates outside Nigeria suggests relatively low international mobility, it also highlights an opportunity for the University to strengthen global exposure and international career pathways for future cohorts.

### 3.3 Employment status and degree relevance



The employment outcomes of the 2023 graduating cohort reveal a strong alignment between academic training at Ahmadu Bello University and labour market engagement. Findings indicate that 42.07% of respondents are employed in jobs directly related to their field of study,

suggesting that a substantial proportion of graduates are applying discipline-specific knowledge and skills acquired during their academic programmes. This reflects the strength of ABU’s professional and regulated disciplines, particularly in areas





such as education, healthcare, engineering, law, and the sciences.

In addition, 32.84% of graduates reported being employed in roles that are somewhat related to their field of study, bringing the overall degree relevance to 74.91%. This pattern indicates that while some graduates may not be working in narrowly defined disciplinary roles, they are nevertheless able to transfer core competencies such as analytical ability, communication skills, and problem-solving

into adjacent sectors including administration, management, and project coordination. The remaining 25.09% of graduates are employed in roles not directly related to their academic training, highlighting the need for enhanced career guidance, practical exposure, and skills diversification. Overall, the results demonstrate strong graduate employability while also pointing to opportunities for strengthening curriculum-labour market alignment and career support services.

### 3.2 Sectoral distribution of employment

Employment Sector	Description / Typical Roles
Education	Teachers, Lecturers, Education Administrators
Healthcare	Medical Officers, Health Practitioners, Allied Health Professionals
Engineering & Construction	Engineers, Technical Officers, Project Supervisors
Law & Legal Services	Legal Practitioners, Court and Legal Support Staff
Technology & ICT	Designers, Project Managers, IT Support, Tech Specialists
Public Administration & Governance	Civil Servants, Policy Officers, Government Agency Staff
Private Sector / Corporate Services	Administrative Officers, Management Trainees, Consultants
Other Sectors	Entrepreneurship, NGOs, Self-employment, Miscellaneous Roles





The sectoral distribution of employment among the 2023 graduating cohort demonstrates the broad labour market integration of Ahmadu Bello University graduates across both public and private sectors. A substantial proportion of graduates are employed in education, reinforcing the University's long-standing strength and national mandate in teacher education and academic training. This pattern reflects ABU's historic role as a primary supplier of educators and education administrators at basic, secondary, and tertiary levels across Nigeria.

Employment in healthcare, engineering, law, and technology-related sectors further highlights the relevance of ABU's professional and science-based programmes. Graduates occupying roles such as medical officers, engineers, legal practitioners, and technology specialists indicate strong absorption into regulated

and skills-intensive sectors that are critical to national development. The presence of graduates in public administration and governance, particularly within federal and state institutions, underscores the University's contribution to policy implementation, public service delivery, and national administration.

Additionally, engagement in private sector roles, entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organisations illustrates the versatility and adaptability of ABU graduates. While this diversity of sectoral placement reflects broad employability, it also suggests opportunities for strengthening university-industry linkages and targeted career preparation tailored to emerging sectors such as technology, innovation, and enterprise development. Overall, the sectoral distribution affirms the University's wide-ranging socio-economic impact while providing valuable insights for strategic workforce alignment and curriculum enhancement.

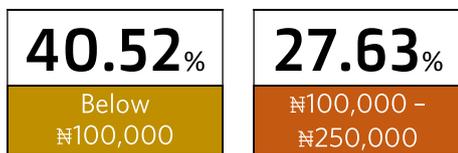




# CHAPTER FOUR

## Socio-Economic Impact and Skills Assessment

### 4.1 Income and earnings profile



The income and earnings profile of the 2023 graduating cohort provides insight into the early-career economic outcomes of Ahmadu Bello University graduates approximately 15 months after graduation. Findings indicate that 40.52% of respondents earn below ₦100,000 per month, a category that largely reflects graduates undergoing the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), internships, entry-level appointments, and transitional employment. This pattern is consistent with early-stage career trajectories in the Nigerian labour market, particularly for newly graduated professionals.

A further 27.63% of graduates fall within the ₦100,000–₦250,000 monthly income bracket, suggesting upward income mobility within a relatively short post-graduation period. This group represents graduates who have transitioned into more

stable employment or junior professional roles across both public and private sectors. Additionally, a smaller proportion of respondents predominantly from engineering and technology-related disciplines reported earnings above ₦500,000 per month, indicating the presence of high-performing graduates in specialised and high-demand fields.

Overall, the income distribution suggests that while a significant proportion of graduates begin their careers at modest income levels, there is clear evidence of progression into mid- and high-income brackets within the first 15 months after graduation. This trend points to strong salary growth potential and reflects the market value of ABU graduates' skills, even within the context of broader national economic constraints. The findings underscore the importance of practical training, professional certification, and career guidance in accelerating graduate income mobility and long-term economic outcomes.

### 4.2 Career progression and salary mobility

Career progression and salary mobility among the 2023 graduating cohort reflect the early-stage professional development trajectories of Ahmadu Bello University

graduates. Approximately 15 months after graduation, many respondents had transitioned from temporary or transitional roles such as National Youth Service Corps





(NYSC) placements, internships, and entry-level appointments into more stable employment. This progression indicates a positive adjustment period during which graduates gain workplace experience, adapt to professional environments, and improve their employability.

The income distribution further illustrates upward salary mobility within a relatively short post-graduation timeframe. While a significant proportion of graduates initially earned below ₦100,000 per month, a substantial share progressed into the ₦100,000-₦250,000 income bracket, reflecting improved job stability and professional advancement. This movement suggests that ABU graduates are able to leverage their academic qualifications and early work experience to secure better-paying roles as they gain exposure and confidence in the labour market.

A smaller but notable segment of graduates reported earnings above ₦500,000 per

month, predominantly within engineering, technology, and specialised professional fields. This group represents high-performing graduates operating in sectors characterised by strong demand for technical expertise and specialised skills. Their earnings profile highlights the potential for accelerated career advancement among graduates whose disciplines align closely with high-growth and skills-intensive industries.

Overall, the evidence points to a pattern of gradual but meaningful career progression and salary growth among the 2023 cohort. While national economic conditions may constrain immediate high earnings for many graduates, the observed mobility suggests strong long-term earning potential. The findings underscore the importance of practical training, workplace exposure, professional certification, and structured career guidance in enhancing early career progression and accelerating salary growth for future cohorts.

### 4.3 Further education and professional certification trends

Pathway	Evidence from Tracer Study
Postgraduate education	Graduates pursuing Master’s and PhD programmes
Location of further studies	Both within Ahmadu Bello University and abroad
Professional certifications	Uptake of ICAN, PMP, Cisco, and related credentials
Skills enhancement focus	Emphasis on technical, professional, and industry-relevant skills
Motivation for further training	Desire to complement academic degrees and improve employability
Lifelong learning orientation	Strong graduate engagement in continuous professional development

Findings from the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study indicate a strong culture of continuing

education and professional development among Ahmadu Bello University graduates.





A considerable number of respondents reported enrolment in postgraduate programmes, including Master’s and doctoral degrees, both within the University and in institutions outside Nigeria. This trend reflects graduates’ recognition of the importance of advanced academic qualifications for career progression, specialisation, and competitiveness in increasingly demanding labour markets. In addition to formal postgraduate education, graduates demonstrated substantial engagement in professional certification programmes, particularly in areas aligned with accounting, project management, information technology, and technical skills. Certifications such as ICAN, PMP, and Cisco were frequently cited, underscoring graduates’ efforts to enhance

their professional credibility and practical competence. These certifications are often pursued to bridge gaps between theoretical knowledge and industry-specific requirements.

Overall, the pattern of further education and certification uptake suggests that ABU graduates are proactive and self-directed in their career development. The emphasis on lifelong learning indicates strong adaptability and resilience, qualities that enhance employability and long-term career mobility. At the institutional level, these trends highlight both the strengths of ABU’s academic foundation and the need to further integrate practical, skills-based components within undergraduate curricula to reduce reliance on external credentials for workplace readiness.

#### 4.4 Evaluation of institutional Key Performance Indicators (teaching quality, curriculum relevance, practical training, career guidance, soft skills)

Key Performance Indicator	Mean Score (out of 5.0)	Interpretation
Quality of Teaching	4.21	Very High
Soft Skills Development	3.93	High
Curriculum Relevance	3.84	Moderately High
Career Guidance	3.54	Moderate
Practical Training	3.53	Moderate
Overall Institutional Performance	—	Strong with Identified Gaps

The evaluation of institutional Key Performance Indicators reveals that quality of teaching is the strongest performance area, with a mean score of 4.21 out of 5.0. This high rating reflects graduates’ strong satisfaction with academic delivery, lecturer competence, and theoretical grounding provided during their studies. It reinforces Ahmadu Bello University’s long-standing reputation for academic rigor and depth

across its disciplines, and confirms teaching quality as a core institutional strength.

Graduates also rated soft skills development highly (3.93), indicating that the University contributes meaningfully to the development of communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and professional conduct. These transferable skills appear to support graduates’ ability to secure employment in roles that are not





always directly aligned with their field of study, thereby enhancing overall employability and adaptability in the labour market.

Curriculum relevance, with a mean score of 3.84, was assessed as moderately high, suggesting that most graduates consider their academic programmes relevant to workplace demands. However, the score also indicates room for improvement, particularly in updating curricula to reflect emerging industry trends, technological advancements, and evolving professional standards. This finding aligns with graduates' qualitative feedback calling for curriculum modernization in certain disciplines.

In contrast, career guidance (3.54) and practical training (3.53) recorded the lowest mean scores among the evaluated indicators. These results point to perceived gaps in structured career support, industry exposure, and hands-on learning opportunities. Graduates' ratings suggest that while theoretical preparation is strong, insufficient practical experience and limited career advisory services may constrain early career readiness. Overall, the KPI evaluation highlights a solid institutional foundation in teaching and skills development, while underscoring the need for targeted investment in practical training infrastructure and centralized career development services to strengthen graduate outcomes.





# CHAPTER FIVE

## Graduate Perceptions, Alumni Engagement, and Institutional Performance

### 5.1 Qualitative thematic analysis of graduate feedback

As part of Chapter Five, the qualitative component of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study provides critical insight into graduate perceptions of institutional performance, employability preparation, and alumni engagement. Open-ended survey responses allowed graduates to articulate their experiences beyond predefined indicators, thereby capturing nuanced perspectives on the strengths and gaps of their academic journey at Ahmadu Bello University. Thematic analysis of these responses revealed several dominant and recurring themes that deepen understanding of the quantitative findings.

A central theme emerging from graduate feedback is the need for stronger practical and experiential learning. Across multiple disciplines—particularly engineering, agriculture, and science-based programmes—graduates expressed concern about the limited integration of hands-on training within their curricula. While respondents acknowledged the strong theoretical grounding provided by the University, many emphasized that insufficient laboratory exposure, fieldwork, and industry-relevant practical exercises constrained their readiness for professional practice. Calls for curriculum “revamping” and improved practical facilities underscore a perceived gap between academic instruction and workplace expectations.

Another prominent theme relates to career guidance and mentorship. Graduates frequently highlighted the absence of structured career development support during their studies, including limited access to career counselling, employability training, and industry engagement. Many respondents expressed a strong desire for mentorship programmes involving successful alumni and professionals who could provide guidance on career pathways, job search strategies, and professional growth. This theme aligns closely with lower quantitative ratings recorded for career guidance and reinforces the need for a more coordinated institutional approach to career development.

Despite these concerns, graduate feedback also reflected strong institutional loyalty and positive perceptions of academic quality. Many respondents expressed pride in being graduates of the University and acknowledged the quality of teaching and intellectual discipline instilled during their studies. Importantly, graduates demonstrated a willingness to remain engaged with the institution, particularly through alumni activities, mentorship initiatives, and support for current students. This combination of critical reflection and institutional loyalty highlights significant untapped potential for strengthening alumni engagement frameworks.





Overall, the qualitative thematic analysis portrays graduates as constructive stakeholders who are invested in the continuous improvement of the University. Their feedback complements quantitative performance indicators by explaining not only *what* graduates experienced, but *why* certain areas require reform. The themes identified practical training, career guidance, mentorship, and alumni engagement provide actionable evidence to inform institutional planning, strengthen graduate outcomes, and enhance the University's long-term performance and reputation.

## 5.2 Identified strengths and gaps in academic delivery

Graduate perceptions from the 2023 Tracer Study reveal a clear pattern of strong academic foundations alongside identifiable gaps in delivery mechanisms at Ahmadu Bello University. A major strength consistently highlighted by graduates is the quality of teaching and academic rigor across programmes. Respondents acknowledged the competence, commitment, and subject mastery of academic staff, noting that lectures were intellectually stimulating and grounded in solid theoretical frameworks. This strength underpins the University's long-standing reputation for producing graduates with strong analytical abilities and deep disciplinary knowledge.

Another notable strength is the development of transferable and soft skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and adaptability. Graduates reported that these skills enabled them to secure employment even in roles not directly aligned with their fields of study. This adaptability has contributed to the high overall degree relevance observed in the tracer study and reflects positively on the University's broader educational environment, peer interactions, and academic culture.

However, despite these strengths, graduates identified significant gaps in practical and experiential learning. A recurring concern was the limited availability and quality of hands-on training, laboratory work, field exposure, and industry-linked practical experiences. Graduates from engineering, agriculture, and science-based disciplines were particularly vocal about the need for curriculum modernization and improved infrastructure to support applied learning. This gap suggests a mismatch between theoretical preparation and workplace expectations, which may delay graduates' readiness for professional practice.

In addition, graduates pointed to weaknesses in career preparation and structured academic support beyond the classroom. Limited access to career guidance, mentorship, and industry engagement opportunities was seen as a constraint on effective academic delivery. While the core teaching function was rated highly, the absence of integrated career-oriented support within academic programmes reduced the overall effectiveness of learning outcomes. Collectively, these findings indicate that while the University excels in knowledge delivery, strengthening practical training and career-focused academic support is essential to enhance the full impact of its academic programmes.





## 5.2.1 SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality of teaching (mean score 4.21/5.0) reflecting strong academic rigor and lecturer competence.</li> <li>• Strong degree relevance, with 74.91% of graduates employed in directly or somewhat related fields.</li> <li>• Wide labour market absorption across education, healthcare, engineering, law, and public administration.</li> <li>• Strong soft skills development enabling graduate adaptability across sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited practical and hands-on training across several disciplines (lowest KPI score: 3.53)</li> <li>• Inadequate structured career guidance and employability support (mean score 3.54).</li> <li>• Over-reliance on theoretical instruction with insufficient industry exposure</li> <li>• Limited international mobility and global placement of graduates</li> <li>• Low formal alumni engagement despite willingness to participate</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum modernization aligned with Industry 4.0 and labour market needs</li> <li>• Establishment of a centralized Career Development and Employability Centre</li> <li>• Leveraging alumni interest (81.85%) for mentorship, networking, and fundraising</li> <li>• Expansion of university–industry partnerships and internship pipeline</li> <li>• Use of tracer study data to improve QS/THE employability and alumni outcome metrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising graduate unemployment and underemployment due to national economic constraints</li> <li>• Increasing competition from private and foreign universities with strong practical orientation</li> <li>• Skills mismatch driven by rapid technological change</li> <li>• Employer preference for graduates with external certifications over academic degrees alone</li> <li>• Resource constraints affecting laboratory upgrades and infrastructure investment</li> </ul>

## Interpretation and Strategic Implications

The SWOT analysis highlights academic quality and graduate adaptability as core strengths of Ahmadu Bello University. High teaching quality, strong theoretical grounding, and transferable skills development have enabled graduates to secure employment across diverse sectors and to remain competitive within the national labour market. The high degree relevance score further





confirms that ABU programmes retain substantial alignment with professional and occupational pathways.

However, the analysis also exposes structural weaknesses in practical training and career preparation. Graduates' repeated calls for curriculum revamp, improved laboratories, and stronger career guidance suggest that academic delivery has not fully adapted to contemporary skills-based and experiential learning models. These weaknesses may slow early career progression and increase dependence on external certifications to achieve employability.

The identified opportunities present a clear pathway for institutional strengthening. By modernizing curricula, investing in practical infrastructure, and activating alumni mentorship networks, the University can convert existing loyalty and academic strength into improved graduate outcomes. Systematic use of tracer study evidence can also enhance ABU's standing in global ranking frameworks that prioritise employability and alumni impact.

Conversely, external threats including economic instability, labour market saturation, and intensifying competition underscore the urgency of reform. Without deliberate action to strengthen practical competence and industry alignment, graduates may face increasing challenges in securing high-quality employment. Overall, the SWOT analysis demonstrates that ABU is well-positioned to improve graduate outcomes if it strategically leverages its strengths and opportunities while addressing identified weaknesses in academic delivery and career support.

### 5.3 Alumni engagement potential and institutional loyalty

Findings from the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study indicate a high level of institutional loyalty among graduates of Ahmadu Bello University, coupled with substantial but currently underutilised alumni engagement potential. Although a significant proportion of respondents reported that they are not actively involved in formal alumni activities, the majority expressed a clear willingness to remain connected to the University and to contribute meaningfully to its development. This combination of low current participation and high expressed interest suggests that the challenge lies not in graduate apathy, but in the absence of accessible, structured, and scalable engagement platforms.

Graduates' feedback demonstrates a strong sense of pride in their alma mater and appreciation for the academic foundation received, particularly in terms of teaching quality and intellectual discipline. This positive perception reinforces graduates' emotional attachment to the institution and strengthens their identity as members of the ABU alumni community. Such loyalty is a critical intangible asset, as it forms the basis for sustained alumni involvement in mentoring, professional networking, institutional advocacy, and long-term support for the University.

The tracer study further reveals that many graduates are especially interested in mentorship and professional networking opportunities. Respondents expressed a desire to connect with successful senior alumni who can provide guidance on career pathways, industry expectations, and professional growth. This indicates strong potential for alumni-led mentorship schemes that link recent graduates and students with experienced professionals across sectors. Harnessing this interest could directly address identified gaps in career guidance while simultaneously strengthening alumni-student-institution linkages.





## 5.4 Implications for employability and reputation

The findings of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study have significant implications for both graduate employability and the institutional reputation of Ahmadu Bello University. On the employability front, the high proportion of graduates engaged in jobs that are directly or somewhat related to their fields of study demonstrates that the University's academic programmes retain strong labour market relevance. The solid ratings for teaching quality and soft skills development suggest that graduates possess strong foundational knowledge and transferable competencies, enabling them to adapt to a range of professional roles across sectors. These outcomes reinforce the employability value of an ABU degree within the national labour market.

However, identified gaps in practical training and career guidance have implications for the speed and quality of graduate labour market integration. While many graduates eventually progress into stable employment and higher income brackets, limited hands-on experience and structured career preparation may delay early career advancement and reduce immediate job readiness. This can increase graduates' reliance on external certifications and informal networks to bridge skills gaps. Addressing these issues through curriculum modernization, enhanced industry exposure, and centralized career services would significantly improve graduate competitiveness, accelerate career progression, and strengthen long-term employability outcomes.

From a reputational perspective, graduate outcomes are increasingly central to how universities are perceived by employers, prospective students, policymakers, and global ranking bodies. Strong employment relevance, positive graduate perceptions of teaching quality, and high institutional loyalty enhance the University's standing as a credible producer of skilled human capital. At the same time, persistent gaps in practical training and career support may affect employer perceptions, particularly in competitive and skills-intensive sectors. Systematic use of tracer study evidence to drive reform, strengthen alumni engagement, and improve employability indicators will therefore be critical in enhancing the University's reputation, both nationally and internationally, and in positioning it more favourably within global higher-education benchmarking frameworks.





# CHAPTER SIX

## Strategic Implications and Policy Recommendations

### 6.1 Interpretation of findings for university management

The findings of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study provide important strategic insights for university management and offer a clear evidence base to guide institutional decision-making at Ahmadu Bello University. Overall, the results portray an institution with strong academic foundations, high teaching quality, and graduates who are largely employable and adaptable within the national labour market. These strengths affirm the effectiveness of the University's core academic mission and validate long-standing investments in teaching and disciplinary depth.

At the same time, the findings highlight structural and systemic gaps that require managerial attention. While degree relevance remains high, the relatively lower ratings for practical training and career guidance suggest that academic delivery has not fully evolved to meet contemporary labour market expectations. For university management, this signals the need to move beyond traditional instructional models and to institutionalise outcome-based education frameworks that integrate experiential learning, industry exposure, and employability support into academic programmes.

The tracer study also reveals significant untapped potential in alumni engagement and mentorship. High levels of institutional loyalty, coupled with limited formal alumni participation, indicate a strategic opportunity for management to strengthen alumni relations as a core institutional function rather than an auxiliary activity. Leveraging alumni networks can support graduate employability, enhance institutional reputation, and contribute to resource mobilisation, thereby aligning academic outcomes with long-term sustainability goals.

For university leadership, the overall interpretation of the findings underscores the importance of data-driven governance and strategic prioritisation. The tracer study should be viewed not as a one-off assessment, but as an ongoing performance monitoring tool that informs curriculum review, investment decisions, and policy reform. By responding proactively to the evidence generated, university management can consolidate existing strengths, address identified weaknesses, and position the institution to improve graduate outcomes, stakeholder confidence, and competitiveness in both national and global higher-education environments.

### 6.2 Curriculum modernization and Industry 4.0 alignment

The findings of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study clearly indicate the need for deliberate curriculum modernization aligned with Industry 4.0 (4IR) competencies at Ahmadu Bello University. While graduates rated teaching quality and theoretical knowledge highly, recurrent





concerns about limited practical training and evolving industry requirements suggest that existing curricula require systematic updating to remain responsive to technological change, digital transformation, and emerging labour market demands.

Industry 4.0 is characterised by rapid advances in digital technologies, automation, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. For the University, aligning curricula with this context requires a shift from predominantly theory-driven instruction to competency-based and application-oriented learning models. This includes embedding digital literacy, data skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, and problem-based learning across disciplines, not only within science and engineering programmes but also in education, social sciences, arts, and management-related fields.

The tracer study results further suggest that curriculum modernization should prioritise hands-on practical components that are credit-bearing and compulsory. Graduates' reliance on external professional certifications to enhance employability indicates that certain industry-relevant skills are currently acquired outside the formal curriculum. Integrating practical laboratories, fieldwork, simulations, internships, and industry projects directly into academic programmes would reduce this gap and ensure that graduates acquire job-ready competencies before graduation.

For university management and academic planners, Industry 4.0 alignment also implies strengthening university–industry collaboration in curriculum design and delivery. Involving industry practitioners, professional bodies, and alumni in curriculum review processes can ensure that course content reflects current and future workforce needs. Such collaboration would enhance graduate employability, improve employer perception of the University's programmes, and position ABU as a forward-looking institution capable of producing graduates who are not only academically sound but also technologically competent, innovative, and adaptable in a rapidly changing global economy.

### 6.3 Career services and employability frameworks

The 2023 Graduate Tracer Study highlights the need for a more structured and institutionalised approach to career services and employability development at Ahmadu Bello University. While graduates demonstrate strong academic foundations and transferable skills, the relatively lower ratings for career guidance indicate that many students complete their programmes without adequate support in navigating the transition from education to employment. This gap has implications for the speed of labour market integration and early career progression.

An effective employability framework should move beyond ad hoc or faculty-based career support to a centralised, university-wide Career Development and Employability Centre. Such a structure would provide consistent services to students across all disciplines, including career counselling, labour market information, CV and cover letter development, interview preparation, and job search strategies. Embedding these services within the student lifecycle—from early undergraduate years through final-year transition—would ensure that employability development is proactive rather than reactive.





The tracer study also underscores the importance of integrating employability skills within academic programmes. Career services should work in close collaboration with faculties to embed work-based learning, internships, industrial attachments, and employer-led seminars into curricula. This integrated approach would allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts while building professional networks prior to graduation. Such alignment reinforces outcome-based education and reduces the disconnect between academic learning and workplace expectations.

Finally, a robust employability framework should leverage alumni and industry partnerships as strategic assets. Alumni mentorship schemes, employer engagement events, career fairs, and sector-specific networking opportunities can provide students with practical insights into career pathways and emerging skills demands. By institutionalising career services and aligning them with academic delivery and alumni engagement, the University can significantly enhance graduate employability, improve employer perceptions, and strengthen its reputation as a producer of work-ready graduates.

## 6.4 Alumni mentorship and internationalization strategies

The 2023 Graduate Tracer Study reveals significant potential for strengthening alumni mentorship and internationalization as strategic levers for improving graduate outcomes and enhancing institutional visibility at Ahmadu Bello University. High levels of institutional loyalty among graduates, combined with limited formal engagement, indicate that alumni represent a largely untapped resource capable of supporting student development, employability, and global positioning. Harnessing this resource requires the deliberate institutionalization of alumni mentorship frameworks and international engagement strategies.

An alumni mentorship programme can serve as a critical bridge between academic learning and professional practice. By systematically pairing current students and recent graduates with experienced alumni across sectors, the University can provide guidance on career pathways, workplace expectations, and professional growth. Such mentorship relationships would address identified gaps in career guidance, enhance students' exposure to real-world experiences, and strengthen alumni-student-University linkages. Digital platforms can be leveraged to scale mentorship across geographic boundaries, ensuring inclusive participation of alumni based both within Nigeria and in the diaspora.

In parallel, internationalization strategies should be strengthened to enhance graduates' global exposure and mobility. The tracer study indicates limited international placement of graduates, suggesting the need for expanded global partnerships, exchange programmes, and international internship opportunities. Collaborations with foreign universities, multinational organisations, and international development agencies can provide students with cross-cultural competencies, global work experience, and access to international labour markets, thereby improving employability and global competitiveness.

Integrating alumni mentorship with internationalization efforts offers additional strategic value. Alumni based abroad can act as ambassadors, mentors, and connectors for international opportunities, facilitating internships, placements, and collaborative projects. For university





management, aligning alumni engagement with internationalization strategies supports long-term institutional goals related to reputation building, global ranking performance, and sustainable development. Collectively, these initiatives position the University to leverage its extensive alumni network as a driver of both local impact and global relevance.





# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of key findings

- I. A significant proportion of graduates from Ahmadu Bello University are successfully integrated into the labour market, with 74.91% employed in jobs that are directly or somewhat related to their fields of study, indicating strong degree relevance and alignment with national workforce needs.
- II. Graduates are employed across diverse sectors, including education, healthcare, engineering, law, public administration, and technology, underscoring the University's broad socio-economic impact and its role as a major supplier of skilled human capital to the Nigerian economy.
- III. The quality of teaching emerged as the strongest institutional performance indicator, receiving a high mean satisfaction score, and reflecting the University's long-standing reputation for academic rigor and strong theoretical grounding.
- IV. Soft skills development, including communication, teamwork, and adaptability, was positively rated, contributing to graduates' ability to secure employment even in roles not strictly aligned with their disciplines.
- V. Practical training and career guidance were identified as key gaps in academic delivery, receiving comparatively lower satisfaction ratings and featuring prominently in graduates' qualitative feedback as areas requiring improvement.
- VI. Income and earnings patterns indicate that while many graduates begin their careers in lower income brackets, there is clear evidence of upward salary mobility within 15 months of graduation, particularly among graduates in technical and professional fields.
- VII. A strong culture of further education and professional certification exists among graduates, with many pursuing postgraduate studies and industry-recognised credentials to enhance employability and career progression.
- VIII. Graduates expressed high levels of institutional loyalty and pride, with the majority indicating willingness to engage in alumni activities, mentorship, and support for the University, despite low levels of current formal alumni participation.
- IX. The tracer study highlights a solid academic foundation and positive graduate outcomes, alongside clear opportunities for strategic improvement in practical training, career services, curriculum modernization, and alumni engagement.





## 7.2 Institutional lessons learned

The 2023 Graduate Tracer Study offers several important lessons for Ahmadu Bello University regarding the effectiveness of its academic delivery and the evolving expectations of graduates and employers. One key lesson is that strong teaching quality and academic rigor remain foundational strengths, and these should be protected and sustained. Graduates value the depth of knowledge and intellectual discipline gained during their studies, confirming that the University's core academic mission continues to be relevant and impactful.

A second lesson is that theoretical strength alone is no longer sufficient in a rapidly changing labour market. Despite high degree relevance, graduates consistently highlighted gaps in practical training and applied learning. This indicates that academic programmes must evolve to balance theory with experiential learning, industry exposure, and hands-on skill development. Institutional planning must therefore prioritise curriculum review and infrastructure investment that directly enhance practical competence and workplace readiness.

The study also demonstrates that career development cannot be treated as an informal or peripheral activity. Graduates' feedback and KPI ratings reveal that limited career guidance and employability support can slow early career progression, even when academic preparation is strong. An important institutional lesson is the need to embed employability development systematically within the student experience through structured career services, mentorship, and employer engagement.

Finally, the tracer study reveals that graduates are willing partners in institutional development. High levels of institutional loyalty and expressed interest in alumni engagement show that the University has a valuable but underutilised social and professional capital base. Strengthening alumni relations, mentorship programmes, and feedback mechanisms will not only support graduate outcomes but also improve institutional learning, reputation, and long-term sustainability. Collectively, these lessons emphasise the importance of evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and responsiveness to graduate and labour market realities.

## 7.3 Strategic outlook for Ahmadu Bello University

The findings of the 2023 Graduate Tracer Study position Ahmadu Bello University at a critical juncture where strong academic heritage must be strategically aligned with evolving labour market and global higher-education expectations. The University's solid performance in teaching quality, degree relevance, and graduate adaptability provides a firm foundation upon which future reforms can be built. Moving forward, the strategic outlook for ABU should focus on consolidating these strengths while deliberately addressing identified gaps in practical training, career development, and international exposure.

In the medium term, ABU's strategic direction should prioritise the transition toward outcome-based and skills-oriented education. Curriculum modernization aligned with Industry 4.0, expansion of experiential learning opportunities, and stronger university-industry collaboration will be essential to improving graduate job readiness and accelerating early career progression. These reforms will enhance employer confidence in ABU graduates and strengthen the University's competitiveness within both national and regional labour markets.





From an institutional development perspective, strengthening career services, alumni engagement, and mentorship frameworks will be central to improving graduate outcomes and institutional reputation. By leveraging its extensive alumni network and high levels of graduate loyalty, ABU can create sustainable systems for mentorship, professional networking, and resource mobilisation. These initiatives will not only support current students and recent graduates but also reinforce the University's visibility, influence, and long-term sustainability.

In the longer term, the strategic outlook for Ahmadu Bello University should be anchored in global relevance and continuous performance monitoring. Systematic use of graduate tracer studies as a recurring institutional practice will enable data-driven governance, informed policy reform, and measurable improvement in employability and alumni outcome indicators. By aligning its academic mission with national development priorities and global benchmarks, ABU is well positioned to strengthen its role as a leading African university—one that combines academic excellence with demonstrable socio-economic impact and global competitiveness.



