FACULTY OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

(FLS)

Student Handbook

January 2017

"Enhancement, Expansion, Diversification"

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<u>Welcome & Introduction</u>

Dear FLS Student

Welcome to the Arab Open University (AOU), and to the Faculty of Language Studies (FLS). We congratulate you on being admitted to both our faculty and our university. By joining FLS and AOU, you have joined a community of learners who are extremely committed to knowledge and advancement, as well as to learning in different and more effective ways.

This is our student guide. The Arab Open University (AOU), we believe, is not only the correct choice for high-quality education and training, but also the gateway to future career opportunities. This guide gives you all the information you need to understand what the AOU can do for you: details of entry requirements for the different academic specializations, and general course requirements which show how the University will help you develop your language and computing skills and improve your independent learning skills.

The guide gives you an overview of the University: its foundation, objectives, programmes and general rules and systems of learning and teaching. It introduces you to the courses, examinations, and assessment systems, and answers many frequently asked questions. It also gives all the information you need about FLS and your specialization.

Your tutors will be your main link with the University, so do not hesitate to get in touch with them if you need help – they will be able to put you on the right track, and they take academic advising seriously. Our administrative staff is also here to help and support you.

In return, what we expect from you is commitment to the ethos of the AOU, to its academic achievements, and to its high standards.

The AOU, you should know, is a partner of The Open University, UK www.open.ac.uk. The AOU student guide and the OU's "Student's guide to studying on a programme validated by The Open University" complement each other and should be read by all AOU students and staff. Both guides are available on our website www.arabou.edu.kw More information about validation by The Open University, UK, can be found at www.open.ac.uk/validate.

We wish you a very rewarding and fulfilling experience at AOU.

Message from the FLS Deanship

It gives the Deanship a great deal of pleasure to write this introductory message which gives you an idea about what FLS is about. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be a member of the AOU family: a family of diligent and distinguished professors, scholars, administrators, and students who all are intent upon making a difference in their lives and in the world. "Making a difference" is both our mission and our target.

When FLS was established 15 years ago, it was with the aim of offering an experience in language learning that is not offered in much (if not all) of our part of the world. It was not intended to be "just another faculty." Additionally, the idea of "open" education in the sphere of languages, in particular, is not only an elegant and advanced idea, but also – one would argue – a necessity. We can no longer afford to continue to teach and learn in traditional, old-fashioned ways. The world we live in, which has changed dramatically in the past two decades, offers so much potential and so many new tools and variables. We have to "open" ourselves to this potential and we have to make use of these tools; and, naturally, adapt to the variables and use them to our advantage. Undeniably, some levels of the traditional face-to-face methods of delivery are still relevant (in some ways, even necessary); but many levels are simply outdated, simply a waste of time. We have to tutor and learn in new ways.

We at FLS are committed to the basic principle of supported open learning, which is strongly-tied to the principle of education for all, which itself is part and parcel of the concept of lifelong learning and of the educational institution "coming" to where the students are rather than the students "going" to where the institution is. We implement the learning-outcome approach, enabling students to learn according to a carefully-drawn roadmap and assess what students actually learn, rather than "teach" what professors presume the students should be learning and assess what they assume the students have learned. We also champion students' self- or independent learning, rather than instruction and spoon feeding, which are so prevalent in face-to-face education in our region today. In fact, we at FLS consciously and conscientiously attempt to strike a balance between face-to-face education and on-line learning, thus privileging the blended-learning approach over any one single mode of learning. While all of the above principles and premises could be mere slogans at many other faculties, they are a concrete reality at FLS. And this is something to be truly proud of.

We take this opportunity to congratulate all of the FLS family members (including our dear students), past and present, on their much-valued contributions and successes to date. Clearly, a lot of effort has been exerted, and a lot of progress has been made. In the days ahead we intend to build our approach on three premises: enhancement, expansion and diversification. One of our immediate aims is to further develop the quality of the programs we offer, at both the graduate and postgraduate levels, making them world-class. And we have the will, the means and the capability to do so. Another is to expand and diversify the programs and the pathways we offer (at the level of both new languages and new concentrations), enabling students to choose what is relevant to their needs and the needs of our society. These will include programs and pathways which qualify the students for the marketplace and for the changing societal needs and demands. A third is to enhance communication with students, making their involvement and feedback a priority. A fourth, which is a

natural outcome of the former three, is to attract more students. We want FLS to be a hub for learning languages in the region.

Furthermore, we plan to contribute to scientific research, especially at the institutional level, in more ways than we have done so far, in the service of the learning process at FLS, of the needs of the Arab society (which we owe a lot), and of human knowledge more generally. The production and dissemination of knowledge in our sphere is our responsibility. There is a lot ahead of us in this brave new FLS, in facing a brave new world... But by capitalizing on the will and willingness of our faculty and students, and on our collective thinking and talent, we are determined to boldly go where no one has gone before, always exploring new territory and always adding to our successes.

Deanship of the Faculty of Language Studies

The AOU: A Brief History

In 1996, the Chairman of the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), HRH Prince Talal Bin Abel Aziz, took steps towards establishing the Arab Open University as a pan-Arab project. A working group was established under the chairmanship of HRH Prince Talal to create a development plan and leading international consultants Arthur Andersen were contracted to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study.

The concept of the Arab Open University (AOU) was formally presented to a UNESCO regional conference held in Beirut in March 1998 and subsequently to a UNESCO international conference in Paris, in October of that year. Five Arab states – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon – offered to host the AOU's headquarters and a decision was made in December 2000 for the headquarters and a branch to be located in Kuwait. At the same time, branches were established in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and a seventh branch, which started operating in September 2007, was opened in the Sultanate of Oman. Sudan Branch was established in 2013-2014. As part of its long-term plans, the AOU intends to open additional branches in other Arab countries such as Palestine and Yemen.

Teaching at the AOU started in early October 2002 in the Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon branches. Instruction in the Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt branches commenced in the fall semester of the academic year 2002/2003, while it started in the second/spring semester of the academic year 2007/2008 in the new Oman branch.

University Mission, Vision, and Goals

Mission Statement

The AOU is a higher education institution delivering an open education system of learning. The University is mandated to serve local and regional communities by offering market-driven programmes of study and research at the pan-Arab level. The University, which is student-centred, promotes education for all and seeks to disseminate knowledge through carefully chosen undergraduate and graduate programmes delivered by highly qualified academics and supported by state of the art technology.

The AOU's Vision

The AOU is realising HRH Prince Talal Bin Abel Aziz's vision of a sustainable education project by extending its services, and opening opportunities, in as many Arab countries as possible.

The AOU seeks to offer opportunities to those who would not otherwise have access to higher education. It is committed to offering high quality programmes which respond to the market needs of the Arab world in education, health, engineering, business, languages, and other key sectors. Consistent with its mission and driven by the concept of lifelong learning, the AOU offers a platform for continuing education through a combined approach in which learning is implemented through online interactive learning.

The AOU Goals

Based on the vision stated above, the AOU has adopted a set of objectives for its mission. These include:

- Offering opportunities of high quality higher education to a large and diverse population of students
- Developing a centre of excellence for open education and blended learning
- Providing a forum for continuing education across the region which will meet the needs of individuals and local communities
- Providing opportunities for professional training according to market demands
- Providing special opportunities in higher education to disadvantaged groups of potential students (e.g. women and those residing in remote areas)
- Participating, as a contributing partner, in promoting research and scholarly activities in areas of special concern to Arab society
- Promoting humanitarian and Islamic values and ethics.

Joining AOU

The AOU is unique in the Arab world by virtue of its partnership with The Open University (UK), where its graduates receive two degrees, one from the AOU and a validated award from the OU (UK). Furthermore:

- The learning system of the AOU is a blend of face-to-face tutoring and self-instructional textbooks designed for distance learning by OU in the UK, and uses the latest applications of electronic technology in teaching and learning (e-learning)
- High quality academic programmes are carefully selected and designed to meet the needs of both local and international markets
- Only 25% student attendance is required, compared to traditional modes of higher education, which helps students who have time constraints, and other commitments such as family obligations (e.g. children), or who have disabilities
- Courses are designed to accommodate working students and those commuting from remote areas
- High quality interactive educational materials are employed
- Mobility and opportunities for credit transfer across branches are possible.

The AOU encourages its students to become independent learners whereby self-learning is emphasized throughout their studies. This enables students to become lifelong learners beyond graduation.

The language of instruction at the AOU is English, which not only improves students' proficiency in the English language, but also ensures better job opportunities after graduation. Some Education programmes are taught in Arabic.

Criteria for Admission

AOU, based on its belief in equal-opportunity education and the two interconnected principles of lifelong learning and education for all, tries to reach out to as many learners as possible making education available to those who may not have an opportunity otherwise. AOU's criteria for admission are among the most liberal in our region. The only requirement it has, for a student to apply and compete for a seat, is

a high school diploma, a fundamental condition by all accrediting governmental agencies in the branch countries. Beyond this, admission – pending the availability of seats on the basis of high-school grades – is open to people of all ages, gender, religious orientation, ethnic origins, etc. Only in Saudi Arabia, and on the basis of local-accreditation requirements for open education, is a student required to become 25 years of age and older. It has to be underscored also that the accrediting bodies in the branch countries put limits on how many students AOU can admit in each programme, and AOU has to abide by the specified numbers. Therefore, if more students apply than AOU is allowed to take, AOU ranks them and then admits them on the basis of their high-school grade averages.

To be admitted in any BA programme the student should fulfill the following conditions:
- Obtain a general secondary school certificate or equivalent.
- Fulfill any other conditions determined by the University or competent authorities of the Branch country.

Language Placement Test
AOU administers Language Placement Tests in both Arabic and English, not as admission requirements but as indicators to help place students at the appropriate level of language development. Based on the test scores, students will be assigned courses, which aim to develop the students' proficiency in English/Arabic in order to undertake the full course load in their respective areas of specialization.

Partnership with the Open University UK
The AOU is approved by The Open University in the UK as an appropriate organization to offer higher education programmes leading to Open-University validated awards. OU-validated awards have parity of esteem with similar awards offered throughout the UK higher education. A validated award is exactly the same as an OU direct award in terms of employment or application for postgraduate study. Under this partnership, the OU provides the following to the AOU:

- Programmes and courses.
- Learning materials (textbooks, CDs, DVDs, etc.).
- Programme monitoring, external examining.
- Dual awards (BA/BSC), exit awards (diplomas and certificates) together with the AOU.

A System of Integrated Learning
The AOU learning and teaching model is based on high quality educational materials. The Open University-based courses offered at the AOU are taught in English and are licensed from the OU UK. The following is a brief description of the model:

- Students are allocated to an individual subject tutor in the ratio of 25:1
- Learning is facilitated through a university-wide electronic Learning Management System (LMS)

- All branches are equipped with multimedia and computing laboratories to support students
- Student assessment is carried out through two main components:
    i. Continuous assessment, i.e. Mid-Term Assessments (MTA) and Tutor Marked Assignments – (TMAs), and
    ii. Formal end-of-semester examinations
  Each of the two components comprises 50% of the overall assessment score.
- Tutors provide comprehensive feedback on students' TMAs to direct them towards better understanding of the subject matter, and to enhance their learning experience.

FLS in Brief:

History & Structure
The Faculty of Language Studies (FLS) was established in 2002, at the very start of AOU. At present, it offers a BA Programme (Hons) in English Language and Literature in all eight AOU branches. The programme is based on the Open University courses in the UK and uses textbooks and approaches of the highest international standards. Demand on the offered programmes is growing, as both are relevant not only to students' intellectual and knowledge growth, but also to their career needs.

BA Programmme (Hons) in English Language & Literature
While the first programme – English Language and Literature – is essentially made up of courses within the traditional, interrelated realms of language, literature and linguistics, it does venture also into the spheres of discourse analysis, pragmatics and culture. Clearly, a BA programme in English Language and Literature enables the graduates of the programme to be competent in the fields of linguistics and English Literature, two fields essential to any intellectual, well-rounded person's education and to any society's needs – stressing here that English literature has actually expanded over the years to include all literatures written in (or even translated into) English. Such crucial development comes with the aim of catering to students' global education and outlook – a must in today's world. But a degree in language and literature also qualifies students for the workplace. Graduates of literature and linguistics develop a command of the language that transcends their specific fields of study to include the language of journalism, media, the marketplace, politics, etc. After all, a programme in English Language and Literature graduates students in possession of excellent language communication skills, both oral and written. Recently, we have been working on developing the programme, giving students a more solid background in language and offering them more options. Toward the former end, we have just introduced a new course in Oral and Presentation Skills; toward the latter, we have introduced a new course on Children's Literature. Needless to say, during 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 all of our courses were replaced with new courses.

BA Programmme (Hons) in English language, Literature and Translation
- The BA (Hons) English Language, Literature and Translation pathway combines two popular disciplines: English and Translation. For this purpose, it

employs modules from both the BA (hons) English Language and Literature Programme and newly-introduced translation modules. Upon launching such a joint programme, FLS aims to endow students joining the pathway with the basic translation skills that enable them to benefit from some (beginner-level) translation job opportunities available in the market and/or to pursue postgraduate work in translation studies. It also, naturally, aims to boost the AOU student recruitment, as this is a strategic aim for the university.

Postgraduate Programmes

At the postgraduate level, FLS has introduced an MA in English literature. Currently, it is offered at the Jordan Branch and is being locally validated in the KSA, Oman, and Egypt Branches. In Jordan, it has been offered since September 2012, and it is a success story, as enrolment has reached full capacity and student satisfaction with the program, due to the great learning and support they receive, is high. The program will get a big boost when it begins to be offered at the rest of the aforementioned branches.

FLS is also working on introducing an MA in translation, for which there is a high demand in the market.

ELU

In addition to these specialisation programmes, FLS houses the English Language Unit which is primarily responsible for both the English Orientation & Foundation programmes. These two programmes, which the students normally take in their first-year, are tailored for students who enrol at the university, with the dual aim of working on their problem areas in English and on enhancing their English communication skills, to enable them to pursue their studies at AOU successfully and to prepare them for the workplace later. ELU is also responsible for implementing the English Placement Test (EPT) and a host of activities which support English-language learning.

FLS Goals & Core Values

Goals

1. Offer quality learning packages across the linguistic, literary and cultural domains of the target world languages which FLS is espousing.

2. Provide opportunities for relevant and effective growth to all individuals – irrespective of age and background – seeking to improve and master the various language, communication, literary, cultural and analytical skills pertaining to the languages they choose to specialize in.

3. Diversify and update the tracks offered within any single language specialisation, enabling students to concentrate on and choose from not only areas within the target language itself but also the related fields, such as translation, mass-communication, tourism, journalistic writing, etc.

4. Conduct original research across the major disciplines offered within FLS in line with the best international standards, with the aim of improving learning

in the FLS programmes on the one hand and advancing knowledge on the other.

5. Attract the most committed and qualified tutors, those who are competent in the various methods of blended learning and who act as active facilitators to student-centered learning.

6. Build solid, two-way bridges with a host of institutions concerned with language, literature, and culture within the communities in which the FLS branches function.

7. Enhance regional and international collaboration with faculties of similar vision, mission and goals.

Core Values

1. Respecting diversity in admitting students and in hiring tutors.

2. Encouraging innovation and excellence.

3. Prioritising independent learning, especially at the on-line level.

4. Highlighting the contribution of the Arab-Islamic nation in language, linguistics, literature and culture.

5. Understanding and appreciating global contributions within the spheres espoused by FLS.

6. Empowering students through confidence-building measures and tools, and enabling them to progress.

7. Continually revising study plans and assessment methods for the improvement of learning.

8. Actively seeking out compatible and outstanding regional and international partners.

9. Promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect.

Distinguished Tutors

FLS prides itself on having tutors who are extremely competent in methods of open and blended learning, and of the material taught in their courses. They constantly challenge their students to new horizons of thinking and knowledge. Besides their competence in their fields of specialisation and diligence, however, the tutors are also extremely supportive of students, always going out of their way to make them feel welcome and to offer prompt assistance when needed. FLS will continue to prioritise hiring not only outstanding tutors but stars in the field. The ELL modules in the ELL, and ELL and Translation pathway are delivered by eighty academic staff (45 full-timers and 35 part-timers) most of whom hold Ph.D.'s in English literature and linguistics, mainly from well-known international universities.

For the complete list of FLS academic staff refer to the university website. (Copy the link to your internet browser to navigate the list).

https://www.arabou.edu.kw/index.php/facultystaff/faculty-members

Continuous growth and development

Though only fifteen years old, FLS is still growing and developing with the aim of both matching developments in our fast-changing world, and catering to the diverse and ever-expanding needs of learners, wherever they are and no matter what their level in English is. A host of new programmes and activities are in the making, and they will be announced in due time. Among these will be the introduction of foreign languages, other than English – such as French, Spanish, and Chinese – both as joint specialisations with English and as elective courses for all desirous students.

Students Ready to Take the Challenge

FLS, like AOU at large, attracts students with great aspirations who value independent, open education. There is no doubt that face-to-face learning has its own value. But it also has its limitations. Too much of it tends to make students too reliant on tutors, which results in spoon-feeding, and dependence on personal contact. This is why FLS champions on-line, independent learning which not only weans students from tutors, but builds on students' own motivation to learn. Self-learning is the most effective form of learning because, among other things, it capitalises on students wanting to learn. But FLS, like AOU again, offers both face-to-face (25%) and self-learning (75%) – what we affectionately refer to as blended learning. Many of our students are mature students, who at once pursue a career and seek continuous growth.

Sustainable International Partnerships

FLS is proud of the fact that it is strongly affiliated with the OU UK which validate, accredit and assess FLS education. And this is a major source of our strength. But FLS also seeks partnerships with other HE institutions in the region with similar vision and mission, and international institutions from both East and West. In a world which has become visibly multicultural and global, global partnerships are a must – sharing experience and cooperating on several specific initiatives, projects and programmes. These international links will get a boost when we start introducing other foreign languages in the near future, either as joint degrees with English or elective courses which all AOU students could elect to study.

Rationale, Philosophy

Why Study English

Programmes of English Language and Literature in our region date back to the late 1920s and early 1930s, when they were first introduced in Iraq and Egypt under the British "mandate." Since then, they have acquired a lot of popularity, attracting some of the best students throughout the Arab World. In addition to the prestige associated with these programmes (with some describing them, in terms of popularity, as the "medicine" of the humanities), they often guaranteed their graduates almost instant

and excellent employment opportunities. The graduates of these programmes are normally proficient in language and communication skills, which are necessary in the workplace. In addition, students who enrol in an ELL programme usually find the programme a horizon opener: in many ways it is the students' window to the world. Besides the language and communication skills, the programme has always provided students enrolled in it with other important skills: critical and intellectual skills – skills which further empower the graduates in both the workplace and society at large. When AOU started deliberating in 2000 the establishment of the ELL programme, it had that background and rationale in mind. At present, the graduates of such a programme have even more opportunities in the marketplace and in society than before. This is due to the mounting importance and scope, for example, of the media and press sector, with the expansion of businesses that hire students with excellent language and other skills, with the increasing importance of NGOs, and with the spread of private schools that offer better pay, etc.

The ELL programme is particularly successful because it combines the language, linguistic, and literary elements which aid students in learning English effectively and developing the necessary critical and analytical skills. The BA (Hons) English Language, Literature and Translation (pathway) aims to endow students joining it with the basic translation skills that enable them to benefit from beginner-level translation job opportunities available in the market. Students with high GPAs can also pursue postgraduate studies in the translation field to become more professional and competent translators.

In addition to all of this, the ELL programme derives its importance at AOU from the obvious link to one of AOU's strategic objectives (among others, of course): "Instil in its students the spirit of upholding Arab-Islamic social and ethical values and an appreciation of other human cultures and heritages." As can be seen from such an objective, "an appreciation of other human cultures and heritages" is a fundamental premise at AOU. This is why ELL was one of the first four programmes of study to be launched in 2002. The willingness and desire to engage with foreign languages, cultures, and sciences is deeply rooted in the Arab-Islamic civilization. Today, as we embark on a globalized, multicultural world, knowledge of global cultures becomes a necessity. This very principle was underscored in the *Strategy for the Development of Arab Education* -- the monumental work prepared by Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization [ALECSO] published in 1979 – which proclaimed:

> *The Arab nation cannot afford to be isolated from the international community and from contemporary culture. Contrary to this, it has made throughout its history contacts with other peoples and cultures and should continue to do so in order to know the world at large and to assimilate the scientific and technological revolution… and take an active role in attaining international peace that is based on justice, right and equality.*

It should be stressed in this context that we live in a diverse, multicultural world where, in addition to the many similarities we share as human beings, there are differences among cultures. These differences should be respected and appreciated, as much as we respect and appreciate our own.

AOU underlines the importance of a degree in English, also, because:

A) English is the global lingua franca, and thus a reasonable mastery of English is an essential requirement for productive international communication and cooperation. Today, there are more than 450 million users of English as a native- or first-language and as many as 350 million users of English as a second language in countries as different as India or Nigeria. It has been estimated that about 80% of the various uses of English do not involve native-speakers at all, but involve two or more non-native speakers using the language as their lingua franca. It is furthermore predicted that, given current population trends, there will be 50% more speakers of English as a foreign language than native-speakers within a decade, making English even more vital to international communication than it is today.

B) English is the language of science, technology, business, economy, aviation, industry, and tourism, as well as the language of great literatures, and thus a necessary tool for the economic, social, cultural and technological development of each and every Arab country.

C) Specialists in English Language and Literature are generally prepared to advocate Arab and Islamic culture, modes of thinking, and ideals to the global community by employing the rhetoric appropriate to different nations in different parts of the world. Who is more equipped to contribute to this tremendous task and this type of dialogue than someone well-versed in the world's "lingua franca"?

Why English with Translation

Translation has become an indispensable tool and a market need in today's world. Such a growing market need indicates that training professional translators and interpreters can attract students' interest in domains of general and specialized translation.

FLS introduces this track with the aim of both catering to the needs of those students who wish to combine language communication skills with translation knowledge to have better job opportunities or to purse postgraduate studies in translation. FLS believes that launching a strong and viable BA (Hons) Programme in ELL and Translation will

- provide students with open learning programmes that address their academic and vocational needs;

- prepare students for further and more advanced studies in either English Language and literature or in Translation;

- prepare and qualify students for employment in the field of translation;

- promote intercultural understanding through translation from and into the Arabic culture.

With the advent of globalization, it is expected that the translation industry will be more profoundly affected by cross-cultural interaction. Graduates of ELL with translation may be targeted by public and private organizations including ministries,

private businesses, translation firms, publishing houses, schools, banks, universities as well as local media network organizations. Students with high GPA may choose to pursue further studies in translation.

Learning Resources:
Students at AOU, including FLS students, are offered various methods of student support. These include:

1. Study materials with guides and audio-visual aids. It is important to note that most of ELL materials for specialization courses are OU-based.

2. The university website www.arabou.edu.kw also embodies a lot of guidance and support materials such as: updated Course Guides, Study Calendars, Specimen Exam papers, as well as additional notes and information on courses.

3. A two-hour weekly tutorial. Students meet their tutors on weekly basis for two hours per class as part of the University's policy to adopt a system of blended learning.

4. Tutors hold weekly office hours. Students can have face-to-face contact with their tutors to seek their assistance, and ask them for clarifications. All part-time and full-time tutors are requested to hold two weekly office hours for each taught section.

5. Interaction with tutors through the LMS.
The LMS has become an integral part of teaching and learning in AOU. It is the main channel of communication between tutors and their students. Students receive their assignments, their tutors' responses, and feedback through the LMS. The privacy of this channel allows students to discuss with their tutors some matters that they may be uncomfortable discussing publicly in the classroom.

6. There are also chat sessions online with tutors, and face-to-face feedback sessions. Additionally, emails are constant means by which tutors and students can discuss important ideas related to course material. Furthermore, tutors are available via phones, as well, to answer any merging queries and offer support.

7. Reading List: Every semester, FLS updates a suggested reading list and uploads on the website. You are strongly encouraged to consult it. It contains several helpful books and articles.

8. Computer and e-library facilities: Both AOU students and staff are given access to e-library resources. Recently, AOU has updated its e-library subscriptions.

9. Educational Resource Centres: These centres provide the needed resources such as Internet and other facilities.

10. Student Information System (SIS).

11. There are also orientation sessions that introduce students to the learning system which the AOU adopts.

12. AOU students also get reasonably effective academic advising.

13. In addition to all of this, there are numerous co-curricular activities that the branches organize for their students, and the availability of these varies from one branch to another. Generally, however, the following can be found at several branches:
    i. Environment Awareness and Conservation.
    ii. Chess Club.
    iii. Arabic Calligraphy.
    iv. Arts & Folkloric Dance Club.
    v. Theatre Performing Arts Club.
    vi. Drawing and Painting Club.
    vii. Poetry and Speech Club.
    viii. English Language Club.
    ix. Holy Quran Club.
    x. Soccer Club.
    xi. Basketball Club.
    xii. University Chorus.
    xiii. Table Tennis.

FLS provides students, through the AOU website and branch websites, with all the information they need about their study plan, course offerings, course description, all relevant academic rules and regulations.

In addition to the guidance and support that the students receive from the Department of Admissions and Registration and the Student Affairs Department on academic and social issues, students are offered different methods of student support. Besides weekly tutorials, students at all branches are encouraged to visit their tutors during office hours. Other methods of student support include:

- Online chat sessions with tutors.

- Online communication and online office hours.

- Face-to-face feedback sessions.

- Orientation sessions that introduce students to the system at Arab Open University by each programme, in addition, of course, to the major orientation at the beginning of each semester which assemble students from all programmes.

- Emails by means of which tutors and students can discuss important ideas related to the course material.

- Advising and registration counselling.

- The use of computer libraries and software.

- Online library.

- Telephone calls at all times.

- Substantial feedback on TMAs.

- Online Student Support System where students' complaints, queries and suggestions are channelled to the right person for response and where an online monitoring system and monthly reports are generated to make sure that each and every question raised by students is being answered.

Personal Tutoring

In addition to the face-to-face tutorial sessions where the students have a direct contact with their tutors, tutors maintain also scheduled weekly office hours which are intended to provide a more informal environment for academic support. Students are always given an opportunity to discuss, ask and answer questions during the office hours. Students can also contact their tutors via e-mail and telephone calls. Students have access to much of the course material and supporting notes over the internet-based learning management systems (LMS) which is to be used for all courses. Thus, in addition to face-to-face contact there is distance support for those students who cannot regularly meet their tutors in their office hours due to employment or domestic responsibilities.

Study/Language Skills

Tutors provide advice for students on how they can improve their study/language skills. Some branches have set up a support unit called the Writing Centre, Writing Lab, etc. The unit's major objective is to help students improve their academic writing skills. It is run by some tutors and senior students. It is open on a daily basis. The unit has been extremely useful for students in helping them improve their writing. Students are either referred to the centre by their tutors or come on their own when they feel they need help.

Career advice

Career advising and networking with employers is offered in most of our branches by our Student Affairs Department to empower students by giving them the tools necessary to excel in today's highly competitive global employment market. Student Affairs Department connects students with alumni and employers for the purpose of promoting employment opportunities for full-time or part-time careers matching with ministry and company requirements. The general goal of this program is to assist students so that they make better career choices and can better identify their skills, competencies and values. The Student Affairs Department serves the students as a consultant for work-related concerns such as developing skills, career decision making, CV and cover letter writing, job interview skills and training and education.

Programme Specifications

Refer to the University website

(A link of the programme specification will be provided here once the programme is validated)

Module Specifications

Refer to the University website

(A link of all module specifications will be provided here once the programme is validated)

Student Support

Academic Advising

FLS, like other AOU faculties, provides students with very good academic advising services. Each incoming student is assigned an adviser who offers the student advising at two levels. The first is logistical help, in terms of which modules to choose, how to go about registering for them, how many hours to register, what to do if a course is not offered or if the student's study load is big, etc. This level of advising is done intensely and effectively prior to and throughout the module registration process. Both the SSS (Student Support System) and SIS (Student Information System) are rendering important services to students. The other level of advising is academic advising. The academic advisor provides the necessary advice if students are facing difficulties coping with the material, if their grades begin to fall below a certain average, if they find the assignments overwhelming, etc. FLS is trying to give the second level more attention by having advisers take the initiative to meet with students more often (rather than wait until the students come to them), to discuss with them how to deal with problems and to monitor students' progress on the basis of the advising they give. More importantly, advisers are expected to offer advice on how to maximize the learning, how to enhance performance, how to conduct assignments properly, how to guard against plagiarism, how to enable excelling students (not just those who struggle) to progress and excel further, etc. It should be underscored here that already FLS has several good publications (paper

as well as online) which help students understand better what the FLS programmes are about, how to deal with them, what assessment is, how and why it is conducted, etc. These publications include: *The Programme Handbook*, *The Assessment Handbook*, and *The Student Guide*.

Most formal and informal arrangements for student support and guidance are branch-based activities. Student Counselling academic advising, employability, health care, on campus activities, social accommodation and financial support are all provided through branch facilities including academic and administrative units according to the branch resources and in line with the AOU policies and rules.

Induction Arrangements

Each semester, freshmen students are introduced to AOU through an induction programme – held normally in the first week of the semester – with multiple sessions for the convenience of employed students.

The FLS faculty at AOU branches makes sure to provide the necessary induction for its students. They advise and guide students on how to study effectively in the programme in specific and at AOU in general. The induction process involves briefings by the representatives of admission and registration department, the student counsellor and the head of student affairs. The students are briefed on the registration policies for various courses, academic expectations, open learning systems, student environment and facilities. New students are also taken on a tour of the university campus to familiarize them with the university facilitries.

The induction process is a continuous process; therefore, FLS faculty at the branch level ensure that students understand the open learning concepts applied in the programme; as well it assures that each student has an academic advisor at the programme level and student counsellor.

Developing awareness and necessary skills to undergo academic study through open learning at AOU is carried out through these means:

- AOU prospectus and program leaflets
- Personal delivery of information through contacts with Admission and Registration and customer support staff during admission periods, either face to- face- or through telephone. During the past academic years a group of AOU students were trained to handle and communicate with incoming calls of prospective students. These AOU students were recruited and paid to provide meaningful and comprehensive information about AOU, its programs, and the nature of study at AOU
- Induction materials, such as AOU newsletter, AOU Prospectus, New Student Orientation CD

- Induction program presentations

- Providing information about AOU during foundation courses

- A required credit course GR 101, independent Learning Skills, which addresses the requirements and skills of studying through open learning in general and AOU in particular.

Student Support & Counselling:
In some branches, there are units for Counselling. These units provide a range of services and activities that help the student to achieve social and psychological adaptation. Please inquire from your tutors, Programme Coordinators, or Student Affairs about the availability of such a unit in your branch, and which services are offered. These services are generally as follows:

Individual Counselling
Some branches offer individual sessions in which the student meets with the Educational and Psychological Counsellor. These sessions help the students to identify the problems facing them or the difficulties that prevent them from achieving their objectives. The Educational and Psychological Counsellor assists the student in developing skills and capabilities which can help him/her to handle all kinds of problems.

Group Counselling
This service is introduced through sessions between a number of students who share the same problems and purposes. Psychological counselling and educational meetings are held with the instructor in order to discuss objectives and interests.

Training Courses
The student can attend the workshops and training courses on different educational and psychological topics which help him/her to acquire new concepts and essential skills.

Exit Interview
The Educational Counsellor interviews the student who wants to drop-out from the University or to withdraw for one or more semesters in order to identify the reasons behind the student's decision. The counsellor tries to find solutions which may help this student to continue studying at the university in cooperation with the concerned teaching staff.

Provisions for Students with Special Needs
Physically challenged students can access all the university's premises through ramps and elevators. There are also special parking spots allocated for them. Students with special needs such as those categorised as slow learners are given extra time during tests and exams. In some branches private rooms and offices are allocated for physically-challenged students, so they can do extra studying with their

aids after classes. The Branches also make available assistants, if and when needed, to help disabled students with their studies and exams, especially reading and writing for students with specific disabilities.

Testing Students with Special Needs

Necessary measures are undertaken in order to provide a comfortable atmosphere for students with special needs to enable them to perform the tests smoothly. Such cases include:

- In case some students with special needs cannot write because of a physical disability, a person is assigned by the university to assist such students in their exams and under the supervision of the Examination Department.
- A special hall is allocated for students with health problems under the supervision of the Examinations Department.

Financial Advice and Support

Scholarships and financial support are routed through the student affairs department. Some branches give financial aid to needy students who meet special conditions. Announcements are published on the Branch University Website clarifying the procedures and deadlines for accepting applications which are evaluated by the University Administration. Grants are normally paid before the end of the semester to qualified applicants. The university has a fund called "AOU student fund" for the purpose of financially supporting the students in need as well as honoring the distinguished students by giving them grants and subsidies or returnable loans.

Opportunities and Support for Study Abroad

FLS plans, in the days ahead, to make available opportunities for exchange – short-term, study-abroad opportunities – for students who are willing. In addition to the exchange at the level of branches within the AOU, FLS plans to identify international partners who will be willing to host our students for a term or two. This has not happened yet, but it is already put in the FLS new five-year Strategic Plan as a future objective. This is part of FLS's internationalization drive.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)*:*

In cooperation with OU, AOU has introduced a PDP package with the objective of empowering its students towards achieving their personal, educational, and professional objectives. The initiative was launched in the second semester 2008/2009 and started to be seriously implemented as of 2009/2010. Already several branches are offering the PDP opportunity for their students, and student involvement is on the increase. Students are encouraged to find out more about this valuable opportunity from their tutors, Programme Coordinators, or Student Affairs staff.

Academic Calendar

FLS follows the University academic calendar. For more details, refer to the University website. (Copy the link below to your internet browser to access the page).

Facilities and Services

Due to the fact that AOU system of education is primarily blended learning that involves integration with technology, it is only imperative that the IT systems be in place to facilitate this system of learning. In general, physical resources at AOU are in branch-based rather than programme-based. Classrooms, computer labs, computer equipment, software and application systems, car parking facilities and special needs facilities, all are used by all students in all programmes.

Language Labs

Branches are fully equipped with language labs, which are being effectively used in the ELU programme.

Library resources

The e-library for all branches is available through the Learning Management System (LMS). It includes a range of resources from the Oxford University, EBSCO search (IT, Business and English literature), Edu search, Emerald journals and GALE, and UK Open University Databases.

The computers at the e-library are extensively used by the students. The staff at the e-library monitors the activities of the students at the e-library during the library hours. The e-library staff attend to all the queries of the students, right from the usage of a computer, using programmes, using the LMS, how to search the e-library for articles, books, periodicals etc. Proper guidance and assistance are given to the students on all matters related to the e-library. Books received by the library are numbered and properly displayed on the shelves. Reference books from the library are issued for both students and staff.

- **Computing resources**

Adequate numbers of computers are available at individual branches and are networked using high speed internet connections. Specially equipped computer labs with multimedia facilities are open to students for extended hours during the day. Student e-mail services along with the LMS serve as the backbone for communication between students, staff, and tutors.

- **Audio/Visual equipment and smart classrooms**

AOU is transitioning toward smart classroom or e-classrooms at many of the branches. This includes tutor PCs, LCD projectors, motorized screens, and audio systems. These facilities enable tutors to use the most effective teaching tools within the classroom.

- **Technical support**

AOU prides itself on the level of technical support extended to students. Qualified staff assist students in the use of all facets of E-learning. Many branches have established Student Help Desks to render a range of services to students.

- **Catering Services**

All branches have professionally managed cafeterias that offer catering services to students at reasonable prices.
For more details on facilities and services, please refer to your Branch website

ASSESSMENT AND PREGRESSION REGULATIONS

Module assessment is based on three main types of written works:
    (i) Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs)
    (ii) Mid-Term Assessment (MTA)
    (iii) Final Exam (FE)

Students' module result will depend upon their achievements across the different components of assessment, equally balanced between TWO MAJOR COMPONENTS: Continuous Assessment & Final Assessment as described below.

(i) Continuous Assessment:
This comprises:
- Course TMA, and
- Course MTA

The two components represent 50% of the Overall Assessment Score (OAS), 20% for TMAs and 30% for MTA

(ii) Final Assessment:
This consists of: ONE FINAL EXAM representing 50% of the Overall Assessment Score.

Minimum pass marks for modules
In order to pass the module, a student must obtain:
(i)   An average of at least 50% across the different components of assessment (i.e. Continuous Assessment and Final Assessment),
(ii)   A minimum average of 20/50 on the Final Assessment, and
(iii)   A minimum average of 15/50 on Continuous Assessment: TMA(s) & MTA(s).

In all these assessment components, students will be assessed according to criteria which are based on learning outcomes.

Allocation of Marks
ELL individual courses are covered in one 16-week semester and students are required to do the following tasks:
    (i) Prepare one TMA
    (ii) Take one MTA, and

(iii) Sit for one final exam

The following table shows the distribution of marks for the various types of course assessment in one-semester courses.

Components		Mark	Total Mark
CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT	TMA	20	50
	MTA	30	
FINAL ASSESSMENT	FINAL EXAM	50	50
GRAND TOTAL		100	100

Notes on TMAs, MTAs & Finals

(i) Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs)
These assignments are spread out over the duration of course delivery. In addition to gauging student progress of study, they serve to invoke and develop investigative and research skills. TMA carries 20% of the overall grade of the course.

(ii) Mid-Term Assessment (MTA)
MTAs are viewed to be another contributor to monitoring the progression of students' achievement. They carry 30% of the overall grade of the course.

Questions in MTAs typically require short notes / answers / comments: e.g. definitions; exemplification; completion; writing one or two paragraphs; i.e. they are not of the open-ended essay type.

(iii) Final Exams (FEs)
Final exams are typically of the essay type and are divided into three parts, each covering one or two blocks/themes of the course as in the table below: Students will be required to answer 3 questions in 3 hours.

Part	Questions	Notes
A	1	- ONE compulsory question, but there might be some options within this question (e.g. defining seven key terms out of 10) - The question typically deals with a very important/central topic
B	2&3	- This part consists of 2 questions - Students answer one question only. - Each question is meant to test a certain block/theme
C	4&5	- This part consists of 2 questions - Students answer one question only. - Each question is meant to test a certain block/theme

The above applies to all ELL courses except the four-credit-hour modules such as EL120 and EL121.

Marking Descriptor

(i) MTA & Final

GRADE	CONTENT	LANGUAGE & ORGANIZATION
A	Excellent answers showing confident and wide-ranging knowledge of core material, good understanding of any relevant theory, and a capacity to address the question in a structural, direct and effective way, thoughtfully and with insight. Originality of thought or ideas from outside the course are an added asset. Examples are to the point.	- Has an introduction defining plan of essay. - Body divided into several paragraphs - Conclusion which directly relates arguments to topic. - Evidence that essay has been edited. - Error-free grammar & register. - Wide range of specialized terminology.
B to B+	Very good answers showing secure knowledge of course materials. Adopting an analytical approach and providing relevant discussion covering most of the key issues. Distinguished from A answers by being less insightful or by showing less comprehensive knowledge of the course.	- First four criteria above maintained - Demonstrates extensive grammar control. - Terminology specialized but less varied.
C to C+	Competent answers reflecting adequate knowledge of the more directly relevant course material and concepts, with reasonable structure and adequate coherence related to the question set.	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but still satisfactory. - Evidence of editing. - Less grammar control than above. - Good range of specialized terminology.
D	Answers which omit some concepts /evidence and/or lack coherence /structure, and/or make minor errors while still demonstrating basic understanding. Or bare pass answers which show awareness of some relevant material and attempt to relate it to the	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but acceptable. - no evidence of editing. - Few grammatical errors that impede communication. - Above average range of specialized

	question.	terminology.
		- Slightly confused introduction and/or conclusion, but body still fair.
		- Some error types that impede communication.
		- Fair range of specialized terminology.
F	Answers which attempt to draw upon relevant material but do not reflect sufficient knowledge of the course and/or neglect the focus required by the question, and/or are incomplete in some important aspects whilst being acceptable in others.	- No introduction and /or no conclusion.
		- Body badly organized or irrelevant.
		- Poor grammar control (extremely limited range of grammar & register).
		- Limited or not specialized range of terminology.

(ii)   TMA

GRADE	CONTENT	LANGUAGE & ORGANIZATION
A (18-20)	Excellent answers showing confident and wide-ranging knowledge of core material, good understanding of any relevant theory, and a capacity to address the question in a structural, direct and effective way, thoughtfully and with insight. Originality of thought or ideas from outside the course are an added asset. Examples are to the point.	- Has an introduction defining plan of essay. - Body divided into several paragraphs - Conclusion which directly relates arguments to topic. - Evidence that essay has been edited. - Error-free grammar & register. - Wide range of specialized terminology. - **Consistent in-text citation and form of referencing**
B to B+	Very good answers showing secure knowledge of course materials. Adopting an analytical approach and providing relevant discussion covering most of the	- First four criteria above maintained - Demonstrates extensive grammar control.

(16-17)	key issues. Distinguished from A answers by being less insightful or by showing less comprehensive knowledge of the course.	- Terminology specialized but less varied. - **Minor Inconsistency in in-text citation and referencing**
C to C+ **(14-15)**	Competent answers reflecting adequate knowledge of the more directly relevant course material and concepts, with reasonable structure and adequate coherence related to the question set.	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but still satisfactory. - Evidence of editing. - Less grammar control than above. - Good range of specialized terminology. - **Inconsistent in in-text citation and referencing**
D **(10-13)**	Answers which omit some concepts /evidence and/or lack coherence /structure, and/or make minor errors while still demonstrating basic understanding. Or bare pass answers which show awareness of some relevant material and attempt to relate it to the question.	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but acceptable. - Few grammatical errors that impede communication. - Above average range of specialized terminology. - Slightly confused introduction and/or conclusion, but body still fair. - No evidence of editing. - Some error types that impede communication. - Fair range of specialized terminology. - **Inaccurate in-text citation and referencing**
F **Below** **10**	Answers which attempt to draw upon relevant material but do not reflect sufficient knowledge of the course and/or neglect the focus required by the question, and/or are incomplete in some important aspects whilst being acceptable in others.	- No introduction and /or no conclusion. - Body badly organized or irrelevant. - Poor grammar control (extremely limited range of grammar & register). - Limited or not specialized range of terminology. - **No in-text citations and no referencing**

Communication & Language Accuracy

Students majoring in English Language and Literature are expected to possess a reasonably high level of proficiency in English. In writing, they are expected to produce well-written and well-developed essays that are error-free in terms of language accuracy. Students' grades will be lowered if they make grammatical and vocabulary errors as well as errors in writing mechanics (e.g. punctuation, capitalization, spelling) and errors in presentation and paragraphing, etc.

Final Grades & Semester / Cumulative Average

(i) Course final grades

Letter grades for course results carry the following points:

Letter grade	Points
A	4
B+	3.5
B	3.0
C+	2.5
C	2.0
D	1.5
F	0.0

Note: The letter grade **D** is considered as the passing grade for the individual course.

(ii) Semester and cumulative average

- The minimum cumulative average required for graduation is 2.0 points.

- Semester and cumulative averages are given in numbers (on a five-point–scale) and performance merits are assigned as in the table below.

Score	Performance Standards
3.67-4.0	Excellent
3.0 – 3.66	Very Good
2.33 – 2.99	Good
2.0 – 2.32	Pass
Less than 2.0	Weak / Poor

COORDINATING AND MONITORING EXAMS & TMAs

Assessment as Team Work

All forms of assessment are the result of team work, on the one hand, and are consistently and systematically monitored at various stages both at the branch level and the university level.

Exams are prepared by the Course Chair (GCC), in coordination with the tutors. After preparing the exam, the GCC sends it to an external examiner to approve it, and after that it is sent to the Dean for final approval.

At the branch level the BCC and the BPC are directly involved in the process of assessment as can be seen from the responsibility defined for each position. Similarly, External Examiners and members of Faculty Exams Committee are involved in all aspects of assessment as can be seen below.

(i) Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) Responsibilities

- Supervising tuition and presentation of relevant course material
- Supervising and monitoring TMAs and MTAs
- Participating in developing course content and presentation and providing the Faculty with feedback from all relevant parties
- Training tutors and making available to them all possible opportunities conducive to professional development
- Holding bi-weekly meetings with tutors
- Monitoring tutorials
- Monitoring tutor office hours
- Giving demonstration tutorials or mini-tutorials
- Holding training seminars for tutors
- Participating in relevant generic and specific training workshops
- Training tutors in monitoring and marking TMAs, MTAs, and final examinations
- Providing semi-annual and annual reports about tutor performance as well as tutor comments and suggestions concerning both content and presentation of the course material.
- Providing ongoing as well as semi-annual and annual feedback reports about TMAs and examinations prepared by course chairs

(ii). Branch Programme Coordinator (BPC) Responsibilities
The duties of the BPC include:

1. Coordinating with the Branch Director on the implementation and requirement of the study program,
2. Coordinating among the different course coordinators,
3. Planning and implementing Branch academic student advising and related matters,
4. Coordinating and follow up of course requirement needs:
   - Preparing the Course Calendar
   - Preparing TMAs
   - Preparing Final Examinations
5. Drawing up Samples of: (for External Examiners Evaluation): TMAs; Midterm Assessment; Final Exam Scripts;

(iii) External Examiners (EE) Responsibilities
1. Participating in the deliberations of the Course Assessment Committee and the Faculty Council Examination Committee
2. Approving questions and marking guidelines suggested by CACs for TMAs and final examinations
3. Reviewing and revising final examination scripts
4. Reviewing and revising TMAs
5. Submitting a report to the Chair of the Central Examination Committee in which he/she provides a summary of his/her ideas and comments on final examination papers, TMAs and assessment of both student and tutor performance. This includes sampling all marked assessments of AOU including MTAs and final examination papers.

Endorsement of Final Results
The results are endorsed at the Branch level through the Branch Examination Committee, then at the AOU HQ through the Course Assessment Committee (CAC), Faculty Examination Committee (FEC), and then the Central Examination Committee (CEC).

Inability to Take the Final Examination
The following cases shall be observed when the student is unable to take the final examination or the mid-term exam (MTA) at the fixed time and place:
   i.   A student who cannot take the final examination, the MTA, or submit a report/project/TMA which is considered a main component of the assessment, must submit a medical report or a force majeure to the Students' Affairs Office which will forward it to the competent authority

  ii.   The case must be submitted within three days of the date of the final examination or the submission date.

 iii.   If the Branch Examination Committee accepts the case, the student is awarded **I** (Incomplete) and the student may take the final examination with all other students studying the course at the end of the next semester or academic year.

  iv.   If the student fails to take the mid-semester exam, and the Branch Examination Committee accepts the case, the student will take the makeup exam offered usually between 2 to 3 weeks after the date of the initial exam.

   v.   Late TMAs are deducted one (1) mark for each late day.

  vi.   If the Branch Examination Committee rejects the case, the student is awarded a zero (0) in this examination

 vii.   A student who cannot take a final examination of a course with accepted reasons can take that examination again on the next occasion that the examination for the same course is held.

Repeating Courses

a) The student may not retake any course in which he obtains grade (C) or above.

b) The student who fails in an elective course may retake the same course or any other elective course for the purpose of completing the programme's approved study plan requirements. The student's new grade resulting from such repeat courses shall be included in his semester and cumulative averages. However, in case of a student's fail mark, the number of course hours shall be excluded from his cumulative average, provided that no modification should occur in the semester average pertaining to the semester in which he failed.

c) The student who fails in a compulsory course must retake the same course in a subsequent semester. The student's grade resulting from such repeat course shall be entered in his record. However, in case he fails therein, the number of course hours shall be excluded from his cumulative average, provided that no modification should occur in the semester average for the semester in which he failed.

d) For the purposes of raising the student's cumulative average to the required limit for graduation purposes only, the student may retake any course in his Study Plan other than OUUK courses. The student's new grade, whether higher or lower than the previous grade, shall be included in his cumulative average. The student's number of points obtained the first time as well as the number of course hours shall be excluded when computing his new cumulative average.

e) For the purpose of raising the student's cumulative average to the required limit for graduation purposes only, the student may retake any OUUK course included in his programme's study plan in which he had previously obtained a (D) grade, provided that the ceiling of the student's new grade shall be (C). The student's number of points obtained the first time as well as the number of course hours shall be excluded when computing his new cumulative average.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Any student caught cheating or found to have committed an act of plagiarism shall be referred to the competent Branch Disciplinary Committee, which shall take its decisions as per rules in effect at the AOU. Punishment, if warranted, may include dismissal from the University. The following are considered acts of cheating and plagiarism:

i. Copying printed material and submitting it as part of TMAs, or examination scripts without proper acknowledgement and documentation

ii. Copying material from the internet, including tables and pictures without proper acknowledgement

iii. Copying other students' work

iv. Using material prepared for the student by individuals or institutions, i.e. material which is not the student's own work

v. Taking unauthorized material into the examination room.

Student Grievance Procedures

Branch authorities look into each grievance and usually respond to the student concerned within a week. There are different types of grievances (appeals, complaints) and there are specific procedures for their submission and processing.

Student Appeals

i. Students may appeal their final grade to the Branch Examination Committee (BEC) within one week from announcement of course results

ii. The Branch Examination Committee ensures that the marks have been compiled properly. It also ensures that all answer scripts have been marked and verified and notifies the student of the acceptance or rejection of his/her appeal.

iii. If the appeal is rejected, students may then appeal the branch committee decision to the Faculty Examination Committee through the Branch Director within one week after notification by the branch committee. Reasons for appeal together with supporting documents must be provided. The appeal is then forwarded for review by the Faculty Examination Committee

iv. The decision of the Faculty Examination Committee is final but students who wish to pursue their appeal beyond this point should do so within one week from the date of notification of the Faculty Examination Committee findings. In such cases, the committee looks into the appeal once again and this time its decision is considered final and irrevocable. The student shall be notified of the decision through the branch within one week of its being made

v. In all cases, if a grade is modified as a result of an appeal then all examination committees must be informed.

vi. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the entire appeal process, the student may appeal to the University President or to the CICP.

Procedures for Appeals and Complaints

<u>Appeals</u>

- Students may appeal their final course grades by filling the online appeals form within 7 days from the announcement of the final course results. The student can also attach any relevant documents.

- Copies of the appeal form will automatically be sent to the Branch Examination Committee and concerned departments.

- The BEC will consider the appeal and if the appeal is valid a copy of the BEC recommendation will be sent to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA).

- The VPAA will send his recommendation that the appeal is upheld to the Central Examination Committee (CEC).

- The grade will only be changed after the approval of the CEC.

- The CEC decision will be communicated to the BEC with a copy to Student Affairs Office to inform the student and the student Affairs Office will notify the student with the decision.

- If the appeal is rejected and the student is dissatisfied with the decision to dismiss the appeal, he or she may take the appeal to a higher level by appealing to the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) through the Branch Director within 7 days of notification of the decision to reject the appeal.

- If the student is still not satisfied with the FEC decision, he/she may appeal to the President of the University or to Open University Validation Services (CICP).

Complaints

- The student may lodge a complaint any time during the academic year, by completing the University formal student complaints form. The student must state the grounds for complaint, giving detailed reasons to support his or her case. A copy will be automatically forwarded to the concerned department and to Student Affairs Office.

- The concerned department will examine the complaint and it may consult other members of University staff or departments if it is deemed appropriate in particular cases.

- The concerned department may find grounds for complaint and produce a report on the case setting out its recommendations and the documentations considered.

- The report will be sent to the Assistant Director for Administration and Finance or Assistant Director for Academic Affairs based on the nature and subject of the complaints for approval.

- Upon the approval of the concerned Assistant Director, the Student Affairs Office will notify the final outcome of the complaint to the student.

- If the student is dissatisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal through the Branch Director to Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) or Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs (VPAF) within 7 days of notification of the decision to reject the complaint. The student will be informed through the Branch Director with the decision of the respective Vice President.

- The student may also complain to the University President and to CICP if he/she is not satisfied with the decision of the VPAA or VPAF.

For further details on assessment and programme, students may refer to the *FLS Assessment booklet* and *FLS Programme Handbook* online.
Information is available under "**Support Material".**

(Copy the link below to your internet browser)

https://www.arabou.edu.kw/index.php/support-material

Students with Special Needs

i. Students with special needs who need particular support should present their case to their tutor who will discuss the matter with the appropriate authority

ii. Students requiring an extension to the examination time must submit their needs not less than three weeks before the date of the examination or the due date of submitting the research/project.

iii. Students with special needs who feel that certain circumstances have impacted negatively on their performance when completing their assignments should submit proof of this to their tutor who will discuss the matter with the appropriate authority

Other Institutional Policies and Regulations

Attendance at Tutorials
With due regard to local accreditation conditions required from each university branch:
i. Face-to-face classroom meeting hours allocated for tutorials in each course during the single semester shall be 4 classroom hours against each credit hour allotted to the course, pursuant to arrangements made by the concerned branch which suit its circumstances
ii. Face-to-face tutorial classroom hours may be increased in case of certain courses having special nature pursuant to ratio to be determined by the competent faculty or branch with a view to fulfilling local accreditation requirements
iii. Attending face-to-face tutorial sessions of the registered course is mandatory by the student whose absence from such tutorials may not exceed 25% of the prescribed tutorials as stated in the approved university calendar.

Study Regulations

Duration of Study and Study Load

i. The academic year consists of two semesters, each of which lasts for sixteen (16) weeks

ii. The summer session lasts for eight (8) weeks

iii. The University Council approves the university calendar for each academic year. The calendar includes dates for the beginning of semesters, adding and dropping courses, final examinations, etc.

iv. The minimum load of a regular student is eight (8) credit hours. The maximum is twenty-one (21) credit hours per semester in all branches

v. Students with a cumulative average of less than 2 points shall not be allowed to register for more than 12 credit hours

vi. The maximum period of study at the AOU is sixteen (16) semesters, equivalent to eight (8) academic years. (Summer semesters are not included.)

Postponement, Suspension and Withdrawal

i. A continuing student may submit an application within two weeks of the beginning of the semester to postpone his/her study. Such a postponement period should not exceed two years (four semesters) whether continuous or interrupted. The postponement period shall not be included within the maximum period required for graduation

ii. During the add/drop period, the student may withdraw from study after the approval of the competent party at the branch.
   - A student who does not register in a certain semester is considered suspended. If he/she submits subsequently an acceptable excuse before the end of the semester, the suspension period is considered a postponement
   - If the student resumes study after a period of postponement or suspension with an acceptable excuse, he/she can complete the study of the second part of the course provided that he/she has satisfied the requirements of the first part of the course. The marks obtained in the first part will contribute to the final grade of the course provided that the period of postponement or suspension does not exceed four semesters.

iii. A student's enrolment shall be cancelled if he/she fails to register for any course during the first semester following his/her first enrolment at the University and/or not registering in any course for three consecutive semesters without valid excuse.

Granting the Bachelor's Degree

The bachelor's degree is granted after completing the following graduation requirements:

i. Passing all courses required for graduation pursuant to the study plan approved for the bachelor's degree in the concerned programme

ii.   Achieving a cumulative average of not less than 2 points

iii.   Not exceeding the maximum period of study

iv.   Finishing any other requirements stated inside or outside the study plan

v.   The OU-validated award is classified on the basis of the student's grade point average in the best 32 credit hours at Level 2 and the best 32 credit hours at Level 3.

Award/Grades Classification
Awards
The classification of the student's certificate as derived from the OUUK shall be as follows:

Classification, OU (UK)	AOU Rating/ Cumulative Average
First class	Excellent
Second class (1st Division)	Very good
Second class (2nd Division)	Good
Third class	Pass

Grades
Final grades for each course as letter grades shall correspond to the following points:

Letter Grade	Points
A	4
B+	3.5
B	3.
C+	2.5
C	2
D	1.5
F	0.

Grade D is considered as the minimum passing grade for a student's successful completion of the course.

Study Fees
The AOU is a non-profit university and aims to keep its fee levels as low as possible, consistent with the need to offer a high quality learning experience for its students. The study fees differ depending on the nature of courses and the living standards of the Arab country where the university branch exists.

Student Transfer

i. Transfer between Academic Programmes

A student is eligible to transfer from one programme to another provided that he/she fulfils the admission requirements of the programme to which he/she wishes to transfer and that the transfer takes place at the beginning of the semester following the one in which he/she has been admitted. In this case, all the modules that the student has already completed successfully and which correspond with the requirements of the new programme will be taken into account. The number of course hours which do not belong to the study plan of the programme to which the student has transferred, as well as the points he/she has attained against such courses, shall be excluded from his/her cumulative average. The student should fill in a special form during the period announced in the university calendar.

The transfer is subject to the following conditions:

 i. The availability of a vacant place in the programme
 ii. The student's average in the secondary school certificate should not be less than the average announced and accepted by the programme into which the student wishes to transfer
 iii. Satisfying any other academic qualifications required by the programme when submitting the application
 iv. Passing any examination(s) required by the programme to which the student wants to transfer.

ii. Transfer between Branches

A student who is registered in one branch of the University is eligible to transfer to another branch, but normally only at the beginning of the semester. In this case, all completed courses are taken into account for the student. However, transfer between branches is subject to local requirements, i.e. additional local requirements might need to be met. The tuition fees for the new courses are calculated according to the fees of the new branch.

Transfer is dependent on the following:

 i. The availability of space in the programme and fulfillment of local requirements

 ii. The student's average in the secondary school certificates should not be less than the average required by the programme to which the student is applying to transfer

 iii. When applying for transfer from a branch, the student should be registered in that branch without any disciplinary issues outstanding

 iv. The student shall fill in a special form before the end of the semester, stating the reasons for his/her transfer

 v. In certain circumstances, a student may apply for transfer from one branch to another during the semester provided that he/she can provide a valid reason

for transfer. In this case, the tutorials, examinations and other study requirements are not affected

vi. The student shall pay the appropriate transfer fee when filing the application. If the application is rejected, the student has the right to receive a refund of the money

vii. Normally, transfer should occur within the same programme in which the student is registered. If not, admission to a different programme should be done simultaneously with the transfer application

viii. Where necessary, it is the student's responsibility to get a residence permit in the branch country to which he/she wants to transfer

ix. When a transfer has been approved by the two branches, the student's file is sent to the new branch

x. Before joining the new branch, the student should be informed about any admission conditions or requirements observed in the new branch so that he/she can fulfill these conditions either before or after joining the new branch.

Conduct By-laws and Disciplinary Procedures

These by-laws shall cover all university-registered students regarding any violation of the University rules, regulations and by-laws. In particular, they cover the following violations:

i. Any act incompatible with honour and dignity or breaching good conduct inside or outside the University
ii. Any act leading to the damage of the University premises and properties
iii. Cheating or attempting to cheat in examinations
iv. Cheating in carrying out assignments and reports or any other duties required in this regard
v. Organization of non-academic societies and meetings inside the University without the prior approval of the competent University administration
vi. Circulation of publications, newsletters, or posters, or collecting signatures for any purpose, without permission from the competent party in the University
vii. Any "sit-in" strike inside the University premises or participation in any demonstration incompatible with the University rules and values in force.

A student who attempts to cheat or does cheat in the examination, as described in a report signed by the head invigilator or the examination supervisor, may be subjected to the following punishments, separately or collectively, following investigation by the Branch Disciplinary Council:

i. Verbal or written notice
ii. Warning
iii. Final warning
iv. Failure in the examination and concerned course
v. Dismissal from the University for one semester or more
vi. Total and final dismissal from the University

Any punishment imposed will be recorded in the student's file.

A student may submit an appeal against the decision taken by the Disciplinary Committee or the Disciplinary Council within fifteen days from the date of being informed of the decision. The decision of the Higher Disciplinary Board is then final and binding.

Student Feedback

Student feedback forms are important and integral part of university's standing and quality of functions. Student feedback is elicited on course content and material, tutor and tutorials and on support facilities through a student survey that is administered online. It has a significant impact on the strategic planning in various areas of program delivery and designing of physical facilities for students. All the branches are required to administer the student survey questionnaire wherein students are requested to provide their feedback on the course material, tutors, program delivery systems and physical facilities. These survey data are processed by the Quality Assurance Unit in the respective branches by the Quality Assurance coordinators. The findings and recommendations are then forwarded to the Branch Director and the Quality Assurance Department at HQ. The evaluation of the student feedback is communicated to all key players.

Student Representation

AOU has ratified all bylaws for the students' councils. Students at branches can form their councils on the basis of democratic elections, which aim to involve students in university life and enable them to contribute, as well as develop their leadership skills. In addition, FLS encourages branches to identify students' representatives (Student REPs) who get in touch with PCs and other branch officials in order to give student feedback. They, in fact, act as liaison between students and the academics at the branch. In addition, these students are called upon to attend some committees, such as the Academic Committee and the University Council, in addition to the FLS Faculty Council.

Contact Us:

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