PBL CENTER
NEWSLETTER

Academic Year 2025/2026
Volume 1, Issue 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- Semester Highlights
- SEL & PBL Workshop
- Reflective Learning Initiative
- Student Projects & Innovation
- GCC Student Achievements
- Sustainability & SDSN
- Future Initiatives

WELCOME MESSAGE



Dr. Jean Henri El Achkar

Manager of the PBL Center & Associate Professor

The Spring 2025–2026 semester marked an important milestone for the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Center at the Australian University (AU). As the Center continues to grow, this semester reflects our shared commitment to strengthening experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, sustainability engagement, and student-centered education across AU.

Throughout the semester, students and faculty engaged in a variety of learning experiences that connected academic knowledge with real-world engineering and sustainability challenges.

From faculty development initiatives and reflective learning projects to student achievements at national and GCC-level competitions, the semester highlighted the growing impact of Project-Based Learning within the university community.

This newsletter reflects some of the important activities, collaborations, and accomplishments that shaped the semester. It also represents the beginning of a broader vision for the PBL Center: creating meaningful, applied, and human-centered learning experiences that prepare students to become future-ready graduates capable of making a real impact in their communities and professions.

I would like to sincerely thank all students, faculty members, collaborators, and university leadership for their continued support and contributions throughout the semester.

Learning in Action. Impact in Practice.


PBL CENTER
Highlights
SPRING 2025–2026
Learning in Action. Impact in Practice.
40
FACULTY PARTICIPANTS
IN THE SEL-PBL WORKSHOP
2
AU TEAMS RANKED AMONG
GCC TOP 5
AT GPCA CARBON NEUTRALITY CUP 2025
1ST PLACE
KOGS 2026
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' COMPETITION
SDSN
AU OFFICIALLY JOINED THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK
NEW INITIATIVE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PBL REFLECTIVE BOOKLET
STUDENT PROJECTS
• SIMULATIONS
• PROTOTYPES
• LABORATORY ACTIVITIES
• SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS
The future of learning is experiential, interdisciplinary, and impact-driven.

FEATURE STORY

Faculty Workshop: Growing Minds and Hearts Through PBL

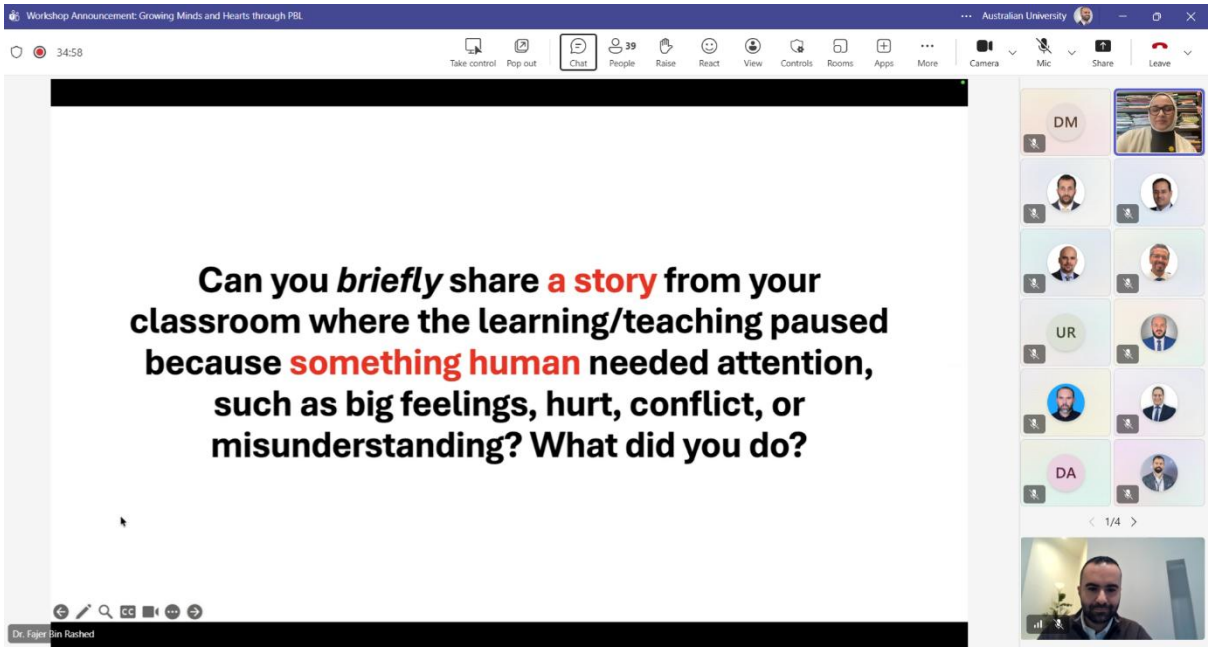


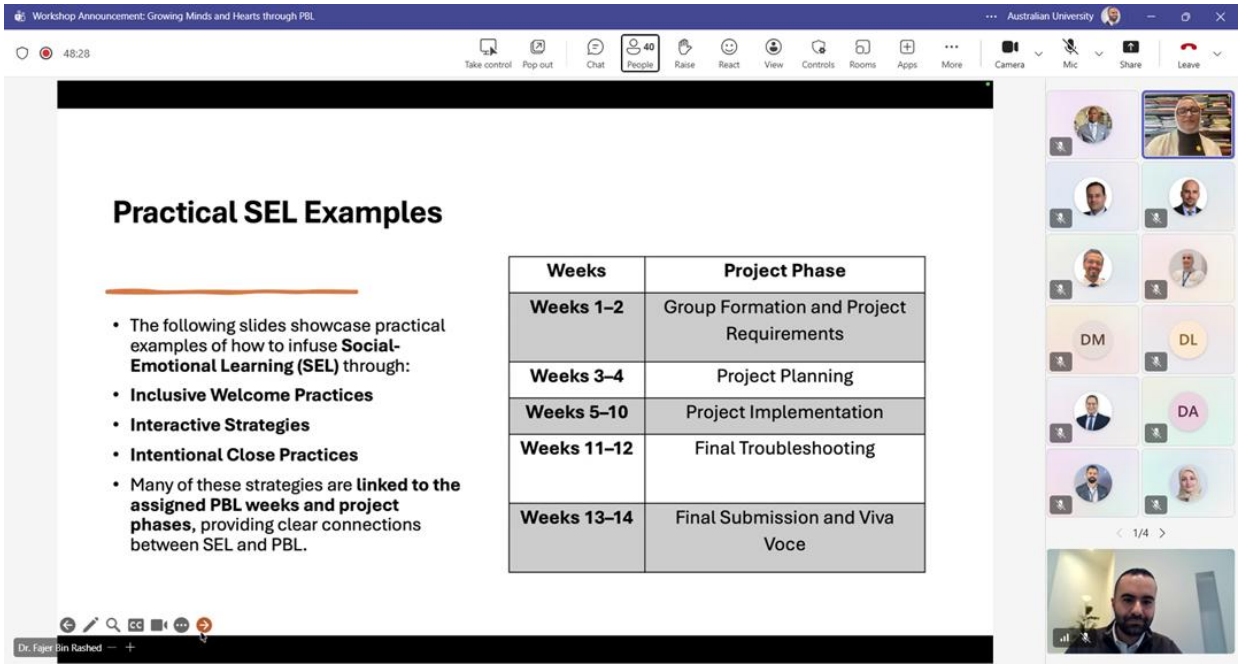
The PBL Center organized the faculty development workshop “Growing Minds and Hearts Through PBL” on April 7, 2026, focusing on integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices into Project-Based Learning environments.

Delivered by Dr. Fajer Bin Rashed from the English Language Program, the workshop introduced practical strategies to support reflective, student-centered, and emotionally aware teaching approaches across PBL in engineering education.

The initiative also marked an important step toward strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration between the College of Engineering and the English Language Program at AU.

The workshop engaged 40 faculty members across the College of Engineering and highlighted the growing interest in experiential and human-centered learning approaches within higher education.





Future engineers need both technical and emotional intelligence skills.

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

Developing the PBL Reflective Booklet



During the Spring 2025–2026 semester, the PBL Center initiated the development of a structured reflective booklet designed to support students throughout their Project-Based Learning journey.

The initiative aims to strengthen reflective learning, communication, teamwork, self-awareness, and student ownership of the learning process through guided activities and reflection prompts integrated across different stages of PBL implementation.

In a rapidly changing world shaped by artificial intelligence, automation, and technological advancement, the initiative highlights the growing importance of human-centered skills alongside technical knowledge in engineering education.

The booklet is being developed in collaboration with Dr. Fajer Bin Rashed from the English Language Program. It reflects the Center's commitment to student well-being, inclusive learning, and sustainability-oriented education aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).







Engineering education is not only about technical knowledge, but also about reflection, communication, adaptability, and human growth.

STUDENT PROJECTS & APPLIED LEARNING

Throughout the Spring 2025–2026 semester, students engaged in a variety of Project-Based Learning activities that connected technical knowledge with practical engineering applications and real-world problem solving.

Projects included:

- engineering simulations,
- modelling,
- sustainability-oriented solutions,
- applied design activities,
- prototype fabrication,
- and laboratory experimentation.

During part of the semester, teaching and project activities temporarily shifted to online delivery, requiring students and faculty to adapt to remote collaboration and virtual project development environments. Many student groups continued their work through simulations, modelling, online coordination, and virtual presentations, while selected teams finalized prototype fabrication and laboratory experimentation activities upon returning to campus.



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS & EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

AU Students Shine at SPE KOGS 2026

The College of Engineering at AU achieved notable recognition during the 5th Kuwait Oil & Gas Show (SPE KOGS 2026), held in Kuwait in February 2026.

Under the supervision of Dr. Rida Elgaddafi, Assistant Professor at the Petroleum Engineering Department, an AU student team earned First Place and received the Golden Award in the Young Professionals Competition.

As an outcome of a PBL unit, this achievement demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential learning in strengthening students' technical, analytical, teamwork, and professional skills.



AU Team Achieves 2nd Place at GPCA Carbon Neutrality Cup 2025

AU also achieved strong regional recognition during the GPCA Carbon Neutrality Cup 2025, a GCC-wide competition focused on innovative solutions supporting the transition toward net-zero emissions.

Among more than 70 project submissions from over 20 universities across the GCC, two AU undergraduate teams were selected among the Top 5 finalists for their PBL projects.

One AU team, supervised by Dr. Jean El Achkar, Associate Professor and Manager of the PBL Center, achieved 2nd Place in the Undergraduate Category through a project focused on advanced CO_2 capture simulation for refinery decarbonization.

A second AU team, supervised by Dr. Rana Malhas, Associate Professor of Petroleum Engineering, was also recognized among the Top 5 finalists for a sustainability-focused project addressing oil spill remediation through waste tire valorization.





SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENT & SDSN MEMBERSHIP



During the Spring 2025–2026 semester, AU officially joined the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), strengthening its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr. Jean El Achkar and Dr. Mortadha Al Saba were appointed as AU focal points for SDSN engagement and coordination.

The membership also creates new opportunities for collaboration with the PBL Center to support sustainability-oriented activities, interdisciplinary engagement, and student involvement in real-world sustainability challenges.

PBL CENTER BROCHURE LAUNCH



During the Spring 2025–2026 semester, the PBL Center finalized its official brochure, which presents the Center's mission, objectives, services, and role in supporting experiential and project-based learning at AU.

The brochure enhances institutional visibility while promoting awareness of PBL practices, sustainability-oriented learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real-world problem-solving.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the PBL Center continues to grow, several new initiatives and development activities are planned for Fall 2026/2027 to further strengthen experiential learning, sustainability engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and student-centered education at AU.

Upcoming Initiatives

- Launch of the PBL Reflective Booklet
- Expansion of sustainability-oriented and SDG-focused PBL activities
- Strengthening industry engagement and applied learning opportunities
- Development of the “PBL in Action” podcast initiative
- Organization of sustainability and innovation-focused student competitions and hackathon activities

The PBL Center will continue to support meaningful learning experiences that connect academic knowledge with real-world challenges, preparing future-ready graduates equipped with both technical and human-centered skills.



AU | PROJECT-BASED LEARNING CENTER