

Editorial: From Continuity to Character

Editors-in-Chief

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A third edition changes the question. The first asks whether a journal can begin. The second asks whether it can continue. By the third, the question becomes more uncomfortable, and perhaps more important: what exactly is this journal becoming? Beginning carries its own excitement. Continuation carries reassurance. But a third edition brings something different. It introduces expectation. Readers no longer encounter the journal as a new arrival whose intentions are still being explained; they begin to recognize patterns. Authors notice what kinds of scholarship are being welcomed. Reviewers become familiar with the standards expected of them. Editors discover which principles survive contact with the practical messiness of publishing and which sounded much easier when written in policy documents. An institutional memory begins to form. That matters. A journal does not acquire an identity because its website contains an aims-and-scope statement. Identity emerges slowly, manuscript by manuscript, decision by decision, correction by correction, sometimes through choices that appear almost trivial at the time. Which questions are taken seriously? Which methodological weaknesses are challenged? How much patience is offered to a promising early-career researcher whose argument is not yet fully formed? When does encouragement become indulgence? When does rigor become unnecessary gatekeeping? Does interdisciplinary scholarship genuinely receive room to breathe, or is interdisciplinarity praised in principle while disciplinary boundaries remain intact in practice? By a third edition, these questions can no longer be postponed indefinitely.

The Research Journal of Maaref University of Applied Sciences (RJMU) enters this edition with greater confidence than it possessed at its beginning, but

confidence, if it means anything academically, should not make a journal more comfortable. It should make it more accountable. Continuity earns neither authority nor credibility automatically. It merely creates the conditions under which both might eventually be deserved. That distinction is worth dwelling on because academic publishing is unusually good at producing symbols of legitimacy. Volume numbers accumulate. Websites become more polished. Editorial boards grow. Citations appear. Indexing applications are submitted. Metrics arrive, sometimes eagerly watched. These developments have their place, of course; pretending otherwise would be disingenuous. Visibility matters. Discoverability matters. Reputation matters because knowledge that cannot be found has difficulty entering wider conversations. Yet there is a danger in confusing the signs of scholarship with scholarship itself. A journal can look established before it has learned how to listen. It can become technically efficient while intellectually timid. It can publish regularly and still lose curiosity. The real maturation of a journal occurs somewhere less visible: in the quality of the questions it permits, the seriousness with which evidence is treated, the intellectual generosity of review, the willingness to admit uncertainty, and the stubborn refusal to make a claim sound larger merely because a larger claim travels farther.

The third edition of RJMU arrives, then, not as an announcement that the journal has “arrived,” whatever that would mean, but as evidence that it is entering a more demanding stage of its development. The novelty of beginning is fading. Something better should replace it: character. Character in scholarship is difficult to manufacture. It appears in the choices made when nobody is watching closely. It appears when a

reviewer spends another hour explaining why an analysis does not yet support the conclusion rather than writing two dismissive sentences. It appears when an author decides to report an inconvenient limitation instead of hiding it beneath confident prose. It appears when editors resist the temptation to equate fashionable terminology with originality. It appears when a journal is willing to publish research rooted in a specific place without treating “local” as a synonym for intellectually minor. It appears when an institution understands that international relevance is not achieved by erasing where scholarship comes from. And this third edition comes from somewhere.

It emerges from a university and an academic community living through a period in which change is not an abstract concept. Economic structures are shifting. Digital systems are expanding unevenly. Artificial intelligence has moved from specialist discussion into classrooms, workplaces, writing practices, industrial environments, and everyday conversation with extraordinary speed. Institutions are being asked to modernize while still repairing older vulnerabilities. Education is expected to become more technologically sophisticated, yet questions of access, equity, cognitive development, academic integrity, and human judgment have become harder, not easier. Economic reform touches accounting systems as much as national policy. Organizational trust competes with rumor. Sustainability is no longer an optional vocabulary attached to research after the fact; it increasingly alters how research itself should be designed.

The contributions gathered in this edition are strikingly different from one another on the surface. Language learning sits beside industrial artificial intelligence. Cognitive psychology meets applied linguistics. Presentation practice meets genre analysis. Entrepreneurship and regional competitiveness appear alongside accounting transformation, higher-education resilience, nonprofit communication, and pharmaceutical analysis. One contribution asks what artificial intelligence means for language learners; another asks what happens when educational technologies themselves reproduce marginalization. Elsewhere, the concern is not language at all, but the invisible integrity of industrial data pipelines, the ecological quality of analytical chemistry, or the enormous practical consequences of changing the nominal scale through which an economy records value. At first glance, it can feel almost too diverse. But perhaps that first glance is misleading. Look slightly longer and a common preoccupation begins to appear. Again and again, these studies confront systems under pressure and ask how those systems

should adapt without losing what makes them trustworthy. That may be the quiet intellectual thread running through this edition.

Artificial Intelligence, Learning, and the Question of Human Judgment

Artificial intelligence offers a particularly vivid example. Its presence across several contributions is not surprising; AI has become almost impossible to avoid in contemporary discussions of education, language, industry, communication, and organizational decision-making. But what is more interesting than the presence of AI is the refusal of these contributions to treat it as a magical answer. The seduction of technological language is powerful. “Intelligent.” “Adaptive.” “Personalized.” “Automated.” “Predictive.” The vocabulary itself can create an aura of inevitability, as though the existence of a technological capacity settles the question of whether, where, and how it should be used. It doesn’t. One of the recurring tensions in this edition concerns the boundary between assistance and substitution. AI may offer learners individualized practice, immediate feedback, conversational opportunities, and forms of support that a teacher facing a large class cannot possibly reproduce every minute of the day. That possibility deserves serious attention. Personalized instruction has long been one of education’s difficult promises: pedagogically desirable, practically expensive. Artificial intelligence changes the scale at which personalization can be attempted. But scale is not wisdom.

A system may correct language without understanding embarrassment. It may produce a fluent answer without experiencing the cognitive effort through which a learner would have discovered that answer. It may simulate conversation without carrying the social history contained in a dialect, a joke, a hesitation, or a word that means one thing in a textbook and something quite different when spoken in a particular street, household, profession, or generation. This distinction becomes especially important when technological enthusiasm enters language education. Language is not simply information transmitted through correct syntax. It carries affiliation, memory, class, humor, intimacy, power, exclusion, affection, and occasionally contradiction. People say things they do not literally mean and expect others to understand them perfectly. They break grammatical rules to signal belonging. They soften a sentence because a relationship matters more than efficiency. They choose one word instead of its technically accurate synonym because the technically accurate synonym would sound absurd in that room. A machine can become remarkably capable

at modeling such patterns. That does not make the patterns trivial. The question, then, is not whether AI can participate in language learning. It already does. The more serious question is what kind of participation preserves learning rather than quietly replacing it.

Here, the contribution on working memory offers an unexpectedly useful counterpoint. The cognitive architecture of language learning reminds us that often marketed through the language of reducing effort, yet some effort is precisely what learning requires. The task is not to maximize difficulty for its own sake; unnecessary cognitive burden helps nobody. But neither should education become so frictionless that the learner rarely has to retrieve, struggle, revise, compare, or construct. A perfectly effortless educational environment might be a terrible place to learn.

This is one of the central dilemmas of our technological moment. Assistance can become so efficient that it removes the very cognitive activity it was meant to support. The line is rarely obvious. A translation tool can scaffold comprehension or prevent the learner from attempting comprehension. Automated feedback can reveal patterns or encourage dependency. Generative AI can provoke better questions or eliminate the need to formulate one's own. The same tool can do both things, sometimes for the same learner on the same afternoon. Pedagogy lives in that ambiguity. It is why the teacher's role does not disappear as systems become more capable. If anything, the role becomes more interpretive. Teachers increasingly have to decide where technology belongs in a learning sequence, when support should be reduced, when an apparently excellent AI response hides shallow understanding, when a student needs another explanation, and when the most educationally responsible intervention is itself with the smoothness of objectivity. This is why technological inclusion cannot be measured only by distribution. A tool can be available and still exclude. A platform can be accessible and still misrecognize. An algorithm can treat everyone according to identical procedures and still reproduce deeply unequal outcomes. Fairness is more difficult than sameness.

Infrastructure, Applied Research, and the Reality Beneath the Surface

The industrial AI contribution in this edition approaches another side of the same problem: what happens beneath the visible intelligence? We tend to notice outputs. Predictions. Dashboards. Automated alerts. Recommendations. What remains hidden is the infrastructure that makes those outputs possible—the

acquisition involves effort: holding unfamiliar information, manipulating it, rehearsing it, linking it with existing knowledge, selecting among competing interpretations, retrieving what almost disappeared a moment earlier. Learning is partly the story of what the mind does while information is still unstable. There is something wonderfully inconvenient about that fact. Educational technologies are

simply to let the student struggle for another minute. Not everything that can be automated should be.

The third edition's attention to educational inequality makes this discussion harder still, and rightly so. Technological innovation is frequently introduced with democratic language: access, inclusion, personalization, scale. Those aspirations are meaningful. Yet technologies enter societies that are already unequal. They do not descend into neutral territory. A student with uninterrupted broadband, a recent laptop, strong digital literacy, fluency in a dominant language, and access to premium AI services inhabits a very different technological reality from a student sharing an older device, relying on unstable connectivity, communicating through an underrepresented language or dialect, and studying in an institution where digital infrastructure itself is fragile. Both may technically have “access to AI.” That phrase conceals more than it reveals.

The digital divide is no longer merely a question of who is online. It concerns the quality of connection, the ability to use systems critically, the visibility of one's language within training data, the assumptions embedded in algorithms, the ways automated assessment interprets difference, and the degree to which users can contest a computational judgment that presents

sensors, data cleaning, integration, timestamps, contextual information, validation procedures, monitoring systems, human overrides, and countless small decisions through which raw traces become something a model can use. There is a lesson here that extends beyond industry. Intelligence depends on infrastructure. A spectacular algorithm fed unreliable information remains spectacularly unreliable. A sophisticated model cannot repair every ambiguity produced by poor data governance. A dashboard may look precise while concealing weak assumptions beneath it. The glamour tends to gather at the visible end of technological systems, whereas trust is often produced by the unglamorous work underneath: calibration, documentation, verification, version control, audit trails, quality assurance, and people willing to ask whether the output actually makes sense.

Academic journals know something about invisible infrastructure too. Readers see articles. They do not usually see the correspondence, formatting corrections, reviewer searches, revision rounds, reference checks, ethical questions, rejected drafts, awkward discussions, or decisions to delay publication until something has been clarified. Yet those processes are to scholarship what data pipelines are to industrial AI. When they work, they disappear. When they fail, the visible output may remain polished for a while, but trust eventually notices. That parallel is worth keeping.

Another contribution turns toward entrepreneurship and regional competitiveness, but its deepest question is not simply how to create businesses. It concerns agency. What happens when education produces qualifications but not confidence to act? What happens when regions possess human talent but lack the ecosystems through which ideas can become opportunities? And perhaps most importantly, what kind of competitiveness is worth pursuing? This matters especially in regions accustomed to being described through deficiency. There is a subtle violence in narratives that continually tell communities what they lack. Investment gaps. Infrastructure gaps. Skills gaps. Innovation gaps. Governance gaps. Each may be empirically defensible, yet accumulated deficit language can eventually distort how people imagine their own possibilities. A region becomes a catalogue of absences. Research should be capable of naming problems without imprisoning communities inside them.

An entrepreneurial mindset, understood carefully, offers one way out of that intellectual trap. It does not mean romanticizing individual “hustle” or pretending that structural barriers disappear when people become sufficiently motivated. That would be cruel as well as analytically weak. Institutions matter. Finance matters. Peace matters. Infrastructure matters. Regulation matters. Geography matters. Still, agency matters too. The capacity to imagine a different arrangement, connect resources, create value, recognize opportunity, cooperate under uncertainty, and act before circumstances become perfect has developmental significance far beyond company formation. Universities have a role here not because every graduate should become an entrepreneur, but because higher education should cultivate the intellectual confidence to believe that knowledge can be used to alter reality rather than merely describe it.

That idea resonates strongly with the circumstances from which RJMU itself is developing. There is a temptation, when discussing scholarship emerging

from Syria or other crisis-affected environments, to romanticize resilience. We should resist it. Hardship is not inherently ennobling. Scarcity does not automatically produce creativity. Conflict does not make research more authentic. Disruption exhausts people, breaks institutions, interrupts education, scatters expertise, damages infrastructure, consumes time that could have been spent on discovery, and narrows horizons in ways outsiders often underestimate. The achievement is not the hardship. The achievement is refusing to allow hardship to define the entire intellectual horizon. That difference matters enormously.

The research on higher-education resilience included in this edition belongs within that more sober understanding. Resilience should not become a flattering word used to excuse permanent institutional vulnerability. A university should not be praised indefinitely for surviving conditions that ought to improve. Genuine resilience means developing capacities that allow institutions not merely to absorb shocks, but to learn, reorganize, preserve essential functions, protect knowledge, invest in people, and eventually move from survival toward development. Digital human capital becomes especially important here. Technology without people who can interpret, govern, maintain, question, and adapt it is fragile. Digital transformation is not achieved by purchasing platforms. A university can acquire expensive systems and remain institutionally analogue in the deeper sense: fragmented information, weak coordination, unclear responsibilities, poor data culture, and technological decisions disconnected from academic purpose. Transformation occurs when capability changes.

The same logic appears, in a very different domain, in the contribution examining Syria's 2026 currency redenomination. Monetary reform may be expressed through a numerical conversion, but its consequences travel through accounting systems, financial reporting, information infrastructure, enterprise practices, public understanding, and institutional credibility. Numbers change quickly on paper. Systems do not. There is something almost symbolic about including such research in this edition. Applied scholarship is most valuable when it arrives close enough to reality to be useful while reality is still moving.

Research is sometimes imagined as a distant activity: observe, collect, analyze, publish after the event has settled. That distance has methodological advantages. Perspective improves with time. Yet societies undergoing transformation also need scholarship capable of entering the difficult middle—when

regulations are evolving, organizations are adapting, data is imperfect, and decisions cannot simply wait for historical clarity. This does not license speculation dressed as evidence. Quite the opposite. Research conducted near a moving policy environment requires unusual discipline because uncertainty is larger. Claims must be bounded carefully. Assumptions must be visible. Recommendations should distinguish what is known from what is plausible. But when done responsibly, such scholarship can connect academic analysis with decisions that have immediate consequences. That is one meaning of “applied” that RJMU increasingly wants to protect.

Applied research is sometimes treated as academically secondary, as though theory represents intellectual depth while application merely follows instructions derived elsewhere. Real applied research is nothing like that. Reality is an aggressive reviewer. It exposes assumptions quickly. An accounting model meets an informal economy. An educational technology meets unstable connectivity. An industrial algorithm meets a failing sensor. A pharmaceutical method meets sustainability constraints. A communication strategy meets rumor, mistrust, and social memory. A language model meets dialect. An entrepreneurship policy meets a region whose infrastructure does not resemble the context from which the policy was borrowed. Then the neatness disappears. Good applied scholarship does not resent this. It learns from it.

The green analytical chemistry contribution offers a particularly concrete illustration. Scientific quality can no longer be separated easily from environmental responsibility. The question is not only whether a method works, but how it works: what resources it consumes, what waste it produces, what hazards accompany it, whether safer alternatives exist, and whether analytical performance can be preserved while reducing environmental cost. This reflects a broader transformation in the meaning of scientific excellence. Precision remains essential. Reliability remains essential. Reproducibility remains essential. But excellence increasingly includes awareness of consequences outside the immediate experimental objective. That shift is healthy. For too long, some forms of scientific thinking treated externalities as someone else's problem. Waste belonged to environmental policy. Social effects belonged to sociology. Ethics belonged to committees. Accessibility belonged to administration. The narrow technical question could then remain beautifully clean. Real problems rarely respect those separations.

Interdisciplinarity, Communication, and the Changing Form of Scholarship

Perhaps that is why the interdisciplinary character of this edition feels less like miscellany and more like a statement about the world applied sciences are trying to understand. The boundaries between disciplines are useful; they organize expertise, methods, traditions, and communities of practice. But the boundaries are ours. Problems do not read university organizational charts. Artificial intelligence is simultaneously computational, educational, ethical, economic, linguistic, psychological, and political. Currency reform is monetary, accounting-related, technological, behavioral, and institutional. University resilience touches management, human capital, digital infrastructure, policy, psychology, and organizational learning. Rumor inside nonprofit environments is not merely a marketing problem; it is a question of trust, communication, perception, social networks, institutional legitimacy, and lived experience. Some questions simply refuse to stay in one faculty. RJMU should make room for them.

That does not mean weakening disciplinary standards in the name of interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinary work becomes meaningful only when it respects the intellectual seriousness of the fields it crosses. Combining fashionable words from several disciplines is not synthesis. True synthesis is harder. It requires enough humility to recognize that another field has methods, assumptions, and debates that cannot be mastered through a weekend of reading. A journal with a broad scope carries a particular responsibility here. Breadth can become strength, because unexpected connections become visible. It can also become incoherence if every subject is welcomed without a shared standard of inquiry. The unifying principle cannot simply be topic. It must be seriousness. Are the research questions meaningful? Are the methods appropriate to those questions? Are interpretations proportional to the evidence? Are limitations acknowledged? Does the work add something—a dataset, an argument, a method, a synthesis, an application, a critical perspective, a conceptual clarification—that another scholar can use, test, question, or build upon? Those questions travel reasonably well across disciplines.

The contribution on presentations and the work on contemporary genre analysis remind us of another dimension of knowledge that scientists occasionally underestimate: form matters. An idea does not enter public life simply because it is correct. It must be communicated. Presentations, research articles, policy briefs, technical reports, conference talks, classroom

explanations, digital posts, peer-review responses—each organizes meaning differently. Genres are not decorative containers into which finished ideas are poured. They shape which ideas can be expressed, whose voices sound legitimate, what counts as evidence, how authority is constructed, and what readers are expected to do next.

This becomes especially fascinating in the age of generative AI, where the production of formally competent language has become dramatically easier. We are entering a period in which polished prose can no longer be treated as reliable evidence of careful thinking. That should unsettle academia a little. For centuries, scholarly institutions have used writing not simply as communication but as an indirect indicator of intellectual labor. To produce a coherent literature review, one had to read. To construct an argument, one generally had to struggle through the relationships among ideas. To explain a method clearly, one usually had to understand what had been done. Those relationships are no longer guaranteed.

Generative systems can produce the appearance of synthesis without the experience of synthesis. They can create elegant transitions across ideas that the user has barely examined. They can turn weak reasoning into fluent sentences and, perhaps more dangerously, make uncertainty sound confident. Academic publishing will have to adapt. The answer cannot be nostalgia. AI will not politely disappear because universities find it inconvenient. Nor should it. These technologies can assist researchers in useful ways—language support, coding, brainstorming, organization, accessibility, exploratory analysis, perhaps many functions we are only beginning to understand. But journals will increasingly have to ask not only whether a manuscript reads well but whether its intellectual provenance is defensible.

Where did the argument come from? Can the sources be verified? Does the author understand the methodology described? Are citations real and relevant? Can underlying data or analytical decisions be explained? Has AI assistance obscured authorship or accountability? Most fundamentally: who is prepared to stand behind the claims? Authorship is not merely the production of sentences. It is responsibility for meaning. That principle will matter increasingly to RJMU. AI literacy must become part of editorial literacy, reviewer literacy, and author literacy. The journal should neither respond with panic nor surrender to convenience. It should respond as scholarship usually responds to disruptive tools: by developing clearer norms, asking better questions, testing assumptions, revising policy when evidence

changes, and preserving the principle that technological assistance never removes human accountability.

Slowness, Peer Review, and the Ethics of Academic Trust

There is a related temptation in the contemporary research environment: speed. Everything pushes toward faster output. Faster review. Faster publication. Faster dissemination. Faster metrics. Faster commentary. Faster reaction to whatever topic is currently absorbing attention. Speed can be valuable. A clinically important finding should not sit unnecessarily in an editorial queue. Research relevant to a rapidly developing crisis may lose value if delayed excessively. Inefficient publishing processes deserve reform. But there is a distinction between removing unnecessary delay and removing necessary thought.

Peer review takes time because another person must think. Revision takes time because authors occasionally discover, midway through responding to a reviewer, that the reviewer was right in a more fundamental way than expected. Verification takes time. Changing one's mind takes time. Scholarship should protect enough slowness for those things to happen.

The second edition of this journal argued for the patient discipline of peer-reviewed publication in a culture increasingly attracted to immediacy. The third edition must carry that principle further because the environment has become even less forgiving. Information is now produced at a rate no human researcher can absorb. Synthetic content floods search spaces. Citations travel without being read. Claims are repeated until repetition creates the appearance of consensus. Under such circumstances, journals become filters—but that word is too mechanical. Perhaps places of deliberation is better. A journal should create a pause between having something to say and permanently entering it into the scholarly record. That pause is valuable.

It is also why peer review must never become ceremonial. A reviewer is not a stamp. An editor is not a traffic controller moving documents from submission to publication. The purpose of review is not to make every manuscript look alike or to punish unconventional work until it becomes conventional. Its purpose is to expose scholarship to informed resistance. Good ideas survive resistance differently. They become clearer. Weak assumptions become visible. Overstated claims shrink to their defensible size. Methods become more transparent. Sometimes

the entire argument changes direction. And occasionally a manuscript should not survive. A serious journal must be capable of saying no, even when publication would be easier, even when an author is disappointed, even when the subject is fashionable, even when the institution would enjoy another item in its output statistics. Openness is not the absence of standards.

Nor should standards become excuses for exclusion. This tension will remain one of RJMU's most delicate responsibilities as it grows. Many researchers emerging from underrepresented academic environments possess valuable questions and data but may not have had equal access to mentorship, methodological training, international networks, advanced editing support, or the tacit conventions of academic publishing. Rejecting such voices mechanically reproduces inequality. Accepting inadequate scholarship merely because its context is difficult does something equally damaging: it implies that researchers from those environments should be held to lesser intellectual expectations. Neither position is respectful. The better path is demanding mentorship. Where a contribution has genuine potential, editorial and reviewer feedback should help the author reach the standard rather than simply announce the distance from it. This takes more time. It may not be efficient in the narrowest administrative sense. But journals embedded within developing research cultures do more than select scholarship. They help create the conditions under which stronger scholarship becomes possible. This is one reason young researchers matter so much to the future of RJMU.

The first successful publication can change a person's understanding of academia. Suddenly the scholarly world becomes less distant. Peer review stops being a mysterious external judgment and becomes a process one has experienced. Citation becomes less mechanical because someone may now cite your argument. Methodological choices acquire consequences. The phrase "research community" becomes tangible. A research culture is built partly through these individual moments. Not all of them will produce famous papers. That is not the point. Universities become intellectually alive when research ceases to belong only to a small group of established academics and becomes something students, lecturers, professionals, and emerging scholars can imagine themselves participating in seriously. This journal should help create that imagination without lowering the threshold of rigor required to enter the conversation.

Local Knowledge, International Reach, and the Meaning of Openness

The distinction between local and international scholarship also deserves continued attention. RJMU is published from Syria. That fact should neither confine its intellectual ambition nor be hidden beneath an imitation of journals produced elsewhere. Place matters. Syria generates research questions shaped by economic transition, institutional reconstruction, educational interruption, demographic movement, technological constraints, health needs, organizational adaptation, and complex relationships between local realities and global systems. These subjects can produce knowledge that is locally urgent and internationally valuable at the same time. "International" does not mean placeless. Some of the most useful scholarship travels precisely because it began by paying unusually close attention to somewhere specific.

A study rooted in Northwest Syria may illuminate trust inside humanitarian organizations elsewhere. Research on institutional resilience in crisis-affected higher education can matter far beyond Syria as universities globally confront war, disasters, pandemics, cyberattacks, political turbulence, migration, and fiscal pressure. Accounting responses to monetary change belong to a broader international history of economies attempting redenomination under very different institutional conditions. Educational inequality in AI systems is unmistakably global, even when particular forms of exclusion emerge differently across languages and regions. Local evidence becomes internationally valuable when it is sufficiently rigorous to travel without losing its context. That is the balance.

The journal does not need to choose between being Syrian and being international. It should become international partly by being intellectually honest about where its scholarship comes from. Internationalization itself should be approached without romanticism. Collaboration is valuable, but international visibility can become another academic status game if detached from substance. A logo on a partnership agreement means little if researchers never work together. A list of countries on an editorial board means little if intellectual exchange remains one-directional. Internationalization becomes meaningful when methods are questioned across contexts, researchers share data and expertise, authors read scholarship outside their usual traditions, and institutions allow themselves to learn rather than merely display affiliation. Real exchange changes both sides. That can be uncomfortable. Good. Academia becomes intellectually fragile when every

collaboration confirms what participants already believe.

Open access belongs within this philosophy too. The journal's commitment to accessible scholarship is not simply a distribution mechanism. It reflects an argument about whom research is for. A paper on nonprofit organizations should be readable by people working in nonprofit organizations. Research on language education should be accessible to teachers who may never enter a subscription database. Work on digital transformation in universities should not be available only to institutions wealthy enough to purchase expensive journal packages. Studies with implications for Syrian economic and educational life should, wherever possible, remain visible to Syrian readers.

Knowledge funded by time, public institutions, communities, participants, and collective intellectual traditions carries obligations beyond professional advancement. Open access helps meet one of those obligations. Yet access alone is not enough. An unread open-access article is still unread. Accessibility also involves language, discoverability, relevance, and communication. Scholars sometimes write as though obscurity proves seriousness. It doesn't. Some ideas are difficult because the ideas themselves are difficult. Others become difficult because academics have forgotten how to explain them. Clarity is not intellectual surrender. There is courage in writing a complex argument plainly enough that another person can disagree with it accurately.

As RJMU develops, this should remain part of its editorial character: depth without unnecessary opacity, accessibility without intellectual simplification, interdisciplinary reach without methodological vagueness, local relevance without isolation, international aspiration without mimicry. None of these balances is easy. Perhaps that is the point. The most worthwhile principles in publishing tend to exist in tension. Be fast enough to remain relevant, slow enough to remain careful. Be open enough to welcome unfamiliar voices, selective enough to protect credibility. Encourage innovation, but ask whether novelty actually contributes anything. Support authors, but do not protect arguments from necessary criticism. Use technology, but do not outsource judgment to it. Seek visibility, but do not let metrics decide what is worth knowing. A journal matures by learning to live inside these tensions without pretending they have been solved.

Building a Research Culture Through Repetition

The third edition gives RJMU another opportunity to practice that maturity. There will be imperfections.

Any editorial claiming otherwise would be suspicious. Formatting can improve. Policies can become clearer. Reviewer networks can broaden. Methodological expectations can become more consistent across fields. Editorial processes can become more efficient without becoming mechanical. International participation can deepen. The quality of every future edition should create a slightly more demanding benchmark for the one that follows. That is what development should look like. Not reinvention every six months. Accumulation.

A stronger review here. A clearer policy there. Better metadata. More careful citation practices. Wider reviewer expertise. Improved author guidance. Greater methodological diversity. More international collaboration. Stronger institutional archiving. More transparent correction procedures. A student who publishes a first paper and later becomes a reviewer. A lecturer who begins collaborating with a researcher abroad because they encountered each other's work through the journal. These developments are not dramatic individually. Academic institutions are often built from undramatic things repeated well.

There is a tendency to speak of the future as though it arrives through grand decisions. Sometimes it does. More often, the future enters quietly through habits. A habit of checking. A habit of citing carefully. A habit of asking whether the evidence really supports the sentence. A habit of answering reviewers thoughtfully rather than defensively. A habit of declaring limitations. A habit of sharing knowledge. A habit of returning to an argument because it still isn't quite right. Over years, these habits become culture. Culture becomes reputation. And reputation, when deserved, becomes trust. This third edition is one more layer in that process.

To the authors whose work appears here: publication marks an achievement, but it should not be understood as the end of the research. Once an article becomes public, it begins another life. Readers may use it in ways the author never anticipated. Some will agree. Some will challenge. Someone may reproduce a method and obtain a different result. Another researcher may take a minor observation from page six and turn it into an entirely new study. This unpredictability is one of scholarship's pleasures. Let the work travel. And let it be questioned.

To the reviewers: much of what you contribute will remain invisible by design. Readers will not see the paragraph that was rewritten because you noticed an ambiguity, the table that was corrected after you questioned a calculation, or the conclusion that became

more cautious because you asked for evidence. Yet those invisible interventions become part of the final paper. Academic publishing rests on an astonishing amount of labor performed without public authorship. It deserves acknowledgment.

To the editorial team: continuity is becoming responsibility. Each edition increases the weight of precedent. Decisions made now will shape what future contributors expect from the journal. Consistency matters, but consistency should never become rigidity. Policies should be dependable enough to build trust and revisable enough to improve when experience reveals their weaknesses.

To Maaref University of Applied Sciences: sustaining a journal means sustaining more than a publication. It means maintaining an environment in which inquiry is institutionally legitimate. It means allowing researchers to ask difficult questions, recognizing editorial labor, supporting ethical review, encouraging students to see research as part of their education, and treating knowledge production as a long-term institutional function rather than a decorative achievement.

And to our readers, wherever you are: do not read this edition politely. Read it critically. Mark the argument you find convincing. Question the one you don't. Follow a reference. Test a claim. Use a method. Write to an author. Bring a finding into a classroom. Compare one study with a different context. Notice a limitation and design research that addresses it. A journal becomes useful only when readers do something with what it publishes. Citation is one form of engagement, but not the only one. Thought is another.

What the Third Edition Should Mean

This third edition appears during an unusually unsettled intellectual period. Artificial intelligence is changing how knowledge is produced. Climate pressures are changing the conditions under which science and development must operate. Economic instability continues to reshape institutions and households. Higher education is negotiating digital transformation while still trying to understand what should remain unmistakably human. Trust—in institutions, information, expertise, media, and sometimes research itself—is increasingly difficult to earn. These pressures do not make scholarship less relevant. They make careless scholarship more dangerous and serious scholarship more necessary.

The answer is not to promise certainty where certainty does not exist. The best research often complicates a question before it answers it. It may identify relationships without proving causation. It may reveal that a policy effective in one context fails in another. It may discover that a technological solution creates a social problem. It may replace one confident assumption with three more precise questions. That is progress too. Knowledge does not always advance in a straight line toward certainty. Sometimes it advances by becoming less wrong. There is humility in that understanding, and academia could use more of it.

Perhaps this is the character RJMU should continue building: intellectually ambitious without pretending omniscience; rooted without becoming inward-looking; technologically curious without becoming technologically obedient; open to innovation without surrendering to fashion; willing to publish practical research without reducing scholarship to immediate utility; proud of where it comes from without expecting geography to excuse weakness. A demanding identity, certainly. But a worthwhile one.

The first edition had to prove that a beginning was possible. The second had to show that the beginning would not disappear. The third faces a subtler task. It must begin turning persistence into identity. From here onward, the journal will increasingly be judged not by the courage it took to start, but by the quality of what it repeatedly chooses to become. That is fair. It is also welcome. Institutions that want trust must eventually invite judgment.

So this edition is offered neither as a monument nor as a milestone polished until every uncertainty disappears. It is offered as another piece of an academic structure still being built—stronger than before, unfinished by design. There are more questions to ask. More methods to test. More authors to welcome. More errors to catch. More assumptions to unsettle. More collaborations to build. More knowledge to make public. The door remains open, but the threshold is becoming clearer.

Enter with curiosity.

Enter with evidence.

Enter prepared to be questioned.

A first edition says: we are beginning.

A second says: we intend to remain.

A third says something more demanding:
now let the work define us.

About the Authors

Dr. Ahmed Abu Hajar is Vice-President of Maaref University of Applied Sciences, Syria, and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Research Journal of Maaref University of Applied Sciences (RJMU). Through his senior academic leadership, he contributes to the university's continuing institutional development and to the cultivation of an environment in which teaching, research, academic responsibility, and scholarly communication reinforce one another. His role places him at the intersection of university governance and academic development, with particular attention to strengthening the institutional conditions through which research can become a sustained part of university life rather than an isolated activity. As Co-Editor-in-Chief of RJMU, Dr. Abu Hajar contributes to shaping the journal's academic direction, editorial standards, interdisciplinary character, and commitment to responsible scholarly publishing. His work with the journal reflects a wider conviction that universities are not merely places where existing knowledge is transmitted; they must also create spaces in which new questions can be asked, evidence can be examined critically, and scholarship emerging from Syria can participate confidently in wider regional and international academic conversations.

Dr. Mustafa Kayyali is an academic, researcher, editor, and higher-education specialist whose work spans quality assurance, accreditation, internationalization, academic publishing, institutional development, management, and education. He serves as Manager of Quality Assurance, Accreditation and

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