

BSc. (Honours)  
Business Studies  
Student Handbook

AOU / OU-UK

(Revised 2017)



**AOU**

الجامعة العربية المفتوحة

Arab Open University

Faculty of Business Studies

**Faculty of  
Business Studies**

**Student Handbook**

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## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	4
Welcome and introduction.....	5
Academic Calendar.....	5
List of programme leader, coordinators, and academic staff, their contact details and availability arrangements .....	6
Introduction to the programme (Faculty of Business Study).....	6
Programme Specification .....	8
Module Specifications .....	8
Student support, guidance and advice: .....	9
List of support staff (technical and administrative) .....	9
Opportunities available to students on completion of the programme.....	10
Opportunities and support for study abroad .....	11
Work placement information .....	11
Facilities and Services .....	12
Assessment and progression regulations.....	13
Dissertations and projects .....	15
Other institutional policies and regulations .....	17
Student participation and evaluation .....	17

## **Foreword**

This handbook is a reference guide to the Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) at the Arab Open University (AOU). It introduces you to Business Management Program with its various tracks and provides you as well with details of programme requirements, examination policies, and with relevant information to help you during your tenure at AOU.

Your FBS tutors and staff at your local branch will be your main link with the University, so feel free to contact them when necessary. In addition to this handbook, please also refer to the companion “Student Guide, for Undergraduate Programmes, 2017-18” published by the Arab Open University, which provides information on overall university regulations and policies.

AOU is a partner of the Open University – UK, and thus many of our rules and regulations are derived or based on the OU UK system. You are therefore strongly advised to also refer to the “Student’s guide to studying in a programme validated by the Open University”, which is available on the AOU website.

As always, we at FBS are open to your suggestions and comments. If you have any comments that can improve the experience for students at AOU, we would appreciate hearing from you.



## **Welcome and introduction**

**By Dr. Bassim Shebeb, Dean.**

Welcome to the Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) of the Arab Open University (AOU). Here at the FBS-AOU, we offer the high quality education that enable you to participate effectively in local, regional, and global labour markets is accessible.

The Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) offers state-of-the-art, cutting edge Business Management programmes in Management, Marketing, Accounting, Economics, Systems Practice, Finance/Microfinance, and Human Resource. Our graduates receive two awards: an AOU which it is fully accredited by the local Higher Education Authority and an award that is validated by the Open University UK. Furthermore, you would be pleased to know that the Business School at OU-UK, with which FBS-AOU is affiliated, is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

This Student Handbook will acquaint all students, new and returning, about many aspects of the Arab Open University. The AOU Student Handbook specifies the general rules, regulations, policies, and procedures for student life at the University and within the campus community. It also defines the structure within which organized student life is carried on and the means by which students may achieve fullest realization of the University's resources and facilities. As an official document, the Student Handbook represents a part of the student's obligation to the University.

Thank you for choosing the FBS at Arab Open University. I hope your year ahead is both challenging and successful.

## **Academic Calendar**

The Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) follows the general academic calendar of the AOU which consists of 2 main semesters of Fall and Spring and a shorter semester of Summer. The fall and spring semesters are normally of 16-week duration whereas the summer semester is of about 8-week duration. The term and assessment dates are clearly marked in the Academic Calendar. The course calendars for individual modules are based on the Academic Calendar of the AOU.

## **List of programme leader, coordinators, and academic staff, their contact details and availability arrangements**

The programme team leader is Dr. Bassim Shebeb, the Dean of the Faculty of Business Studies (FBS), (*B.Econ./B.IMGT, KU, Kuwait, MA.Econ., USask., Canada, PhD.Econ., UQ, Australia*). The lists of programme coordinators at the AOU-Branches and academic staff are available electronically on the AOU's website at (<http://arabou.edu.kw/>) and available in each Branch's website. The academic staff at the FBS are available to you during the face-to-face tutorial sessions and also during office hours and Academic Advising.

## **Introduction to the programme (Faculty of Business Studies)**

Arab Open University's Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) is non-traditional in approach, creative in application, and unique in perspective. FBS is the Arab World's most comprehensive blended learning business school, offering the full spectrum of business and management education options from single modules through to bachelor's and master's degrees. All are delivered with the flexibility, accessibility and quality that students expect from AOU.

The BA (Hons) Programme in Business Studies was launched at the beginning of the academic session 2002/2003 at AOU branches in Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. The programme commenced in the other three AOU branches Bahrain, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia one semester later, to be followed by a seventh branch in Oman which began to operate in 2007. Sudan the eighth branch started to operate in Fall 2015. The Business Studies Programme was first validated by The Open University in December 2003, and continues to undergo periodic revalidation to maintain its currency.

**The Objectives of AOU's Faculty of Business Studies are to:**

- Provide students with the knowledge to succeed in their chosen field and ensure the development of skills in problem solving, ethical decision making, communications, teamwork, and leadership.
- Increase students' abilities and confidence to handle managerial, financial and administrative activities.
- Enable students understand how key forces like the economy, the state and the system influence and interact with business.
- Teach students how to apply the most recent and innovative developments in systems thinking to areas such as information systems, organizational change and professional practice.
- Acquire and provide knowledge about the different approaches to the analysis and explanation of business problems; how to set targets and plan how to achieve them.
- Attract, and retain faculty dedicated to education, scholarship and the mission of the FBS.
- Attract and develop outstanding students who are dedicated to intellectual excellence.
- Produce primarily basic research, with supporting efforts in applied and pedagogical research that contributes to and complements the mission the AOU.
- Develop the skills of independent learning through activities of face to face and distance learning.
- Provide opportunities for continued involvement, education, and professional growth of its graduates.

**Minimum of 132 Credit Hours (495 Credit Points)**

In order for a student to receive the Business degrees he/she must successfully complete a minimum of 132 credit hours (495 credit points), of which 96 credit hours (360 Credit Points, Pts) are for OU requirements while 36 credit hours to meet local accreditation requirements. The following table includes AOU courses for freshmen students to be taken in the first year (Category 1). (Category 2) includes the further AOU courses to be taken as faculty requirements and electives. In addition, (Category 3) includes OU UK 360 Pts requirements for levels 4, 5 and 6. The majority of modules in the core Business programme requirement (Category 3) are modules fully-sourced from The OU UK and validated for delivery in the AOU environment.

**Distribution of 132 credit hours (495 credit points)**

No	Category	Credit Hours
1	University Requirements: Mandatory & Electives	24 (18 & 6)
2	Faculty Requirements common & Electives	12 (4 & 8)
3	Common Core Modules (Faculty & Track)	96 (48 & 48)
<b>Total</b>		<b>132</b>

At the beginning of each semester, students receive a learning package which is designed and prepared especially for active and independent study; the package contains:

- 1) the core reading/study materials,
- 2) a number of other items that vary slightly depending on the particular business module requirements, such as further reading material in the form of set books, supporting notes, audio-visual aids in the form of audio cassettes, video tapes, and CD-ROMs,
- 3) a module calendar that serves as a guide to the progression of study of module material and content, and
- 4) copies of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs).

### **Attendance requirements**

The Business programme, like other AOU programmes, is based on a blended learning model, comprising of a compulsory face-to-face tuition component constituting 25% of student study hours and the balance 75% devoted to self-study. Students are allocated to an individual subject tutor in the ratio 25:1. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning by studying the module materials according to the schedule provided in the course calendar. Learning is facilitated through a University wide learning management system (LMS) based on the open source software Moodle.

### **Programme Specification.**

FBS offers a BA degree in business with the option to specialize in one of seven tracks:

- 1- BA (Hons) Business Studies (Systems Practice)
- 2- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Economics
- 3- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Accounting
- 4- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Marketing
- 5- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Management
- 6- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Finance / Microfinance
- 7- BA (Hons) Business Studies with Human Resources Management

While all the tracks share a common core requirement, track specific modules vary from one track to another. More specification details are provided at the AOU website (at <http://arabou.edu.kw/>) for easy reference.

### **Module Specifications**

AOU academic programmes are made up of modules (formerly called courses) made up of a variety of academic materials. Each module within a programme is designed to deliver content that achieves the desired learning outcomes and objectives consistent with the vision and mission of AOU. Module Specification



documents for the seven tracks (Management, Accounting, Marketing, Economics, Systems Practice, Finance/ Microfinance and Human Resources Management) are provided at the AOU website (<http://arabou.edu.kw/>) for easy reference.

### **Student support, guidance and advice**

Most formal and informal arrangements for student support and guidance are branch based activities. Student counselling, academic advising, placement, health care, on campus activities, social accommodation and financial support are all provided through the branch facilities.

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

In addition to the guidance and support that the student receives 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 module material.
- Advising and registration counselling.
- The use of computer libraries and software.
- Online library.
- Telephone calls.
- 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 answered.

### **Induction arrangements**

Each semester, new students are introduced to AOU through an induction programme – held regularly in the first week of the semester – with multiple sessions for the convenience of employed students. The Faculty of Business Studies at each branch of AOU conducts its own business studies specific

induction for its students, emphasising the characteristics of the blended learning model. Students are also familiarized with the processes, rules and regulations of the university.

### **List of support staff (technical and administrative)**

Support staff at the Headquarters and at the branches are ready to support you in your studies. Their contact details are available at branch websites.

### **Personal tutoring**

In addition to the face to face tutorial sessions where the students have direct contact with their tutors, tutors also maintain scheduled weekly office hours and can be remotely contacted via email and telephone.

### **Study skills**

The blended learning model requires a unique set of skills. To adequately equip students with these skills, students are required to enrol in GR 101-“Independent Learning Skills”. Specially trained tutors guide students in acquiring self-study skills, such as the use of e-learning tools, research methodologies, effective writing, and practice of academic rigour.

### **Career advice**

Although many of our students are already employed, career advising and employment enhancement services are offered by the Student Affairs Department. The general goal of this programme is to assist students to make better career choices and to match their skills and competencies with career opportunities in the job market. Services provided by the Student Affairs Department include CV and cover letter writing and job interview skills.

Individual branches organize job fairs and career day activities that promotes the interaction of students with prospective employers. AOU maintains a detailed alumni data base that can serve as a potential networking platform for job seekers.

### **Counselling**

Counselling span both academic and personal issues. At the beginning of each semester, academic advisors guide students in drawing up their academic plans and course of study, taking into account the commitments of the student and the natural progression through the programme. Students facing personal or academic difficulties are strongly urged to contact their branch counsellor for help and resolution. All student related information is held in the strictest confidence to protect the privacy of each student.

**Scholarships and Financial Support.**

A limited number of scholarships are available for deserving students at selected branches. Financial aid is available for qualified students on a merit cum needs basis. Students can also avail of installment tuition payment facilities. Check with your local branch for further details and application procedures.

**Support for students with disabilities**

AOU respects the right to education for all individuals, thus making reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of physically disabled or otherwise challenged students. These include provision of ramps and other physical infrastructure, special consideration in the administration of examinations, and any other measures deemed necessary to facilitate the learning experience of such individuals.

**Opportunities available to students on completion of the programme**

Globalisation and the advancement of technology have forced employers, particularly in the private sector, to search for individuals qualified in problem solving and decision making. Therefore, there is an increased demand for Business Studies graduate students. Our students will graduate from the Business programme with a solid academic background, paving the way for career opportunities in different business areas, such as: accounting, finance, marketing, human resource and banking. Students interested in pursuing graduate study may consider enrolling on the MBA programme at FBS.

**Opportunities and support for study abroad.**

By virtue of AOU's partnership with The Open University UK, graduates receive two degrees, one from the AOU and a validated degree from The OU UK. However, all academic work must be completed within one of the AOU branches. If you wish to transfer to another institution, check the regulations at the host institution about credit transfers.

**Work placement information**

Work placements are intended to permit students to enrich their learning experience by combining practical work with academic course work. In the current FBS format, such related experience is limited to project work in some of the level six modules.

## **Facilities and Services**

AOU's vision is "to evolve as a technology driven, web enabled institution, connecting students, faculty and staff anywhere anytime to support its blended learning model." Resources at AOU are, in general, branch-based rather than programme-based. Classrooms, computer labs, computer equipment, software and application systems, car parking facilities and special needs facilities, are used by all students on all programmes.

### **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 Open University UK Databases.

Students are encouraged to use the e-library as extensively as possible, so as to effectively interface with AOU's blended learning model. FBS enforces the use of the e-library by requiring business students to provide good referencing in all its TMAs.

Well trained e-library staff are available to attend to all your queries and guide you in the use of computers, computer programmes, LMS (learning management system), and search methodologies. 24/7 online access to the e-library's e-resources is provided for the faculty and the students of the university. The e-library can be accessed through the link provided on the LMS.

Hard copy books and periodicals received by the library are catalogued and displayed on the shelves. Reference books from the library are issued to both students and staff. Some branches have arrangements whereby AOU students can access materials and resources from other libraries in their local communities/countries - so check with your local branch.

### **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 and helpdesk**

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.

### **Artificial Intelligence Lab**

Established in 2010, in collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory is expected to promote research within AOU to better serve the needs of students.

### **Catering Services**

All branches have professionally managed cafeterias that offer catering services to students at reasonable prices.

## **Determination of results**

### **Assessment and progression regulations**

Complete details on assessment and progression regulations can be found at the AOU website and are also distributed as part of each module package. The following discussion summarizes the salient features of the assessment process.

Assessment is based on two components and uses three types of instruments.

The two components are:

- Continuous assessment: This comprises the TMA (20%) and the MTA (30%) representing 50 % of the overall assessment score.
- Examination assessment: This consists of one final exam at the end of the semester. This component represents 50 % of the overall assessment score.

The three instruments are:

- Tutor-Marked-Assignments (TMA)
- Mid-Term Assessments (MTA)
- Final Exams

For a student to pass a module, he/she must achieve an overall score of 50% in the final examination and continuous assessment, combined i.e. he/she should score a minimum of 20% in the continuous assessment and 30% in the final examination or vice versa. Grade D (1.5 points) is considered as the minimum passing grade for a student's successful completion of the module.

A student unable to appear in the final examination due to an *acceptable* medical report or a force majeure, will be given a grade of “Incomplete” (I), and shall be allowed to sit for a make-up final examination in the nearest semester when that module is offered; otherwise, he/she shall receive a grade of Fail (F).

### **Student Appeals**

Students may appeal their final grade to the Branch Examination Committee (BEC) within one week from announcement of course results. Students not satisfied with the decision of the BEC can choose to take his/her case to the Faculty Examination Committee. Institutional procedures ensure that the grading and assessment process is fair and equitable. For details on the appeals process and re-appeals, refer to the AOU website.

Students can also seek redress for any non–examination related complaints at any time, by completing the University’s student complaint form. These cases are referred to the concerned department by the Student Affairs office. Students are notified of the outcome of the complaint through the Student Affairs office in a timely manner. Again, if not satisfied with the outcome, the student has the right to appeal to the concerned Vice President, and in extraordinary cases even to the President of the Arab Open University and the Vice-Chancellor of The Open University UK.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

AOU takes the academic integrity of its programmes and processes very seriously. Any student found cheating or to have committed an act of plagiarism shall be referred to the competent Branch Disciplinary Committee. Punishment, if warranted, may include dismissal from the University. The following are considered acts of cheating and plagiarism:

- Copying printed material and submitting it as part of TMAs, or examination scripts without proper acknowledgement and documentation
- Copying material from the internet, including tables and pictures without proper acknowledgement.
- Copying other students' work
- Knowingly permitting other students to use your work as their own.
- Using material prepared for the student by individuals or institutions, i.e. material which is not the student's own work
- Taking unauthorized material into the examination room.

Please be informed that AOU uses sophisticated software such as **Copypatch**® and **Turnitin**® which are highly effective in detecting instances of plagiarism involving the use of public material without proper referencing.

**Inability to submit assignments or take the Final Examination.**

- A student who cannot take the final examination or submit a report/project which is considered a main component of the assessment, must submit a medical report or a force majeure to the Students' Affairs Office within three days of the date of the final examination.
- If the Branch Examination Committee accepts the case, the student is awarded I (Incomplete) and the student may take the examination with all other students studying the module at the end of the next semester or academic year
- If the Branch Examination Committee rejects the excuse, the student is awarded a zero (0) in this examination
- A student, who cannot take a final examination of a module with accepted reasons, can take that examination again on the next occasion that the examination for the same module is held.
- The numerical mark of zero (0) shall be recorded for each TMA not submitted by the cut-off date unless the student provides within three days of the cut-off date evidence of a medical report or extraordinary circumstances which are beyond his/her control. If the case is approved then, depending on the circumstances, the TMA may be submitted up to three weeks after the cut-off date

**Repeating Modules**

- The student may not retake any module in which he obtains grade (C) or above.
- A student who fails in an elective module may retake the same module or any other elective module for the purpose of completing the programme's approved study plan requirements
- A student who fails in a compulsory module must retake the same module in a subsequent semester.
- For the purposes of raising the student's cumulative average to the required limit for graduation purposes only, the student may retake any module in his Study Plan other than The OU UK modules in his programme's study plan in which he/she had previously obtained a (D) grade.

For regulations regarding how grade point averages are computed when repeating modules, refer to the guidelines at the AOU website.

**Dissertations and projects**

The FBS program does not require any dissertation. Individual modules may have project work as part of the module specification.

### **How results are communicated**

The final module results are approved by the Central Examinations Committee pursuant to a recommendation submitted by the Examinations committee of the Faculty of Business. The final results are then announced on the Arab Open University website. Students should log in to SIS (Student Information System) with their ID and password to view their results.

### **Rules for determining degree classification, and for the award of honors, distinction, and merit, as applicable**

The classification of the degree award for the programmes validated by The Open University UK is calculated on the basis of the student's average grade in his/her best 32 credit hours of modules in Level 5 and the best 32 credit hours in Level 6.

The classification of the student's certificate is as follows:

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

Final grades for each module as letter grades correspond to the following grade points:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>
A	4.0
B+	3.5
B	3.0
C+	2.5
C	2.0
D	1.5
F	0.0

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



### **Granting the Bachelor's Degree**

The bachelor's degree is granted upon completion of the following graduation requirements:

- Passing all modules required for graduation pursuant to the study plan approved for the bachelor's degree in the concerned track.
- Achieving a cumulative average of not less than 2 points
- Not exceeding the maximum period of study
- Finishing any other requirements stated inside or outside the study plan

### **Granting of exit awards – Certificate of Higher Education in Business Studies and Diploma of Higher Education in Business Studies.**

FBS also provides exit awards for candidates who are unable to continue through the full programme of study required for the BA (Hons.) degree. Students may exit with either a Certificate of Higher Education (HE) in Business Studies or a Diploma of Higher Education in Business Studies.

For a Certificate of Higher Education in Business Studies, a student will be required to have successfully obtained 120 credits at Level 4. For a Diploma of Higher Education in Business Studies, a student will be required to have successfully obtained 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5

### **Other institutional policies and regulations**

All relevant AOU policy applies to FBS students. You are therefore urged to familiarize yourselves with University wide policy, procedures, and regulations provided at the AOU website and the 31 articles of University council approved by-laws. These articles directly relate to all aspects regarding your programme of study, including assessment policy, appeal procedures, plagiarism, maximum allowable duration of study, transfer of credits between branches, ... etc.

### **Student participation and evaluation**

#### **Student feedback**

The Faculty of Business Studies in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Unit at the Headquarters recognise that the students play a very important role in the evaluation, development and enhancement of the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Feedback from students allow the Faculty of Business Studies to evaluate how its services are viewed by its students. At the branch level, collecting student feedback is a continuous process throughout the whole

academic year. Several formal and informal methods are used to get student feedback, these methods include: direct contact with tutors and administrative staff, petition and complaints, e-mail messages, suggestions delivered through suggestion boxes and Student Surveys or Questionnaires.

Your feedback has a significant impact on strategic planning at FBS, we therefore urge you to provide us with your honest and candid comments and remarks, particularly on the student questionnaire. All comments and responses are held in the strictest confidence and anonymity.

### **Student representation on committees**

Students have the opportunity to represent their interests through student councils or student committees. Student council bylaws as ratified by AOU, allow students to form branch based student councils by electing members on a democratic basis. Representatives from these student bodies are encouraged to voice student concerns, attend administrative departmental meetings, and in general to be partners in improving the learning experience at AOU.

### **Contact Us**

The AOU has comprehensive centralized websites set up for its branches, in English unless otherwise noted: <http://arabou.edu.kw/>