PELIARQ

Guidance on Levantine qualifications, qualification frameworks and credit systems

About PELIARQ

PELIARQ "Promoting European-Levantine Internationalisation and Automatic Recognition of Qualifications" promotes opportunities for internationalisation by European universities in the Levant; and promotes improved recognition of qualifications and transparency around the education systems in Europe.

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- UK ENIC, ECCTIS Limited
- UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union (Italy)
- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

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List of Acronyms

AARU - Association of Arab Universities

ANQAHE - Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

AQACHEI - Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions

AQI-PRO – "Implementation of an internal quality assurance system for short vocational training courses in higher education institution"

CPD - Continuous Professional Development

DGHE - Directorate General of Higher Education

ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ECVET – European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENIC – European Network of Information Centres

EQF – European Qualifications Framework

EU – European Union

GPA – Grade Point Average

HE – Higher Education

HEI – Higher Education Institutions

LNQF - Lebanese National Qualifications Framework

LQF – Lebanese Qualifications Framework

MEHE - Ministry of Education and Higher Education

MoE – Ministry of Education

NARIC - National Academic Recognition Information Centre

PELIARQ - Promoting European-Levantine Internationalisation and Automatic Recognition of Qualifications

Ph.D. – Doctor of Philosophy

QA – Quality Assurance

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNIMED - Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo

USEK - Holy Spirit University of Kaslik

Project Description

This project seeks to support EU higher education institutions (HEI) to establish improved links with, and understanding of the education systems in the Levant, focusing on the target countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

Strategic internationalisation activities are the cornerstone of world class higher education (HE) systems. European universities must be at the forefront of internationalisation to deliver exceptional higher education opportunities for their students and the opportunities for staff to develop ground-breaking research. At the same time, the ability to understand international education systems and qualifications frameworks is a crucial enabler for universities looking to recruit the best students and staff from around the world.

A needs analysis indicates the value of enhanced cooperation and engagement in the target countries. Enhanced cooperation would support the fair and automatic recognition of skills and qualifications within the EHEA. According to UNESCO statistics, the top destination for outbound student mobility from Lebanon is in the EU (France), with the UK being fifth and EHEA countries making up 10 of the top 20 destinations. Moreover, 9 of the top 20 destinations for Jordanian students are also in the EHEA; while for Syria, the top destination is Turkey, with 10 of the top 20 destinations being within the EHEA. It is therefore necessary for EU and EHEA institutions to better understand the education systems these students are coming from.

Furthermore, while internationalisation at home and within the EU are well established, this is not the case with all regions.

To maximise the success of internationalisation strategies in the Levant region, HEIs require clear guidance on the available opportunities in the region and the ways in which these opportunities can be maximised. It is necessary to identify barriers to internationalisation (such as regulatory issues) and how these can be overcome, and concurrently any particularly pertinent enablers for the opportunities available, such as the use of technology to support internationalisation, support for public-private initiatives, the degree to which educational levels are aligned between systems, and the recognition of prior learning to facilitate transition of learning between different HEIs. The nature and structure of quality assurance arrangements is also a key element in supporting both internationalisation and a clear understanding of the education systems in the region.

The project aims for the guidance to be valuable to HEIs across all of Europe, and for the information on Levantine qualifications systems to be relevant and aligned to European standards such as the EQF and ECTS.

 UNESCO Beirut and the Association of Arab Universities (AARU) have supported this project assisting the consortium in developing full and comprehensive outputs and making key links with stakeholders in the Levant region. PELIARQ also held interviews with the subjoined universities who provided further insight on their national higher education:

Jordan: University of Jordan, Zarqa University, Al-Balqa Applied University.

Lebanon: University of Balamand, Antonine University, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik.

Syria: Damascus University, Arab International University.

Introduction:

This guidance report for European universities discusses the education systems of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. It will examine the following five topics for each of these countries:

1. higher education regulatory framework.
2. what type of programmes are offered and method of delivery.
3. the operative qualification frameworks.
4. what type of credits they use.
5. accreditation processes.
6. quality assurance mechanisms.

It should be noted that the grading systems for the countries involved in this project will not be covered in this guidance. All grading systems should form part of a quality assurance process, which will most likely be varied between institutions, and possibly even different fields of study awarded from same institution. For further information one should consult the ENIC-NARIC centre in their respective country, and also the awarding body.

Who should use this guidance:

This part of the guide is for HEI staff seeking to initiate contact with HEIs in the target Levant countries, with the aim of establishing internationalisation activities including mobility opportunities and developing methods to deliver programmes of study, either online, physically, or through a hybrid model. Such programmes can be full courses or even modules or credits that will allow recipient HEI to update their programme content. The delivery of Continuous Development Programmes (CDP) for teaching staff is also envisaged as a potential outcome of this guide. The possibility that HEIs from both regions would be able to develop joint programmes of study, and also assist in the movement of teaching staff and students will be the ultimate goal. Thus, the target audience - subject to the national and HEI requirements - will be:

- University international offices.
- Faculty programme directors.
- Student bodies.
- Teaching staff.
- Registrars.
- CPD providers.

How the guidance is structured:

The guide is composed of six chapters, covering the six topics listed in the introduction. Each chapter will then provide further insight for each topic in relation to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Where possible, the information presented will also be supported by direct feedback from universities that the PELIARQ project team contacted, delineating any specific circumstances applicable for each country of university.

General country overview

Jordan

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Basic Data:
- Official name: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Capital: Amman
- Total area: 89,342 km²
- Population: 11,167,204
- Official language(s): Arabic
- Ethnic groups: Jordanian 69.3%, Syrian 13.3%, Palestinian 6.7%, Egyptian 6.7%, Iraqi 1.4%, other 2.6% (includes Armenian, Circassian) (2015 est.)
- Religions: Muslim 97.1% (official; predominantly Sunni), Christian 2.1% (majority Greek Orthodox, but some Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant denominations), Buddhist 0.4%, Hindu 0.1%, Jewish <0.1%, folk <0.1%, other <0.1%, unaffiliated <0.1% (2020 est.)
- Currency: Jordanian Dinar (JOD)

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Jordan, officially the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is located in the heart of the Middle East, northwest of Saudi Arabia, between Israel (to the west) and Iraq. Amman is the capital city of Jordan. The official language is Arabic, but English is widely spoken.[1] Jordan has a population of 11,167,204[2] covering an area of 34,495 sq. miles of land. Jordan gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1946. It is a unitary state under a constitutional monarchy and the current monarch Abdullah II is the head of the state and commander-in-chief of the army.

Lebanon

<div style="background:#4BA3C3; padding:1em;">

Basic Data:
- Official name: Lebanese Republic
- Capital: Beirut
- Total area: 10,452 km²
- Population: 5,261,372 (July 2021 est.)
- Official language(s): Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian
- Ethnic groups: Arab 95%, Armenia 4%, other 1%
- Religions: Muslim 61.1% (30.6% Sunni, 30.5% Shia, smaller percentages of Alawites and Ismailis), Christian 33.7% (Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group), Druze 5.2%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus (2018 est.)
- Currency: Lebanese Pound

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[1] The World factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/jordan/#geography
[2] Department of Statistics: Department of Statistics (dos.gov.jo)

Lebanon, officially the Republic of Lebanon is located on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, listed as the second smallest country in the Middle East and in the Arab world. The country's surface area is 4,036 sq. miles and the current population is estimated at 5,261,372, Beirut being the capital city. The official language is Arabic; however, French is widely spoken in Lebanon. After World War I, France attained a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province in Syria. The French demarcated the region of Lebanon in 1920 and gained independence in 1943.

Syria

Basic Data:
- Official name: Syrian Arab Republic
- Capital: Damascus
- Total area: 185,180 km²
- Population: 20,384,316 (July 2021 est.) Official language(s): Arabic
- Ethnic groups: Arab 90%, other 10%
- Religions: Islam 87%, Christian 10%, Druze 3%
- Currency: Syrian Pound

Syria officially known as the Syrian Arab Republic is situated in the Middle East. Damascus is the capital city of Syria. The official language is Arabic; however, Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian, French and English are also spoken. Syria has a population of 20,384,316 (July 2021 est.) covering an area of 71,500 sq. miles of land. Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French administered the area as Syria until granting it independence in 1946. Since then, Syria went through a lot of changes and in 1958 joined Egypt to form the United Arab Republic until 1961 and the Syrian Arab Republic was re-established.[3]

Due to the civil war in 2011[4] Syria encountered the largest influx of refugees and movement that included student mobilities between Syrian universities. The closure of universities in cities due to war forced students to move to universities in safe areas. Other universities had been heavily damaged by war and were not able to operate. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research ordered public universities to host those students to attend classes, even without documents until it was safe to go back to their respective universities. [5]

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[3] The World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/syria/
[4] Syrian Civil War: https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War

[5] International Credit Mobilities of Syrians during Conflict: Opportunities and Challenges - Sulaiman Mouselli

1. Higher Education Regulatory Framework

A notable characteristic of higher education in the three target countries is that the sector, to varying degrees, remains subject to increased governmental regulatory oversight when compared to most European countries. Universities are still dependent on government approval for licensing, accreditation, funding, and other matters that may affect the delivery of education, (for example, the recognition of programmes that were partially delivered abroad, or online). As such, public universities have been noted to enjoy more favorable regulatory conditions than private universities. However, private universities are becoming more popular, and are also a major force for change and development, often pushing ahead with educational developments at a faster rate than being allowed for by the regulatory authorities. This chapter will look at how education is delivered in each country, and more importantly who are the authorities that approve and recognize the respective institutions and their programmes.

Jordan

The Ministry of Education of Jordan is responsible for pre-primary, primary and secondary educational levels. The higher education system in Jordan is administered by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR)[6].

The Jordanian education system is thus divided into the following cycles:

- Pre-primary education.
- Basic education.
- Comprehensive secondary education (academic /vocational)
- Higher education.

Basic and secondary education:

In Jordan, basic and secondary education is regulated by the Ministry of Education.[7] Basic education lasts 10 years (Grades 1-10) and is free and obligatory in Jordan. Secondary education is not compulsory and lasts two years (Grades 11-12). It is divided into different streams; the comprehensive secondary education (academic) stream where the students will finish with a general secondary education examination that will involve a common core curriculum and optional specialised academic or vocational courses. Comprehensive secondary education (academic) includes three different streams namely scientific, literary and information management. The

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[6] Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research: https://mohe.gov.jo/Default/En

[7] The Ministry of Education of Jordan: https://moe.gov.jo/ar/node/15782

comprehensive secondary education (vocational) combines vocational and academic education. The core curriculum is the same as for academic schools; hence, students specialise in one subject from the following: Agriculture, commerce, home economics, hotel management, industry, and nursing. The six specialisations include general education subjects, science subjects and specialist subjects

Upon completion of secondary school, students need to obtain the general secondary education certificate to be admitted to higher education institutions. The general vocational secondary education certificate, awarded to those who have studied vocational courses, may also allow access to higher education at institutional discretion. The other stream is the applied secondary education, which contains specialised vocational courses that prepare skilled labour through apprenticeship programmes run by the Vocational Training Corporation or the Ministry of Labour. Upon completion students will obtain the applied secondary education certificate that will grant admission to community colleges but does not typically permit direct access to higher education.
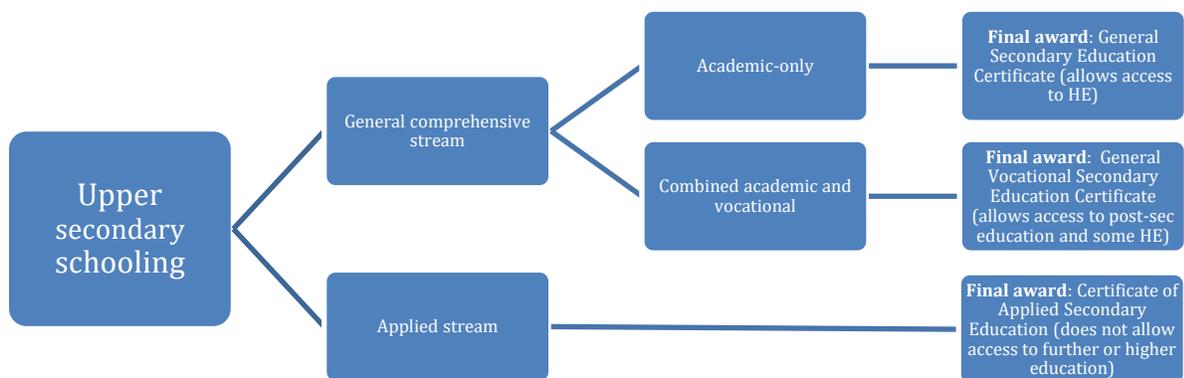
Admission requirements to higher education:

Institutions select students based on their average final exam mark and stream; students do not generally need to sit for an admission examination. The MoHESR determines every year the number of available places within a faculty and the exact entry scores for various fields of study.[8]

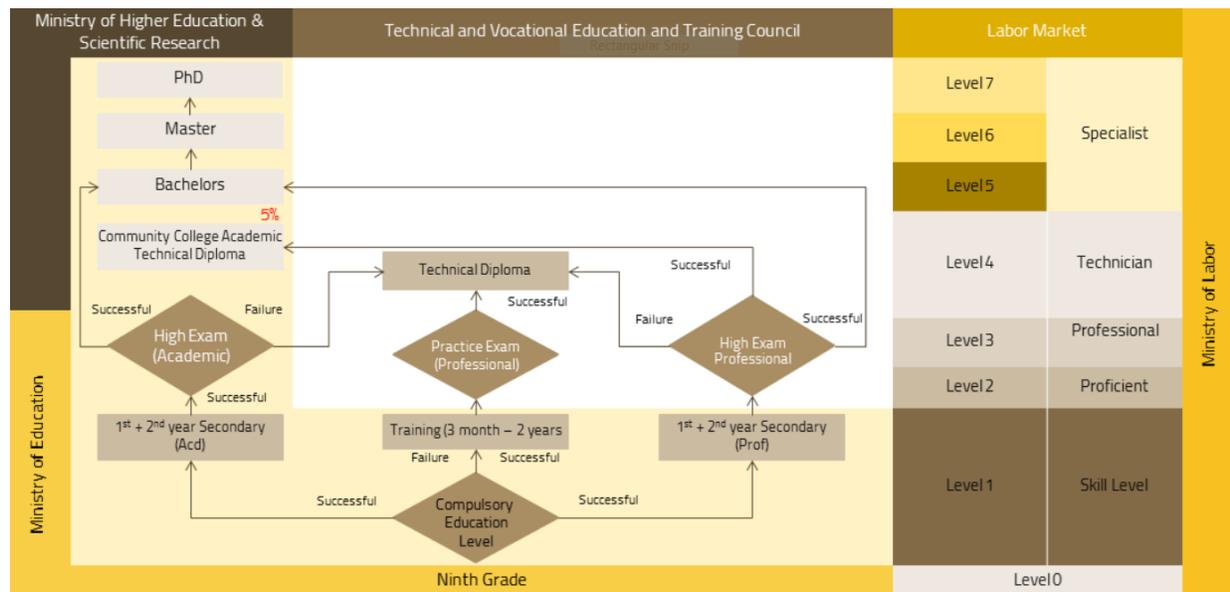Access to higher education is open to holders of the General Secondary Education Certificate or any other equivalent certificate from abroad. Depending on their grades, students can choose between public and private universities and community colleges. Universities implement the credit-hour system which entitles students to select courses according to a study plan.

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[8]Education System Jordan: Education system Jordan (nuffic.nl)

To enroll for a Bachelor degree programme students are generally required to be in possession of the Jordanian General Secondary Education Certificate, UK A-levels or the International Baccalaureate (IB). Students applying for Master's degrees must be in possession of an undergraduate degree and applicants for Doctorates are required to hold a Master's degree. Moreover, students applying for postgraduate studies must demonstrate their level of command in English by obtaining positive scores via the TOEFL-iBT/IELTS or the National exam of the English language. Score requirements vary depending on the course/programme chosen.[9]

Higher Education:

The MoHESR is responsible for higher education,[10] with the Council for Higher Education being the coordinating body. Public and private universities in Jordan follow either the British or the American education systems. Some of these universities also have links with many American, British and other international universities around the world. Community colleges offer non-university and vocational education and are open to holders of all types of general education certificates. Programmes of two to three-year durations are offered in different fields such as sciences, art, management engineering, and business and management. Since 1997, all public community colleges are administered by the Al-Balqa Applied University and at the end of the courses, students will sit for a comprehensive examination (Al-Shamel). Once successful, this will lead to the Associate degree / Diploma.[11]

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[9] Access to Higher Education:http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/StudyInJordan/en/

[10] Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research: http://portal.mohesr.gov.eg/en-us/Pages/default.aspx

[11] Higher Education - Jordan:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=84&TextID=162

Institutions:

At present, there are 10 public, 19 private and 2 regional universities in Jordan. Both public and private universities offer Bachelor degrees, while Master's and Doctorate degrees are offered in public universities and only a few private universities.

The language of education is Arabic; however, due to a growth in international programmes, such programmes are also offered in English.[12] A list of universities and higher education institutions can be found online.[13]

> **Key Points:**
> - Education in Jordan is centralised
> - There are a mix of public and private institutions
> - Programmes follow the American or British education models

Lebanon

Education in Lebanon is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)[14]. In Lebanon, English or French with Arabic are taught from early years in schools.

The education system in Lebanon is divided into the following cycles:

- Pre-primary education
- Primary education
- Intermediate education/Technical - Vocational
- Secondary education/Technical - Vocational
- Higher Education

Basic and secondary education:

Pre-primary education lasts for three years and covers the ages between three to five. At this stage the curriculum aims to encouraged children's social and linguistic development and prepare them for primary education level.

Primary education lasts for six years and covers grades 1 to 6. Children will learn the following subjects: Arabic, art education, civic education, foreign language (French or English) Geography, History, Mathematics, and Physical education. Children may continue their studies for another six

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[12] Higher Education in Jordan:http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/StudyInJordan/en/

[13] Universities and Institutes: https://mohe.gov.jo/EN/List/Universities__and_Institutes___
[14] MEHE: https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar

years at intermediate/secondary level or a three – six years technical or vocational training programme.

Intermediate education lasts for three years and covers grades 7 to 9. Education at this level can be both academic and technical/vocational but it is not compulsory. The curriculum at this level is broad based and aims to prepare students for secondary education. After completing intermediate studies students acquire the Brevet d'Études, that will give access to secondary education. The skills demonstrated at this level will determine in which stream students will enter in the secondary cycle.

Secondary education lasts for three years and is open to holders of the Brevet d'Études. In the first year, all students will follow the same curriculum while in the second year, students will choose between science stream or ats/humanities stream. In the final year, students are divided into four optional streams (arts and humanities, general sciences, life sciences, and socio-economic science. Streaming will be based on the students' abilities as shown by the Brevet results. Selection of the students is decided by the school principles.

After the three years, students will sit for the General Secondary Certificate examination also known as Baccalauréat Libanais. This award gives access to higher education.[15]

Admission requirements to higher education:

Admission requirements may vary between institutions but in general for undergraduate programmes the General Secondary Certificate (Baccalauréat Libanais) or a comparable qualification are accepted.

Students that have graduated from the national high school system may be required to successfully complete an International Foundation year before entering undergraduate courses. It is required to have good A-level scores or the equivalent of the International Baccalaureate Diploma to be considered for admission to undergraduate degree courses.

Students that are in possession of the French Baccalaureate (Baccalauréat Général) / Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur / Diplôme and the Diploma of Technical Licence / Licence Technique are accepted as an entry requirement for the undergraduate degree courses. Students that need to follow postgraduate courses must be in possession of an undergraduate honours degree or equivalent from a recognised university with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.8. Ph.D. courses can be followed by having successfully completed a Master's degree from a recognised Lebanese institution.

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[15] Education System in Lebanon:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=92&TextID=157

Higher Education:

The higher education (HE) system in Lebanon can be categorised as having two parallel systems, being the public and the private sector, all falling under the administration of the MEHE. The public higher education sector is represented by only one higher education institution, being the Lebanese University (LU), with approximately 80,000 students. It is governed by its own law, decrees, and bylaws under the tutorship of the MEHE, but enjoys a high degree of independence and autonomy.

The Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) which is in MEHE has responsibility for private universities and university colleges, while technical and vocational institutes are under the responsibility of the Directorate General of Technical and Vocational Education.

Institutions:

MEHE maintain on their website[16] a list of accredited universities and programmes.

> Key Points:
> - Education in Lebanon is conducted in either English or French with Arabic
> - Administration is centralised with the MEHE
> - There is one public institution and a range of private institutions at higher education level

Syria

Primary and secondary education:

Schools are generally publicly run and administered by the central Ministry of Education (MoE). Syria follows a 12-year system of compulsory and secondary education. Compulsory education is divided in two cycles, the first cycle is four years and the second is five.[17]

Secondary education is not mandatory, but it is available for students that pass the examination at the end of the primary cycle. Results will determine if the students follow the general secondary stream or the technical / vocational secondary stream, which are both three years in duration in grades 10-12. Students are awarded the General Secondary Certificate upon successful completion of a national examination.

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[16] Accredited Universities in Lebanon: http://www.higheredu.gov.lb/arabic/privuniv/personal_univ.html
(PELIARQ noted issues with the official weblink, which is not always working)

[17] Education in Syria: https://wenr.wes.org/2016/04/education-in-syria

At grade 10, students follow the same general secondary curriculum. In grades 11 and 12, students will choose between literary streaming that include the following subjects: art and music, Arab society (economy and general philosophy), geography and history; and scientific streaming where students study the following subjects: biology, chemistry, mathematics and statistics, and physics.[18]

Vocational secondary education lasts three years and the curriculum includes mainly vocational subjects that involves hands-on practice. Students choose a specialisation and at the end of their studies they receive the vocational secondary education The titles of these certificates vary upon the specialisation the student has taken.

Admission requirements to higher education:

Holders of the general secondary certificate are entitled for university entry. Students generally pick a subject to study according to the stream they followed during upper secondary education. Graduates from the science stream are allowed to enter any university discipline, while the majority choose a scientific or applied subject while graduates of the literary stream may read for programme offered at faculties of arts, business, commerce, fine arts, Islamic jurisprudence, and law.

The grades required for access to individual degree programmes vary annually and are determined by the University Admissions Committee of the Council of Higher Education. Dentistry, engineering, and medicine degrees require particularly high marks from prospective students. Holders of the Professional Secondary Certificate may access undergraduate courses in related disciplines. Universities may also set their own admissions examinations for entrance to some subject specialisations although they are not widely used. Although in theory all holders of the general secondary certificate are eligible for a place within the Syrian higher education system, demand is such that the University Admissions Committee limits the number of places available to students each year.[19]

For a postgraduate taught course such as a Master's degree, students normally need a Bachelor degree from a recognised institution in a relevant subject with high grades. To follow a Doctor of Philosophy, students need to be in possession of a Master's degree with a minimum grade of 75%.

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[18] Secondary Education in Syria:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=157

[19] ECCTIS: Syria
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=162

Higher Education:

Higher education is regulated by University Law No. 6 of 2006, and each institution is established through a separate presidential decree. Several regions are under the authority of other groups, such as the Syrian Interim Government and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES), also known as Rojava, and offer their own education systems and qualifications.

Public universities have long dominated the scene till 2005-06, after which, private universities were allowed to operate. Changes to legislation now allow private universities to operate. In Syria there are now 8 public universities and about 23 private universities. After 2010 the Ministry of Education did not allow any further private universities to open but allowed new religious universities to start to operate. In 2011 the last private university was opened to accommodate its students.[20]

Private universities have only recently been allowed to offer Master's or any other postgraduate programmes. The Ministry thinks that private universities do not have enough qualified academic staff to run certain programmes. Most private universities are working on a profit-based system. In instances where their academic staff are not sufficiently suited to deliver certain programmes, private universities rely on public teachers that are hired for 4-5 years contracts.[21]

Public universities are allowed to offer all levels of education. Students that obtain a Bachelor degree from a private university and are willing to continue their studies will have to enroll with a public university. Public universities allow some places for students coming from private universities that will have to sit for an entrance exam for access. Students that study at a public university are advised to study all modules in the country during their undergraduate studies, otherwise they are not awarded the degree; hence, studying abroad is not recognised. However, it is acceptable for students to study modules abroad for Master's and Ph.D. programmes as this is considered as a research period. The law does not allow undergraduate joint degree programmes at a national and international level. Students that want to study for a Bachelor or a Master's degree must study the full programme either abroad or in Syria.

The only university that is allowed to deliver online education is the Syrian Virtual University. It is a public university but with different regulations, more lenient procedures compared to public universities, and it is the only accepted online delivery. Because of Covid-19 some universities have been recording sessions and were uploaded on open-source learning platforms, such as Moodle, hence regular lectures stopped. Apart from the Syrian Virtual University, there are no infrastructures or tools to do online learning.[22]

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[20] Arab International University – Interview notes
[21] Arab International University – Interview notes
[22] Arab International University – Interview notes

Institutions:

The MoHESR maintain on their website[23] a list of accredited universities and programmes.

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Key Points:
- Undergraduates must study all modules in Syria; study abroad for credit towards the degree is not recognised
- Graduate studies may incorporate study abroad periods
- Undergraduate joint degree programmes are not formally recognised under the present law

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[23] Universities and Institutions: http://www.mohe.gov.sy/mohe/index.php

2. Programmes and delivery

National requirements determine what programmes of study may be delivered, be that in terms of format, duration, learning outcomes, and also the possibility of having joint programmes of study, i.e., being awarded by two universities, or delivered by two different awarding bodies.

Jordan

In Jordan there are no restrictions in having joint programmes; in fact, the Ministry of Education is enhancing these forms of collaboration with foreign universities. However, some universities reportedly feel discouraged to apply for joint programmes, with the main difficulty cited being the complexity and length of the process to obtain approval from the MOHE, which reportedly involves a significant number of steps. Nevertheless, there have reportedly been some recent changes in the regulations and in the Ministry of Education's team, which have meant that some support for such programmes is now being offered and there is more flexibility in accelerating the procedures, so for this reason some universities are taking this opportunity and applying for joint programmes. The vision has also changed to involve local universities to increase collaborations with universities in the EU and integrate joint programs in their educational offer.[24]

Another challenge that Jordanian universities are facing is that when they seek for joint programmes in other countries, in some cases, foreign universities or HEIs do not distinguish Jordanian universities. That is why universities are working on international ranking and international recognition of their universities.

A very successful experience in Jordan is the German Jordanian University (http://www.gju.edu.jo/). Students spend part of their education in Jordan and part in Germany. For example, undergraduate students spend two years in Jordan and the last year in the EU. German Jordanian University is a state university, and they follow Jordanian regulations. They issue the qualification as a Jordanian diploma and follow the rules of the Jordanian HE system. However, they provide the opportunity for one year of degree abroad, in Europe, which is what some universities in Jordan are aiming for. [25]

In the years before the Covid-19 pandemic online learning was not recognized; however, the mentality has changed, and there is more acceptance and integration of online learning. This will keep changing hopefully, to include virtual courses. Hopefully this will change the ratio on remote and face to face courses.

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[24] University of Jordan - Interview notes
[25] University of Jordan - Interview notes

Bachelor degrees

Bachelor degrees are generally four years in duration; however, some degrees can take five to six years. Programmes of dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, architecture, and veterinary science are of a duration of five years while Doctor of Medicine (MD) is awarded after six years of study.[26] The coursework credit hours (vide note 31) vary from 132-223 depending on the duration of the programme of studies.

Master's degrees

Admission to Master's degree programmes is based upon a mark of 'good' or equivalent in a Bachelor degree and a desired level of English demonstrated by a minimum score in TOEFL-IBT, IELTS or the National exam of the English language (score requirements vary per study programme). Master's degrees are generally two years in length after the Bachelor degree, and may vary between three and six semesters. They may be completed by either coursework or a thesis.[27] If the degree is obtained by coursework and a thesis; it requires 24 credit hours of courses and 9 credit hours of research. If it is done by coursework and comprehensive examination, then it requires 33 credit hours.

Ph.D.

Doctorate degrees are awarded after a minimum of three years of additional study and the submission of a new dissertation. It involves, depending on the subject, 24 credit hours of coursework and 24 credit hours of research. As an entry requirement for the Ph.D., applicants should hold a Masters degree with a minimum of 'very good'.[28]

Al-Balqa Applied University informed that at the moment it is not offering Ph.D programmes since they do not have enough infrastructure and academic staff to structure the programme. Specific regulations from the MoHESR require from any institution wanting to offer Ph.Ds to have staff with publications, skills and experience.

Lebanon

Degrees are awarded by HE institutions according in accordance to the higher education law 285/2014.

As regards joint degrees it is noted that Lebanese universities have a well-established history of concluding successful joint programme agreements with various European universities. Such joint

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[26] Study in Jordan: http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/StudyInJordan/en/

[27] Study in Jordan: http://rce.mohe.gov.jo/StudyInJordan/en/

[28] Higher Education in Jordan:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=84&TextID=162

programmes have been established, *inter alia*, in Spain, Hungary, France, Poland, in fields of study varying from business, engineering, and law. Web-link provided during interview with USEK.[29]

Higher Education institutions award the following degrees:

Bachelor degrees

Bachelor first level degree, which requires at least three academic years of study or their equivalent in semesters. In each case, the minimum study duration can be no less than two and a half academic years; in addition to the total number of credits required to receive the degree. High-school degree holders or equivalent can enrol in this type of degree.

First Cycle Programmes: There are two types of first cycle programmes; one is leading to a Bachelor's degree after 3 to 4 years (comparable to 180 - 240 ECTS) and another one leading to a Bachelor of technology after 3 years of studies (comparable to 180 ECTS).

Master's degrees

Master a second level degree, which requires at least two academic years of study for the holders of first level degrees. Bachelor's degree holders or equivalent can enrol in this type of degree.

Second Cycle Programmes: Masters degrees are delivered in Lebanon by all types of higher education institutions and in all branches of study. These are organised over a length of 1 or 2 years which are comparable to 60-120 ECTS or 30-39 American credits. Admission requirements to enrol into Masters degree programme, are for a student to have completed a Bachelor programme comparable to at least 180 ECTS or 240 ECTS, depending on the length of the Bachelors degree.

Ph.D.

Ph.D. (Doctorate) a third level degree, which requires at least three academic years of study for the holders of second level degrees. Master's degree holders or equivalent can enrol in this type of degree.

Third Cycle (Ph.D.) Programmes: According to the law for the re-organisation of private higher education, only universities and university colleges can organise doctoral studies. However, the decree 10068 of 2013 establishes more conditions for the opening of such programmes. It is to be noted that only the Lebanese University, which is the only public university in Lebanon can self-accredit Ph.D. programmes. This means all other universities must have such programmes

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[29] USEK: https://www.usek.edu.lb/erasmus-international-credits-mobility

approved by the MEHE, which is a prolonged process. As a solution, some universities provide the Ph.Ds. but are awarded (and thus accredited) by other foreign universities.[30]

Syria

The language of instruction for all courses is Arabic, however many scientific / technical subjects include some modules taught in English or French.

Bachelor degrees

Usually, undergraduate degree programmes are four years in duration that will include a workload of 133 credit hours[31] . However, degrees in architecture, dentistry, engineering, general medicine, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine require the completion of an initial preparatory year (credit hours can vary from 169 to 191 depending on the type of course). The results of the preparatory year are combined with those obtained for the General Secondary Certificate to determine the specialisation that students may take in the remaining four to five years of study.[32]

Most universities use lectures as their main mode of instruction and examinations are the main form of assessment. Coursework, written assignments and group and practical work are not commonly used to assess student performance. Likewise, dissertations are not consistently set as part of programmes.

Upon completion of an undergraduate degree programme, students are granted the Bachelor degree which is often referred to by the French term *Licence*

Master's degrees

Students need to obtain at least 65% from the Bachelor degree to be eligible in order to continue for a Master's degree. Furthermore, students are also required to take an entry examination in English or French language that are set by individual universities. Such programmes are usually two years in duration and students will need to pass all six modules to progress onto the second

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[30] The Higher Education system in Lebanon – National Report 2019: http://www.meric-net.eu/files/fileusers/3760_Lebanon_National%20Report_MERIC-Net.pdf

[31] Credit hour system: https://www.aiu.edu.sy/en/60/Studying-at-AIU

[32] Syrian Qualifications: https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=162

year which comprises a thesis. Only Master's degrees in academic disciplines are accepted for admission to doctoral programmes.[33]

In Syria there are Master's degrees which can be academic or vocational. Vocational programmes tend to imply more technical education and a small thesis, while academic programmes are more theoretical with longer thesis. Students that opt to study for vocational programmes cannot pursue for Ph.D. since there are no vocational Ph.D.'s in Syria.

Ph. D

The entry requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy is a Master's degree with a minimum grade of 75%. The Ph.D. is normally awarded following three years of full-time study and research. Normally, the programme is structured into one year of coursework, followed by two years of thesis preparation. Students are assessed on their thesis and on a minimum of two articles to be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. [34]

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[33]Syrian Qualifications Master's Degree:https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=162

[34] Syrian Qualifications Ph.D.: https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=162

3. National Qualification Frameworks

Jordan

Jordan currently does not have a formalised national qualifications' framework; however, it is a member of the AQF and of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ANQAHE. Their national framework is still under development and referencing processes have not yet been launched.[35] It should be noted that the learning outcomes in the proposed AQF in 2012 have a similar definition to the Bologna process system.

The ANQAHE defined the three learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences):[36]

> *"Knowledge – The cognitive representation of ideas, facts, principles, events or happenings. It can be learned from practical or professional experience as well as from formal instruction or study and can comprise description, understanding, thinking, analysis, synthesis, debate and research. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.*
>
> *Skills – The learned ability to perform a function that in some way responds to or manipulates the physical, informational or social environment of the individual. It incorporates the procedural knowledge required to carry out a task. Skills may be assessed directly or implied from performance. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are defined as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).*
>
> *Competence – The effective and creative deployment of knowledge and skills, including general, social and civic, as well as specific occupational contexts. Aspects of competence also encompass the learner's ability to transcend these through further learning, practice and reflection. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is defined in terms of responsibility and autonomy."*

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[35] National Qualifications Framework Jordan:https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/Jordan.pdf
[36] Qualifications Framework-ANQAHE: http://www.anqahe.org/uploads/7/3/3/4/73345067/anqahe_aqf_.pdf

In 2019[37], a Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework[38] had been prepared by the committee formed in compliance with the letter of the President of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions. The Strategic plan will expire in 2023 in which one of the conditions mentions that qualification standards need to be equal to those in educational institutions in other parts of the world and align the framework with Arab and international frameworks. Thus, signing recognition agreements between Jordan and other countries to recognize the Jordanian qualifications will be in place.[39]

The framework management aligns the Jordanian NQF with other frameworks (European framework and Arab country frameworks) by harmonizing the level descriptors in the frameworks and can be used in the harmonization of the Jordanian National Qualification Framework with the European Qualifications Framework as per- the table below.[40]

The ten-level Jordanian framework comprises pre-school education through tertiary education and ending with a doctorate qualification. The framework contains all kinds of academic, vocational, professional, and technical qualifications issued in the Kingdom. Therefore, these qualifications are placed according to the consistency of the learning outcomes in them with the level characteristics that have been developed according to international standards.

European Framework	The Jordanian National Framework
Level 8	Level 10
Level 7	Level 9
	Level 8
Level 6	Level 7
Level 5	Level 6 Level 5
Level 4	Level 4
Level 3	Level 3
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1

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[37] The National Qualifications Framework System for the year 2019:
http://jnqf.heac.org.jo/Manager/OPSHandler/Resources/Attachment/Form/10198/The%20National%20Qualifications%20Framework%20System%20for%20the%20year%202019--.pdf/The%20National%20Qualifications%20Framework%20System%20for%20the%20year%202019--.pdf.pdf

[38] What is the JNQF?: http://jnqf.heac.org.jo/?v=5.20.10.28.2&url=en/What-is-the-JNQF

[39] Strategic plan for the implementation of the NQF for the years 2019-2023:
http://jnqf.heac.org.jo/Manager/OPSHandler/Resources/Attachment/Form/10198/Strategic%20Plan%20English%20(2)/Strategic%20Plan%20English%20(2).pdf
[40] NQF Proposal in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:
http://jnqf.heac.org.jo/Manager/OPSHandler/Resources/Attachment/Form/10199/NQF-HEAC-8-Final1-English%20-%20Revised%20%20DRAFT%2031%20Jan%202019-converted/NQF-HEAC-8-Final1-English%20-%20Revised%20%20DRAFT%2031%20Jan%202019-converted.pdf

Lebanon

There is currently a draft Lebanese Qualification Framework (LQF), but it is not yet official (not approved or published). In the interim various universities refer to the EQF in their diploma supplement[41]. Some are also using the EQF when reviewing diplomas coming from EU for purposes of recognition. A draft version of the LQF which is similar to the EQF is also being used by Antonine University, but again this is not official nationally.

The draft 8-level LQF was first drafted in a Tempus project between 2010 and 2013 but was not further developed after this point for general academic qualifications (although a 6 level sub-framework for vocational education has been tentatively adopted).[42] No further progress towards the establishment of LQF has been made since then.[43]

LNQF Level	Qualification
1	First cycle: Children's Garden/pre-school: small, medium and large kindergarten
2	Second cycle: primary: from EB1 (Basic education 1st year = CP) to EB6 (corresponding to the 6th, but attached to primary)
3	Third cycle: complementary: from EB7 to EB9 (5th to 3rd)
4	Secondary School
5	TS
6	Bachelor-license
7	Masters
8	Ph.D. Doctorate

A draft of LNQF based on 8 levels[44]

Syria

Syria currently does not have an official national qualification framework, and in the absence of such framework, the below credential comparison table is being presented as a guide of how Syrian qualifications would be referenced to the EQF, and to their European comparable programmes of studies, based on current practices by recognition centres.

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[41] Antonine University (Interview notes)
[42] European Training Foundation, 2021. "National Qualifications Framework – Lebanon" https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-07/lebanon_0.pdf
[43] The Higher Education system in Lebanon – National Report 2019: http://www.meric-net.eu/files/fileusers/3760_Lebanon_National%20Report_MERIC-Net.pdf
[44] The Higher Education system in Lebanon – National Report 2019: http://www.meric-net.eu/files/fileusers/3760_Lebanon_National%20Report_MERIC-Net.pdf

Credential	Entry requirement	Length of study	Comparable level (EQF)
General Secondary Certificate	Completion of Grade 9	3 years	Comparable to Level 4
Professional Secondary Certificate	Completion of Grade 9	3 years	Comparable to Level 4
Associate Degree	Secondary Certificate	2 years	Comparable to Level 5
Bachelor's degree/ Licence	General Secondary Certificate/Associate Degree	4 years	Comparable to Level 6
Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree/Diploma of higher Studies	2 years	Comparable to Level 7
Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree	3 years (minimum)	Comparable to Level 8

4. Credits systems

Jordan

There is no national credit system in Jordan; the American credit system is used, or institutionally-specific credit systems. Below is a conversion table as defined by the University of Jordan of how University of Jordan credits are transferred to ECTS[45]

Conversion table between ECTS and UJ credit hours for the bachelor degree (1st cycle) programs		Conversion table between ECTS and UJ credit hours for the postgraduate degree (2nd and 3rd cycles) programs	
ECTS Credits	Maximum number of UJ credit hours	ECTS Credits	Maximum number of UJ credit hours
1	0	1	0
2	1	2	0.5
3	2	3	1
4	2	4	1
5	3	5	1.5
6	4	6	2
7.5	5	7.5	2
8	5	8	2.5
10	6	10	3
12	7	12	4
15	9	15	4.5
30	18	30	9

During interviews with Zarqa University, the PELIARQ team was informed that Jordanian certificates are provided in Arabic and English language and transcripts include credits. There is no official rule on the conversion of these credits to ECTS; however, it is estimated that 6 ECTS are equivalent to 3 credit hours. Jordanian students in general do not face problems when they travel to continue their studies in a European university.

Lebanon

There is no standardised national credit system in Lebanon due to the dual French- and US-style of education systems used in-country. [46] The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has not put in place a common Lebanese credit system to date; however, they have done a lot of capacity building in the Ministry about the conversion of ECTS and the American credits.

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[45] Conversion Table:
http://offices.ju.edu.jo/en/oir/Documents/ECTS%20Credit%20and%20Grade%20Conversion%20Tables.pdf
[46] Antonine University (Interview notes)

In practice, universities in Lebanon use the American credit system (1 credit is equal to 15 hours of study) and the European credit system - ECTS (1 ECTS is equal to 25-30 hours of study). As an example, the Lebanese University (public university) uses the European system.

For conversion of credits, Lebanon uses a 1:2 ratio, which means that 1 ECTS is equivalent to 2 American credits. They take into consideration the thesis of the student and other factors.

Syria

Most Syrian universities use the credit-hour system during their academic years. Study plan credit hours differ from each other depending on the course and duration of the programme of studies. As an example, the Arab International University adapts this system. A credit hour is made up of one theoretical hour or two practical hours a week and is planned for one academic semester (first semester 18 weeks, second semester 19 weeks). Credit hours can be theoretical or practical or both. The IAU defined credits as follows:

> "*Assuming a course in the study plan requires (3) credit hours, two of these hours are theoretical while one is practical. This course will hence be delivered in the form of two theoretical hours and two practical hours a week during study hours. Therefore, we can calculate that the student attending this course will have had to have attended (28) theoretical study hours and the same amount of practical hours.*"[47]

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[47] Studying At AIU: https://www.aiu.edu.sy/en/60/Studying-at-AIU

5. Programme Accreditation

Jordan

All universities are subject to the international standards of accreditation in terms of licensing and monitoring administered by the Higher Education Council, the MoHESR and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI).[48] The Commission was established in 2007 according to Law No. (20) by the name of HEAC, and in 2016, the Commission has been expanded to include the "Quality Assurance " (AQACHEI).

All joint programmes need to go through an accreditation process in the first instance, which is followed by a continuous monitoring process for quality. The accreditation is then checked by the MoHESR, which assesses the programme's quality, the CVs for course staff and infrastructure available. However, the lengthiest and most complex part of the process is the assessment of instructors' skill, where there are specific skill sets for each discipline that teachers need to be matched against.

Lebanon

All private HEIs are accredited by MEHE. The accreditation process has three stages:

- the accreditation of a programme;
- the delivery permission;
- recognition.

Any new study programme needs to go through a process to get accredited by the council of ministers. A new study programme goes through the technical committee, then to the HE Council, and then the programme needs to be accredited by the Minister. Afterwards, the HEI must submit a request to deliver the programme and demonstrate that it has the capacity in terms of infrastructure, resources, staff to deliver the programme. If all is deemed in compliance, the Minister can issue the permission to the institution. The third process is the national recognition of the study programme. The recognition will verify that the programme is well delivered.

Three years before having the first cohort of graduates, the technical committee will check that the programme meets the compliance requirements, and then it will be assigned the recognition. This is set in law. PELIARQ noted possible issues with this procedure as the process can be

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[48] Study in Jordan: https://studyinjordan.jo/Education

blocked at the level of the ministry, with reported cases of outstanding programmes since 2014. Other Universities also have external accreditation for specific fields of study.[49]

Syria

Programmatic accreditation is not yet in place; however, MoHE plans to establish a higher education quality assurance and accreditation system in Syria are under development.[50]

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[49] **USEK** informed that they have ABET accreditation for engineering science programmes, NAB for Architecture, Federation of Medical Accreditation too. In four years, the goal is to be considered an American university. USEK also has accreditation for student services.

[50] Accreditation and Quality Assurance:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=166

6. Quality Assurance

Jordan

Quality assurance is carried out by the aforementioned AQACHEI.[51] The vision of the commission is to "elevate Higher Education Institutions to global competitiveness."[52]

Monitoring of programmes occurs twice per year and is done internally by the specific university's quality department, which also conducts student satisfaction surveys. The QA unit looks into the course content and subsequently checks the quality from samples of students' assessments.

While exchanges of staff and students are managed internally, programmes must be approved by the Ministry, the accreditation agency and the HE council. [53]

Lebanon

Lebanon does not have a national quality assurance process; thus, it is up to universities to establish their own internal QA processes[54] as per law 285/2014. This internal QA will allow universities to have themselves ready to be quality assured by external evaluators, or eventually by the national quality assurance agency, when this will eventually be established.

The need to align standards with those used abroad has led to the development of QA processes that adopt established standards. As an example, USEK reports that for programmes that do not have specific accreditation, they will apply the USEK quality policy which was developed through a European project AQIPRO[55] which is creating a quality standard for all programmes. The AQIPRO is closely based on the European Quality framework. During the quality assurance of the programmes, they have a series of surveys, peer review, and a full quality procedure which takes into account the input of all stakeholders. Everything is monitored according to a specific schedule and each semester they review all the inputs and carry out any necessary changes as required. USEK further reported that they also have a special advisory board which monitors the learning outcomes, and other parameters. Each semester it will then review all inputs, carry our

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[51] AQACHEI: http://en.heac.org.jo/
[52] PPT by Dr Mohammad Othman:https://erasmus-plus.org.jo/Portals/0/Clivio%20Visit%20PPT/Sunday/03-%20Accreditation%20-%20Dr%20_%20Mohammad%20Othman.pdf?ver=bvIgaAfDl9sXuFthIQebdQ%3d%3d

[53] University of Jordan - Interview notes
[54] **Balamand University** inform that there QA committee seeks to align its academic standards with the requirements of professional bodies (e.g., association of engineering).
[55] Project with ENAEE: https://www.enaee.eu/

modifications, and also create metrics to measure such modifications. The information is internal and available for accreditation bodies, but not publicly available.[56]

Syria

The MoHE is responsible for quality assurance at tertiary level within the national educational remit. In 2005 a number of resolutions were issued in order to establish quality assurance centres sitting within each public university. Such resolutions allowed staff to be trained in quality assurance methodologies and to develop programmes for implementation. The Technical committee for Private Universities was set up two years later to offer accreditation for private universities. Despite all this, such quality assurance is not formally in place at national level. After institutions are issued with a Licence, there is not a proper follow-up to monitor such institutions, although programmatic accreditation is not yet in place. Although the MoHE prescribes guidelines on the structure of degree programmes, higher education institutions are largely permitted to develop and administer educational programmes themselves.

Before the civil war of 2011, MoHE launched a few quality assurance initiatives that included the Higher Council Decision (154/2005), in which the legal basis for quality assurance were established. Such decision included the formation of quality assurance centres in each university based on self-assessment. MoHE plans to establish a higher education quality assurance and accreditation system in Syria are under development.[57]

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[56] Holy Spirit University – Interviews notes
[57] Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Syria:
https://www.ecctis.com/Product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=160&TextID=166

Use and ongoing support of this guidance

This guidance is an informed opinion based on information made available to the project researchers through research and interviews undertaken at the time of issue of this document. This guidance gives an overview of the educational systems for the countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria highlighting their educational regulatory systems, programmes and delivery, national frameworks, credits systems, programme accreditation and quality assurance. Additional information, if required, should be sought directly from potential partner institutions (e.g. information on grading systems or procedures for recognition of prior learning) or from sources such as ENIC/NARIC offices. The PELIARQ project team encourages all parties making use of this document to continue providing feedback that will help maintain keeping this guidance up to date with any new developments related to the topics discussed.