

Akkreditierungsagentur  
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales  
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science



## **Assessment Report**

**for the Application of**

**Beirut Arab University, Beirut, Lebanon,**

**Faculty of Human Sciences, Department of Psychology,**

**for the Accreditation of a Bachelor Study Program**

**“Psychology” (Bachelor of Arts in Psychology)**

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## 1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Health and Social Sciences (the AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate bachelor and master study programs in the fields of health and social sciences, as well as in related domains, such as law or economics. By implementing accreditation and recommendation procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the higher education institutions remain responsible for fulfilling the quality assurance, too.

Since 2004 the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS also joined the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA); in 2009, AHPGS became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and began being listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Since 2012, the AHPGS has been a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

The accreditation criteria of the AHPGS are the basis for the accreditation decision. These criteria can be found on the webpage of the AHPGS<sup>1</sup>. The Accreditation Criteria are developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

### I. University's application

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the self-evaluation report and its corresponding annexes. These are to fulfill the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS standards. As a result, the AHPGS produces a summary (see below), which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ahpgs.de/english/program-accreditation/> (28.04.2016)

## **II. Written review**

Parallel to the first step, the main documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the accreditation commission of AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the applied accreditation criteria. Consequently, the written reviews of the experts are comprised together.

## **III. On-site visit (Peer-review)**

The experts carry out the on-site visit at the University. In the course of the on-site visit, the expert group holds discussions with various members of the University, including the University and college administrative representatives, the program management, teaching staff and a group of students. Such extensive discussions provide the expert group with additional information and a better insight into the structure and content of the program.

The task of the experts during the on-site visit is to verify the rationality of the program's objectives and learning outcomes and their correspondence to the needs of the current and expected labor market situation, to evaluate the sufficiency and effectiveness of the teaching staff, material resources, and methods of assessment (admission requirements, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as of the program management (program administration, internal and external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, the expert group issues the expert report for the study program. This is based on the results of the on-site visit, the documents submitted by the University and the experts' considerations based on these documents. The expert reports are made available to the University to issue a response opinion.

The expert report, as well as the University's response opinion – together with the application documents – is submitted to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for the final decision.

## **IV. Accreditation decision**

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available, namely the University's application documents, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the Expert Report and the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis for the decision of the Accredi-

tation Commission of the AHPGS, which can be formulated in three ways: accreditation, accreditation with conditions or denial of accreditation.

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Procedure-related documents

Beirut Arab University (hereinafter “the University”) assigned the AHPGS to carry out the accreditation of the bachelor study program “Psychology”.

The University submitted the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter referred to as SER) and the relevant annexes of the bachelor study program “Psychology” to the AHPGS in electronic form on April 18, 2016. The contract for the assessment and the accreditation of the study program (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) was signed by the University and the AHPGS on August 6, 2015.

On June 10, 2016, the AHPGS forwarded the open questions (OQ) pertaining to the application documents of the study program to the University. On June 27, 2016, the University submitted the answers to the open questions (AOQ) and explanatory notes to the AHPGS in electronic form.

This document presents the summary of the study program “Psychology” prepared by the AHPGS.

The Self-Evaluation Report submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the Self-Evaluation Report, the University provided the following documents:

<b>Annex</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Course offering (Fall/Spring 2015/2016)
2	Rules and regulations (2015/2016)
3 (a)	Psychology mandatory and elective courses
3 (b)	Study plan
4	University requirement elective courses
5 (a)	University core and elective courses, Spring 2015/2016
5 (b)	University core and elective courses, Fall 2015/2016
6	Assessment Booklet of the University
7	National Law No. 285
8	Research in Positive Psychology, sample 1
9	Research in Positive Psychology, sample 2

10	BAU (Beirut Arab University) Code of Ethics
11	APA (American Psychological Association) Code of Ethics
12 (a)	APA Guidelines
12 (b)	ILO (intended learning outcomes) Matrix
12 (c)	ILO list
13	Quality Assurance Center
14	Quality Assurance Unit reports
15 (a)	Student survey results
15 (b)	Students' evaluation of psychology courses – template
16	Student exit survey – template
17	Official statement of the University regarding on-line education programs
18	Hiring and retention regulations
19	Information about workshops
20 (a)	Libraries resources
20 (b)	List of psychology books in English and French
21	Research policy of the University
22	Institutional Review Board
23	University centers, offices and departments
24	Course descriptions
25	CVs of the teaching staff of the program
26	University Strategy 2013-2018

The Summary, the Expert Report as well as the decision of the Accreditation Commission build the basis for the present Assessment Report.

## 2.2 Study program

### 2.2.1 Structural data

University	Beirut Arab University
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Human Sciences / Department of Psychology
Title of the study program	"Psychology"
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
Form of studies	Full-time



Organizational structure	Monday – Friday; 8:00 - 15:00 and 15:00 – 18:00
Period of education	3 years/6 semester
Credits according to the credit hour system	99 credits
Contact hour/credit	1 lecture contact hour = 1 credit 2/3 hours of tutorial, practical or clinical classes = 1 credit (Every credit requires 2 hours of self-study.)
Workload	Total: 2,790 hours Contact hours: 1,125 hours Self-study hours: 1,440 hours Training: 225 hours
Beginning of the study program	Academic year 1994/1995
Time of admission	every fall semester, once per academic year
Number of available places on the program	30 per academic year
Number of admitted students	In 2013/2014: 9 students in 2014/2015: 11 students in 2015/2016: 15 students The total number of students currently enrolled in the program: 43
Number of graduates by now	104 (years 2010 – 2016)
Admission requirements	The secondary school certificate or its equivalent; International applicants have to provide an equivalence certificate from the Equivalence Committee of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
Tuition fees	140 USD(\$) per credit; total: 13,860.00 USD(\$)

Table 1: Structural data of the bachelor study program “Psychology”

### 2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

The University provided a list of intended learning outcomes of the bachelor study program “Psychology” according to the following categories: knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, professional and practical skills, general transferable skills (for details, see Appendices 12 b and c).

The Psychology Department states that the learning outcomes of the study program "Psychology" were developed in accordance with the Guidelines of the American Psychological Association (for details see Appendices 12 a, b and c).

The main objective of the study program "Psychology" is to provide students with skills and competences that will enable them to contribute to the improvement of the mental health of individual persons as well as of the society in general. To be more precise, the program graduates are expected to provide support for people with different psychological problems and/or disorders, disabled people and those suffering from drug abuse. Furthermore, they must be able to help people in situations of acute stress and crisis. As mentioned in the submitted Self Evaluation Report the program focuses on the needs and the features of the Arab Region which faces overwhelming changes.

In terms of qualification-specific knowledge and competences, the program offers the students the chance to acquire the concepts of human behavior and be trained to determine the factors leading to positive and negative behavioral outcomes. To this end, they learn about motives, emotions and aspects of mental health, which influence and guide people in their everyday lives.

In terms of research skills, in the program students learn to apply methods of research in psychology by means of psychological scales and statistical analyses. In the courses oriented to research, they are expected to formulate hypothesis and to verify them with the help of different scientific procedures, to develop different checklists, assessment scales and questionnaires, as well as to interpret the obtained results according to scientifically proven principles.

With regard to the aspect of social responsibility, in the program students are expected to propagate the concepts of mental health in the community. They are also encouraged to conduct volunteer work and offer services to people with special needs. In addition to that, in the program students are engaged in extracurricular activities dedicated to the support of elderly people, organization of workshops for civil society workers and the promotion of the concepts of positive psychology among citizens.

In terms of cognitive skills, the study program is aimed at the enhancement of students' intellectual capacities to think critically and to analyze personal, vocational and social issues within the framework of the theoretical

knowledge they receive during the education process at the University. At the same time, the program cultivates students' skills of self-reflection and self-management, and thus, contributes to their continuous personal development as committed, compassionate and responsible members of the society.

Furthermore, the program seeks to develop solid skills of constructive communication with peer students, instructors, patients and the society in general. During their studies, students are encouraged therefore to work in groups, to give presentations and to explain their point of view. Besides, in the program students are required to use communication technologies.

Knowledge of professional ethics constitutes another objective of the program. Throughout their studies, students learn about the principles of professional conduct, as well as the responsibilities and confidentiality of the work they are expected to perform as psychologists (SER 1.3.1 and 1.3.2).

Graduates of the program "Psychology" are expected to find employment in public hospitals, private or public clinics, mental health care institutions, training and research centers at universities and centers focused on psychometrics. Furthermore, they can work in departments of human resources, in factories, family courts, orphanages, homes of the elderly, autism and disability centers and schools.

The program, however, does not qualify the students to become psychotherapists upon graduation, even though the students are provided with the basic principles and the necessary foundation needed for counseling and therapy (see AQQ 2). To qualify for the profession of psychotherapist in the Arab World, as is the case in Egypt for example, the graduate needs to attend about 10 to 15 training courses recognized by the Ministry of Health. The graduate may also attain a specialized Master's degree in clinical psychology. The Department is planning to establish a specialized master program in "Clinical Psychology", which qualifies the graduate to become a practicing psychotherapist. It is worth noting that the psychotherapist profession has not been fully specified or regulated by the Ministry of Health in Lebanon. There is no official procedure that should be followed to obtain a license to practice psychotherapy (see AQQ 2).

Besides, the program students have the opportunity to complete a teaching diploma after their studies in psychology, which will then enable them to take

up teaching positions in high schools (SER 1.4.1 and AOQ 1). To obtain a teaching diploma in psychology, students must successfully complete a total of 28 credits in addition to an internship of 3 months at a high school after having completed the Bachelor program. The standard duration, for the completion of the requirements to obtain a teaching diploma, is two semesters (see AOQ 1).

The University states that Lebanon witnesses a growing demand for specialists in psychology at the moment. Thus, psychologists are required to provide support for the large number of refugees from Syria and Palestine. At the same time, more organizations started referring to psychometrics, in other words techniques of psychological measurement, in order to optimize their performance. Besides, a number of the program graduates are working for the society engaged in the support of people with autism, for the organization concerned with women's rights, and for a number of private organizations (SER 1.4.2 and AOQ 19).

### 2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

According to the regulations of the University, an academic year consists of a fall semester and a spring semester that last for 15 weeks and start in September and February, respectively. Besides, there is a summer term that spans a period of eight weeks and includes the final examinations starting from June. During the summer term, the University offers some of the university and faculty requirement courses for critical case studies. There should be a minimum number of 10 students for such courses to take place. Credit hours obtained in the summer semester are calculated within the spring semester grades (Annex 2, XII).

The University applies the system of credit hours, where one credit hour is used as a standard to measure and specify the workload of students per semester. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures and to two or three hours of tutorial, practical and/or clinical classes per week (Appendix 2).

Every faculty defines the minimum number of credits required for graduation. These credits consist of **Faculty** and **Departmental Mandatory courses**, that must be completed by all students in the program as part of the graduation requirements, and **Faculty** (minors offered from departments other than psychology) and **Departmental Elective courses**, a set of courses that students

can select from in order to fulfill the number of elective credits required in the program.

In addition, there is a set of courses designated by the University to ensure that all students acquire a broader knowledge. These courses include **University Mandatory courses** and **University Elective courses**.

The bachelor study program "Psychology" consists of 44 courses and 99 credits to be covered in three years of studies:

- 3 are University Mandatory courses (5 credits),
- a minimum of 6 are University Elective courses (11 credits),
- 6 are Faculty Mandatory courses (12 credits),
- 6 are Faculty Elective courses - called also Minor courses - (12 credits),
- 13 Psychology Mandatory courses (39 credits),
- 10 Psychology Elective courses (20 credits).

The students register for up to nine courses in one semester and can obtain 15 to 17 credits in one semester. All courses are completed within one semester. The regular study period of the program is three years/six semesters.

The list of courses offered according to the study plan (Appendix 3b):

Sem.	Title	Type	Credits
1	Ethics and Principles of Scientific Research	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Introduction to Psychology	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Introduction to Mass Communication	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Introduction to History and Geography	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Introduction to Sociology and Philosophy	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Major Issues in the Arabic World	Faculty Mandatory	2
	Elective (General), up to 2 courses	University Elective	2
	Arabic Language	University Mandatory	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>16</b>
2	Developmental Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Cognitive Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Elective (General), up to 2 courses	University Elective	2

	English Language	University Mandatory	2
	Human Rights	University Mandatory	1
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>17</b>
3	Physiological Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Criminal Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Psychology of Learning	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Elective (General), up to 4 courses	University Elective	4
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>17</b>
4	Vocational Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Psychology of Personality	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Elective (General), up to 3 courses	University Elective	3
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>17</b>
5	Research Methods in Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Psychometrics	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Health Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>17</b>
6	Clinical Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Positive Psychology	Psychology Mandatory	3

	Counseling and Psychotherapy	Psychology Mandatory	3
	Elective (Faculty)	Faculty Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
	Elective (Department)	Psychology Elective	2
<b>Total:</b>			<b>15</b>
<b>Total for the whole program:</b>			<b>99</b>

Table 2: Module overview

The course descriptions (Appendix 24) include information about the level, the amount of assigned credits, language of instruction, pursued learning outcomes and skills, content of studies and examinations foreseen in every course of the program.

In the first semester of the program (also known as the General semester), students have to complete the Faculty Mandatory courses. These courses introduce the students to the various disciplines of the human sciences as a foundation for their specialization in the following semester. After the first semester students pursue one of the following programs offered at the Faculty of Human Sciences as their Major: "Mass Communication", "Psychology" or "Sociology". In addition to that, the first semester includes the course "Ethics and Principles of Scientific Research", where students get acquainted with the requirements of academic work and research. The course "Major issues in the Arabic World" provides an overview of the current social developments in Arabic countries. Once the students have successfully completed the General Semester, they choose the domain they are most interested in: psychology, sociology or mass communication. There is no ceiling to the number of students that may be accepted in any of the programs at the Faculty (see AOO 4).

According to the study plan of the program, students have to attend 13 Psychology Mandatory courses, which are taught starting with the second semester.

In the second semester, students attend two Psychology Mandatory courses. They learn about the physical, psychological, mental and emotional development of humans through the lifespan in the course "Developmental Psychology". The course "Cognitive Psychology" is dedicated to the analyses of how

cognitive, as well as nervous, structure and perception of human beings functions.

The third semester foresees the completion of three Psychology Mandatory courses and among them “Physiological Psychology”, where students are taught about the nervous and glandular systems of a human body, as well as about the biological factors determining a mental disease. In the course “Psychology of Learning”, students are introduced to different methods of learning, the impact of conditions and individual differences on learning and the role of motivation in learning. The objective of the course “Criminal Psychology” is to analyze the definition and the concept of crime from social and legal perspectives, to apply research methods in criminal psychology and to work with models of anti-social behavior.

In the fourth semester, the program students attend the course “Vocational Psychology” consisting of two parts: the theoretical part is dedicated to the analyses of the nature of work, as well as of ethics, responsibilities and the general atmosphere at workplace; for the practical part, students take interviews with people of different professions, write formal reports and psychological analyses. The course “Psychology of Personality” is focused on the development and assessment of normal and exceptional personalities.

The Psychology mandatory courses of the fifth and sixth semester are increasingly research-based and practice-oriented. Thus, the courses “Psychometrics” focuses on the application of multidimensional psychological measurements, whereas in the course “Clinical Psychology” students are confronted with cases of psychological illnesses and neurotic disorders in hospitals and clinics. In “Counselling and Psychotherapy” students are similarly required to perform a range of counseling interventions for the treatment of patients. Finally, the courses “Positive psychology” and “Health Psychology” draw students’ attention to the actual needs and challenges experienced by various groups of the society.

According to the study plan, students are required to complete ten (out of 21) Psychology Elective Courses (see the list in Appendix 3a). The elective courses are selected in accordance with their relevance to each level of study. Further, the students’ view-points are taken into consideration in the selection process. The electives are distributed across the five semesters of the specialized program (AOQ 5).



Along with the degree-specific courses, the program students are required to attend three University Mandatory courses, namely "Arabic Language", "English Language" and "Human Rights", for which they obtain five credits in total. Besides, there are a minimum of six University Elective courses in the first four semesters of the program, for which students have to obtain 11 credits. These courses are offered by different faculties of the University and are dedicated to different sciences, e.g. law, medicine, business administration, architecture, engineering and other (see the full list of the University Elective courses in Appendix 4). The University underlines that the program students are encouraged to attend those elective courses that are in some way relevant to the field of psychology and that will enhance their vocational interests and perspectives.

The curriculum of the program foresees the attendance of six Faculty Elective courses (called also Minor courses) that students are free to choose from the following study programs: "Arabic Language and Literature", "English Language and Literature", "French Language and Literature", "Sociology" and "Mass Communication". The University explains that by choosing, for instance, mass communication courses as their Minor, students can learn about functions and activities of media institutions, principles of management and public relations, theories of group dynamics, methods of propaganda and the role of public opinion, as well as many other aspects related to psychological sciences (for more details see SER 1.2.2).

Similar to the mentioned study programs of the Faculty of Human Sciences, the program "Psychology" also offers its courses as Minor in Psychology for students of other specializations (see AOQ 6). The University asserts that the study program is linked with different spheres of academic studies and therefore enables the acquisition of interdisciplinary skills and competences related to psychology.

To be eligible to graduate from the program, students have to complete all degree requirement courses listed in the document "Degree Plan form". Furthermore, students must complete their studies within a period not exceeding the double length of the expected program duration. They should also fulfill the minimum credit hour requirements for all types of courses and their final CGPA grade must be at least 2.00. Finally, students must obtain the Interna-

tional Computer Driving License (ICDL), which is a computer literacy certification (for more details, see Appendix 2, VIII).

The program does not require the submission of a graduation paper at the end of studies for the obtainment of the bachelor's degree.

Teaching methods of the study program "Psychology" include the problem-solving approach. Students are expected to take an active role in the learning process and to come up with a solution for a particular situation. Furthermore, the teaching staff of the program considers self-learning as an important element of the education process. By means of brainstorming as a didactic method, lecturers encourage all students to participate in collecting ideas. Research-based approach is applied in the courses that are relevant to the current research of the instructor or that require students to conduct a study and to present it in the form of a poster or a mini-paper. Next, the Department of Psychology is planning to integrate the strategy of a flipped classroom more actively, which envisages the delivery of the learning material through online media, in other words outside of the traditional classroom (SER 1.2.4).

The teaching staff of the Department of Psychology uses power point presentations in classes and also uploads video and hand-out learning material on the webpage of the program. The University points out that education through distance-learning is not recognized by the current national rules of Lebanon (SER 1.2.5, Appendix 17).

The bachelor study program "Psychology" offers three courses that particularly focus on practical implementation of the acquired theoretical knowledge and skills under real-life working conditions. Thus, in the course "Vocational Psychology" students visit various factories and industrial organizations in order to measure and analyse the job-related indicators of stress and satisfaction based on the interviews with workers. In the course "Clinical psychology", students are trained to diagnose mental and psychological disorders of patients based on tests results, to prepare psychological profiles, to write reports, and to conduct a case study. In the course "Counseling and Psychotherapy", students are expected to implement different techniques, methods and strategies of counseling of patients in health care institutions (SER 1.2.6).

In each of these courses students have three hours of training per week, which amounts to 45 hours of training per semester. The Department of Psy-

chology is considering the possibility of introducing an internship semester as a graduation requirement (SER 1.2.1).

With regard to academic support, the University informs that an experienced coordinator is assigned for the training period in each of the described courses. The Head of the department, the course instructor and the training coordinator are together responsible for the preparation of the training plan. The Department of Psychology closely monitors the alignment between the theoretical and practical content of these courses, and also between the practical assignments and the general learning outcomes of the program "Psychology". The course coordinator is required to submit a report after each visit to training premises, where they describe the treatment cases, outcomes of the training class and the activities performed by students. Students are also required to prepare a report under the supervision of the coordinator, in which they outline the links between the theoretical framework of the course and the practical tasks they have completed. Students' reports are then evaluated and discussed with students (SER 1.2.6).

The Department of Psychology informs that it is planning to design questionnaires for students to evaluate the performance of training coordinators. Furthermore, the department is considering the organization of visits to the training sites and premises in order to evaluate them and to establish contacts with the respective administration (SER 1.2.6).

The University states that the curriculum of the study program "Psychology" was developed according to the domains identified by the American Psychological Association (APA) (Appendix 12 a). Furthermore, the Department of Psychology took into account the psychology curricula of higher education institutions, such as the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, the Touro College Berlin and the University of Mannheim in Germany. Thus in terms of internationality, the Department of Psychology emphasizes that its study program is consistent with the content of similar programs in Europe. Based on the comparison with the international approach, the University has introduced the course "Human Rights" as a university mandatory course in the program and the Psychology Department is planning to offer a whole semester for internship (SER 1.2.8).

The language of instruction of the program is Arabic, except for the courses “English Language”, “Psychology Texts in English” and some University Elective Courses, which are taught in English.

The University is involved in international exchange projects within the framework of Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects. At the department level, three psychology students are expected to take part in an exchange program offered by the US Embassy in Lebanon, which will take place at Saint Mary’s College in Indiana, United States. The University underlines, that the study program “Psychology” is aimed at enabling its students to continue their studies at European higher education institutions and to engage in student mobility programs (SER 1.2.8).

Research is integrated in the study program “Psychology” through the course “Ethics and Principles of Scientific Research” in the first semester and the course “Research Methods in Psychology” in the fifth semester. In the latter, students are expected to formulate a research problem, research objective and hypothesis, based on which they will then prepare a report or a case-study. Thus, the program aims at the application of research skills and scientific approach in most of its courses, starting with the basic and finishing with the complex practice-oriented ones. Furthermore, the Junior Research Team of the department has recently conducted a study, in which various methods of research were linked with the concepts of positive psychology and personality (SER 1.2.7).

The evaluation and grading system of the University is described in the “Rules and Regulations for Undergraduate Programs” (Appendix 2) and in the “Assessment Booklet” (Appendix 6) of the University. The University differentiates between the Course Grade Point Average (GPA), the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for the whole period of studies (see Appendix 2, V).

In each course, the Department of Psychology applies two continuous written assessments (in the 7th and 12th semester, respectively) and a final examination at the end of the semester (in the 16th week). Hence, the number of final examinations is equal to the number of courses in any given semester. Assessment methods include worksheets, group discussions, presentations, quizzes, and research papers. In 2013, the University launched an Assessment Booklet (Appendix 6) in order to provide its teaching staff with practical

guidelines in order to implement a high-quality testing strategy, and to adopt a continuous assessment policy employing the full spectrum of test types and formats.

Students, who are not able to take an examination due to reasons beyond their control, can apply for re-examination within a week after the examination date. These students apply for an Incomplete Grade (INC). This allows the students to sit for the final exam in the first week of the following semester, and thus receive their full grade.

Students can repeat a course for the following reasons: if they failed a mandatory course; if they received a low grade or failed an elective course and want to replace it by another elective course; if they want to improve their CGPA. In the last case, they may repeat a course only once.

Starting with the second semester, students with a SGPA and a CGPA less than 2.00 receive an academic warning and are prevented from registering for more than 12 credit hours in the following semester (Appendix 2, VII).

The grading system of the University consists of the following indicators:

Letter Grade	Percentage	GPA	Grade
A +	95 – 100	4.00	Excellent
A	90 – 94	4.00	
A-	86 – 89	3.67	Very Good
B+	83 – 85	3.33	
B	80 – 82	3.00	
B-	76 – 79	2.67	Good
C+	73 – 75	2.33	
C	70 – 72	2.00	Pass
C-	65 – 69	1.67	Marginal
D	60 – 64	1.33	
D-	55 – 59	1.00	Weak
P / T	--	--	Transfer
F	0 – 54	0.00	Fail

Table 3: Grading system of the University

According to the regulations of the University, students' credits obtained at other equivalent higher education institutions are recognized when the attended courses are comparable in terms of scientific content and the number of credits to those offered at the University. Such courses must be completed

with a grade not less than C and the completion date must not exceed five years. Up to 50% of the total number of credit hours required in a specific study program can be transferred from previous studies (Appendix 2, sections IX and X, and SER 1.5.3).

In terms of compensation measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, the University can assign a person to assist visually or physically impaired students during examinations. Such students can also use their own special laptops under the guidance of a supervisor. Upon the approval of the course instructor, students with special needs are allowed to record lectures.

#### **2.2.4 Admission requirements**

Admission procedure and requirements of the study program "Psychology" are defined in the "Rules and Regulations for Undergraduate Programs" of the University (Appendix 2, II). According to these regulations, the University holds annually two entrance examinations, in April and July. Applicants who did not pass the first attempt in April have the chance to apply for the second entrance exam in July. The admission procedure takes place every fall semester, once a year.

In order to be admitted to the bachelor study program "Psychology", applicants have to provide the secondary school certificate or its equivalent. International applicants have to provide an equivalence certificate from the Equivalence Committee of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which should confirm that their secondary school degree is comparable to a Lebanese one. As another option, international applicants can be registered in the last grade (Grade 12) of a recognized governmental or private school in Lebanon. In the last case, applicants have to provide also the school records of the Grades 10 and 11 completed at their home countries.

Students can apply online or fill in the application in paper form, which is available on the website and at the Admission Office of the University. Together with the secondary school certificate, the application form and other relevant documents, students have to pay a non-refundable application fee in the amount of 200,000 LL (Lebanese Lira), which is approximately equal to 118 EUR at the moment.

The Department of Psychology does not have any admission requirements with regard to specific subjects and additional tests. In the academic year

2015/2016, there were 15 students admitted to the program "Psychology". The Department can accept up to 30 students per year.

Beirut Arab University offers four foundation programs to students who are not sufficiently prepared to join the University as a first year student (Appendix 2, III.):

- Freshman Year Program,
- Remedial courses,
- Preparatory Year Program,
- Intensive English Program.

Foundation programs are not required for students who want to join the Faculty of Human Sciences (OQ 10).

Every newly enrolled student of the University receives an individual enrolment file that, among other things, contains the handbook of the relevant faculty, the student manual, the advising policy, the study plan of the relevant program, the general Rules and regulations of the credit hour system and other program-related documents (Appendix 2, IV).

The University indicates that its bylaws do not restrict the admission of students with disabilities and chronic illnesses. However, the University does not offer specific compensation measures for such applicants with regard to the admission requirements. Currently, Faculty of Human Sciences does not have any students with disabilities (SER 1.5.2).

## **2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance**

### **2.3.1 Human resources**

At the moment, the teaching staff of the Department of Psychology consists of three professors, two assistant professors, two associate professors, one full-time and one part-time lecturer. In the academic year 2016/2017, the academic staff involved in teaching of the program "Psychology" is going to include seven full-time members and five part-time members. Information about the qualifications of the teaching staff members is available in the submitted CVs in Appendix 25.

According to the information provided by the University, roughly 70% of the "Psychology" program in total is taught by full-time teachers. 51 % of the

program specific Department Psychology Requirements are covered by professors and associate professors, as well as 33 % of the Psychology Minor Courses (SER 2.1.1).

The University has regulations for hiring and retention of the teaching staff (Appendix 18). The following members and units of the University are involved in taking decisions about the appointment on teaching positions: the Head of the department, the Dean of the faculty, the President of the University and the University Council. The full teaching load of all regular academic staff members is 3 to 5 courses per semester or 9 to 15 credits per semester (AOQ 12).

Regarding opportunities for the continuous professional development of human resources, the University informs that the Faculty of Human Sciences has so far offered three workshops annually for its teaching staff members. These workshops focus on new methods of teaching and learning, design of a course plan, effectiveness of student-based learning, strategies of delivering new learning material and other (Appendix 19). The teaching staff of the study program "Psychology" is also encouraged to conduct scientific research (see the samples of publications in Appendices 8 and 9).

### **2.3.2 Facilities**

The learning premises of the Department of Psychology are located on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> floors of the Hairi Building of the University campus in Beirut. The Department of Psychology accesses six classrooms and one lecture hall with a capacity for 300 students. In addition, all University facilities are available upon request (AOQ 13).

The Department of Psychology has a laboratory that is equipped with different instruments, scales and measuring tools necessary for the assessment of various intellectual skills, mental abilities and conditions, as well as personal attitudes and motivations. Students are trained to apply these tools and to interpret the obtained results according to psychological theories (SER 2.3.1). One employee supervises the laborators of Psychology (AOQ 11).

The Department of Psychology offers its students access to a number of databases, search tools and open access links. The library resources of the Department of Psychology include 225 books, 15 theses, three specialized journals and three specialized e-journals, as well as 9,166 e-books (Appendix 20



a). The program-related media is included to the library resources of the Faculty of Human Sciences which allows students regular access throughout the day for the period of the entire semester (opening hours: Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm).

The University provides wireless internet access and offers its students the possibilities to register for courses online. The Faculty of Human Sciences has six laptops, 14 installed data shows, and 14 screens used for teaching purposes. There are 12 computers, 16 printers and a photocopier that are available for the academic and administrative staff of the faculty (SER 2.3.3).

In order to receive financial support from the University, the Faculty of Human Sciences forwards a formal letter to the President of the University, in which it describes the current needs of the faculty members. Diversification of financial resources is one of the main strategies of the University determined for the period from 2013 to 2018 (Appendix 26).

### **2.3.3 Quality assurance**

Beirut Arab University has a Quality Assurance Center (QAC), whose main function is to evaluate the academic performance of different faculties and to facilitate the improvement of the educational process within the institution (Appendix 13). Every faculty of the University has a Quality Assurance Unit that is supervised by the faculty dean. The Quality Assurance Unit of the Faculty of Human Sciences was established in 2011.

The quality assurance system of the University includes the following procedures:

- Course evaluation questionnaires, in which students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning (Appendix 15),
- Students' satisfaction survey, in which students evaluate the availability of learning resources and the support offered by the University and its units,
- Preparation of the staff development program in order to improve the qualifications of the academic staff members,
- Academic staff-members evaluation, which is monitored by the dean of the faculty and serves to ensure the quality of activities of the academic staff-members in different areas (AOQ 17),
- Site visits of each faculty once per semester by the QA Committee of the University in order to monitor the academic performance with a special fo-

cus on undergraduate programs and the experiential learning ones. The Committee of the QAC prepares a visit report and forwards it to the University President, who then sends a copy of the report to the relevant dean to take appropriate actions (see the visit reports from 2014 and 2015 for the Faculty of Human Sciences in Appendix 14).

As a result of the visits of the QAC members, the last Site-Visit Report (May 14, 2015, Appendix 14) to the Faculty of Human Sciences states that a significant improvement in all quality works in teaching and learning and documentation has been observed and that the Psychology program is fit with the conditions of quality assurance to a large extent (Appendix 14, p. 9).

At the beginning of the academic year, a course coordinator is assigned under the supervision of the dean. The course coordinator ensures that the course plan includes the course description and the Intended Learning Outcomes (knowledge, intellectual skills, professional skills, transferable skills). By the end of each semester, a course report is written related to each course offered during the relevant semester. This report includes statistical information about students' attending, students' assessment and examination results, topics taught and their relevant hours, used teaching and learning methods, administrative constraints, course enhancement suggestions and an action plan for the following year (AOQ 16). The coordinator reviews the course report and the recommendations made by the staff members and students concerning any changes or additions to be made.

To assure feasibility of the study program with regard to the students' workload, students are allowed to register no less than nine credits and no more than 18 credits per semester, depending on their Course Grade Point Average (GPA) and Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA). Students with a lower GPA are advised to register a lesser number of credits, while students with a GPA of less than 2.00 are not allowed to register more than 12 credits (AOQ 18). In addition, the course evaluation forms target also the students' workload. Students are encouraged to evaluate the workload objectively, and their answers are taken into consideration (AOQ 18).

In order to design the curriculum of the program in alignment with the requirements of the current trends and the needs of the job market, the Psychology Department administers an exit survey (Appendix 16) and holds annually two meetings with the Psychology alumni. For the further development

of the program in alignment with the job market needs, the Advisory Committee of the Faculty of Human Sciences includes hospital managers and directors of disability and autism centers. The alumni's and Advisory Committee's points of view are submitted to the Council of the Department of Psychology for discussion and subsequent implementation of those remarks that are feasible in the plan of the program.

The Department of Psychology can accept up to 30 students for the Psychology study program each year. Since 2013 the number of students who chose the Psychology major slightly increased up to 15 students. The University assumes that this may be attributed to the conflicts surrounding Lebanon which cause increasing need of psychological assistance. The drop outs during the study process (AOQ 19) are reasoned by the transfer to other major study programs, the delay in earning required credits requested for the upper level, the student's withdrawal from the program, or their final dismissal from the university.

From 2010 until 2016, 104 students graduated from the BAU Psychology program. 81 of them took part in the exit survey and provided information about their career path (AOQ 19).

All newly enrolled students attend a number of orientation sessions organized by the Student Affairs Deanship with the participation of the staff member of the Faculty. New students also receive a student file, brochures and a CD containing information about the Faculty and departments, requirements for graduation, duties and rights and the registration for University, Faculty and Department mandatory and elective courses.

Students are also introduced to the BAUS's "Code of Ethics" (Appendix 10), a document that is meant to determine the basic ethical standards for the conduct of persons active within the context of the University, to adhere to the freedom of scientific research and teaching, to promote social responsibility and equality amongst individuals regardless race, religion, family status, gender, age, physical disability or social status and to encourage creative thinking and constructive criticism. In case of violation of the University's Code of Ethics, the dean of the Faculty issues a Misconduct Citation to the student's breach of the University's customs and rules, and/or performing prohibited acts as mentioned in the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If three misconduct

citations are issued throughout the enrollment period, students may be suspended by the University Council (Appendix 2: Rules and Regulations, XII/10).

In its Strategy 2013–2018 (Appendix 26), the University states that the facilities for students with physical disabilities have to be secured (Strategy Five). Thus, easier access for wheelchairs to the University buildings has been ensured. Disabled students can apply for support during exams times. Upon approval of the instructor, lectures can be recorded (SER 1.6.10).

## **2.4 Information about the University**

Beirut Arab University is a private non-profit institution for higher education that was founded by the Lebanese El-Bir and Ishan Society in 1960 with the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Law. Other faculties were established in the course of the following years, the last one being launched in 1995. In 2016, the Faculty of Arts was renamed to Faculty of Human Sciences. The University campus is located in the center of Beirut, Lebanon. The Faculty of Human Sciences is situated on the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> floors of the Hariri Building, which is an annexation to the main campus that was constructed in 1978.

At the moment, there are a total number of 8.659 undergraduate and 1.161 postgraduate students enrolled at the University. The University consists of 10 faculties, which offer 42 undergraduate and 87 postgraduate study programs.

The University has an official research policy (Appendix 21) and it considers the contribution to the development of research as one of its main strategies (Appendix 26). The research facilities of the University include the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is responsible for the assurance of protection of humans and animals involved in research or related activities (Appendix 22). Furthermore, the University has a Research Centre for Environment and Development, the Centre for Continuous Education, the Academic Development Centre and other (see Appendix 23). The University provides also specialized laboratories in each faculty according to the requirements of specializations.

In the recent years, the University has established three branch campuses in the cities of Debbeye, Tripoli, and Bekaa. In 2006, the University adopted the credit hour system, which is implemented in the United States. In 2015, the

University attained the institutional accreditation by a German accreditation agency (SER 3.1.1).

The study program "Psychology" was established in 1960 within the Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology. It became an independent department in 1995. There are 43 students in total currently enrolled in the program. The Department of Psychology offers bachelor, master and PhD programs in psychology.

In 2013 and 2015, the department organized international conferences dedicated to positive psychology, as well as interdisciplinary aspects of psychology, and hosted scholars from Egypt, Belgium, India, Kuwait, Sweden, Turkey, and the USA (SER 3.2.1). Moreover, the Department of Psychology holds workshops focused on the activities of non-governmental organizations working with women and children. The laboratory of the Department of Psychology is going to be enhanced with new furniture, equipment and psychology-related tools by the spring semester 2016.

### 3 Expert report

#### 3.1 Preliminary remarks

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (hereupon, the AHPGS) was commissioned by the decision of Beirut Arab University, Lebanon, (hereupon, the University) for the accreditation of the study program "Psychology" (Bachelor of Arts).

The on-site visit of the study program "Psychology", offered at the Beirut Arab University (BAU), was carried out on November 7-8, 2016, at Beirut Arab University, Beirut, Lebanon.

The documents of the university, the feedback from the experts to the documents and the results of the discussions with the representatives of the University during the on-site visit serve as basis for the statements made in the expert report.

The following experts were appointed by the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the evaluation of the study program:

**As representatives of higher education institutions and professional practice:**

***Prof. Dr. Barbara Bräutigam<sup>2</sup>***

*University of Applied Sciences Neubrandenburg, Germany  
Professor of Psychology and Social Work*

**Prof. Dr. Hanna Christiansen**

Philipps University, Marburg, Germany  
Professor of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology

**Prof. Dr. Janne Fengler**

Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences, Alfter near Bonn, Germany;  
Professor of Childhood Education and Educational Psychology

**Prof. Dr. Holger Höge**

Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg, Germany  
Retired professor of Psychology

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<sup>2</sup> The experts shown in italics did not participate in the on-site visit of the University.

**As student representative:****Ms Lara Hille**

Medical Studies at University of Hamburg, Germany  
Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Sport Science

The on-site visit of the experts is carried out in accordance with the *Criteria for the assessment and accreditation procedures of study programs at foreign higher education institutions* developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). After the announcement of the accreditation decision, the expert report will be published as a part of the final Assessment Report.

**3.2 Basic information about the study program**

The main objective of the bachelor study program "Psychology" offered at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Beirut Arab University is to provide students with skills and competences that will enable them to contribute to the improvement of the mental health of individual persons as well as of the society in general. The study program requires the obtainment of 99 credit points (CP) according to the international credit hour system. One credit point is equal to one contact hour of lectures or to two or three hours of tutorial, practical and/or clinical classes per week. Every credit requires two hours of self-study. The total workload of the program constitutes 4,605 hours, of which 1,410 are contact hours, 225 are training hours and 2,970 are hours of independent study. It is a full-time study program with a regular duration of three years/six semesters. The bachelor study program "Psychology" consists of 44 courses to be covered in three years of studies:

- 3 are University Mandatory courses (5 credits),
- a minimum of 6 are University Elective courses (11 credits),
- 6 are Faculty Mandatory courses (12 credits),
- 6 are Faculty Elective courses - called also Minor courses - (12 credits),
- 13 Psychology Mandatory courses (39 credits),
- 10 Psychology Elective courses (20 credits).

Admission requirements of the program include the secondary school certificate or its equivalent. International applicants have to provide an equivalence certificate from the Equivalence Committee of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which should confirm that their secondary school degree is comparable to a Lebanese one. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic title "Bachelor of Arts". There are 30 study places annually available in the program. Admission takes place every fall semester. The first batch of students has been admitted to the program in the academic year 1994/1995.

### **3.3 Expert Report**

On September 7, 2016, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the program "Psychology" based on the above mentioned *Criteria for the assessment and accreditation procedures of study programs at foreign higher education institutions*.

The on-site visit was carried out on November 7-8, 2016, according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the head office of the AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on November 6, 2016 for preliminary talks prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as the uprising questions. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at the University.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the Faculty of Human Sciences and the Department of Psychology and the teaching staff of the program "Psychology" as well as with students currently studying in the program. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, library, and computer classes. Besides, experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the psychology laboratory.

In the course of the on-site visit, the University submitted the following additional documents:

- Research reports of the Psychology Department,



- Graduates survey,
- Meeting minutes of the Quality Assurance Unit,
- Conceptual paper "Interprofessional Education".

The expert report is structured in compliance with the accreditation criteria of the AHPGS approved by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS on September 30, 2015. The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts' feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, results of discussions with the representatives of the University, Faculty of Human Sciences and the Psychology Department serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

### **3.3.1 Program aims and their implementation**

The study program pursues specific and clearly defined professional qualification objectives. The students get equipped with knowledge, skills and necessary techniques needed to work as a psychologist in various community facilities. They receive training to support patients and people with different psychological problems and disorders or drug abuse. The students are also prepared to play an important role in vocational organizations, i.e. to help workers raise their morale and to understand how to cope with stress.

The learning outcomes of the study program are defined and they correspond to the pursued academic degree. The students gain knowledge of various major perspectives and theories of psychology. They know how to use scientific methods to examine psychological questions and articulate and recognize the importance of values, ethical standards and diversity in Psychology. Graduates are able to analyze psychological problems and draw correct inferences using qualitative and quantitative analyses. Besides, they can develop programs and interventions for different target groups.

The graduates of the psychology program are prepared to work in laboratories, hospitals, courtrooms, schools and universities, community health centers, prisons and corporate offices. Graduates may also work as family and school counsellors, child development specialists and special education psychologists. However, the Bachelor degree does not qualify the graduates to work as psychotherapists, which requires a Master degree. This regulation is in line

with the German system that also requires a master degree in psychology before beginning training in psychotherapy

In order to provide the students with broader knowledge in general, but also skills and attitudes that are considered essential to facilitate effective interprofessional collaborative practice, the University developed a conceptual paper for interprofessional education and a system of non-program specific mandatory and elective courses on University and on Faculty level, among them Arabic and English language skills, a human rights introduction and ethics and principles of scientific research.

Thus, the impression of a profound and substantial program could be confirmed on site. The study program focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover both professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences.

Certainly, the experts point out that the program is dominated by an applied understanding of psychology and has its core discipline in the psychology of personality and its related disciplines. In these areas the current program is well established. To strengthen the program's international compatibility and comparability, the program should extend the basic subjects of psychology, especially general psychology regarding perception, memory, motivation, emotion etc. In addition, the experts see possible and desirable enhancement of the program by intensifying and enlarging the training in research methodology, especially experimental methods, and statistics. The enlarging of research methodology and statistics are also recommended to be offered within the first two to three semesters instead of in the fifth and penultimate semester (see also Criterion 2). Herein, the experts see a potential to be developed in order to facilitate the access to Master programs at other universities (abroad) and - in the long run - to PhD programs on international level.

On site, the University showed its strong commitment to personal development and social responsibility of the students and to enhance independent thinking and a comprehensive awareness to enable the students to make informed and socially responsible choices in agreement with their academic, professional and life goals. The faculty comprehensive Human Rights Center is a University initiative that assists students and accordingly their communities to a better understanding of their rights through raising awareness in the course of formal and non-formal methods thus complementing their education

all through university years and years after. The experts agree, that especially in the study of psychology it is necessary to strengthen reflexive and personal competences in respect to working with others and themselves.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.2 Structure of the study program**

All study programs of the Faculty of Human Sciences, including the program "Psychology", start with the General Semester after which the students pursue one of the programs offered at the Faculty, and consist of the following types of courses:

- University mandatory courses (5 credits), that focus on Arabic culture and Arabic language and Human Rights. They are obligatory for all students enrolled at the University and are taught during the first year of studies.
- University elective courses, of which at least six (11 credits) must be chosen from other comprehensive subjects and activities (e.g. sports).
- Faculty mandatory courses (12 credits), that serve to provide the students with basic knowledge in social and human sciences (sociology, philosophy, history, geography, psychology, communication) and as well in ethics and principles of scientific research. These courses are obligatory for students at the Faculty of Human Sciences and are usually offered in the first General Semester.
- Faculty elective or minor courses, of which six must be chosen (12 credits) from the Faculty's portfolio throughout the years of studies.
- Psychology mandatory courses (39 credits), that are specific to the study content and qualification objectives of the program. They are taught by the teaching staff of the department from the second to the last semester of studies.
- In order to follow and/or deepen individual topics and subjects, students elect additionally ten Psychology elective courses (20 credits) throughout their studies.

Thus, the study program aims at providing students with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences. The content and the organization of the modules are consistent with the intended learning outcomes of the study program.

The study program "Psychology" comprises 44 courses. Students register for up to nine courses and between 15 to 17 credits in one semester. All courses are completed within one semester. The regular study period is three years/six semesters. The University's explanations of their credit hour system showed the equivalence of the 99 credits with a European Bachelor program; workload calculations are comparable. The course handbook reveals a coherent structure and continuously increasing complexity of learning material and students' competence level, with the focus on specialization courses in the final stages of the education.

The program curriculum and its qualification objectives comply with the requirements of the higher education level. Although the experts note a prevalent applied understanding of psychology in the program and see the potential for enhancement in increasing the contents regarding methodology and statistics (see also Criterion 1). The course "Research Methods in Psychology" (3 credits) is foreseen in the fifth semester. The experts consider it strongly recommendable to offer this course at an earlier stage of the program and to extend statistics and methodology in the curriculum, especially with respect to modern approaches such as structural equation modelling, hierarchical analyses. This knowledge is also necessary when reading original research articles in the field of psychology. Further, and as already mentioned (Criterion 1), the program should extend the basic subjects of psychology, especially general psychology regarding perception, memory, motivation, emotion etc. and consider if social psychology could be implemented as a mandatory instead of an elective module. These aspects would contribute to make the program internationally comparable and to promote and facilitate students' mobility. However, the experts discussed if the fields of psychology actually taught at BAU fit with international programs. If BAU would complement the above mentioned fields of research methodology and general psychology, it may be appropriate to award a Bachelor of Science degree (B.Sc.) for finishing the complemented program.

The Department of Psychology has signed agreements with two Lebanese civil society organizations, a children's rehabilitation kindergarten and an association for battered women. Within certain courses the students complete trainings at those organizations in the area of psychological and psychosocial counselling, and applying counselling programs in some cases. The current system of combining theory and practice within the modules is excellent from

the experts' point of view and should be kept. However, the situation of "practice at the university" is not comparable to real field conditions. Thus, it's recommendable to implement opportunities for extended internships that also offer the possibility to get to know further psychological working fields, such as human resources etc.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.3 Admission and Feasibility**

To be admitted to Beirut Arab University, applicants must hold the relevant Lebanese Secondary Certificate or its equivalent. The admission procedure and requirements of the study program "Psychology" comply with the "Rules and Regulations for Undergraduate Programs" of the University and follows a two-step admission system implemented at the Faculty of Human Sciences. Thus, applicants are first admitted to the General Semester at the Faculty of Human Sciences and upon completion, they are allocated to one of the majors offered at the faculty, respectively to the psychology program. The Department of Psychology can accept up to 30 students per year. Unlike other faculties and departments at the University, the Psychology Department does not require passing an additional admission or entrance exam with regard to specific subjects that corresponds to the standards of the Psychology program from the experts' point of view. The admission requirements are properly documented and made publicly available.

As every university in Lebanon, Beirut Arab University demands tuition fees. The University's aim is to provide a quality educational system with affordable tuition fees according to the students' economic situation. On site, the students confirm a very competitive price policy at BAU and the University's efforts to provide financial aid and scholarships. E.g., students that have siblings enrolled at the University during the same semester are eligible for a discount on their overall tuition fees. Additionally, BAU provides direct financial support under defined conditions to students experiencing hardship in the form of tuition fees reductions. Furthermore, very skilled and talented students have the chance to apply for BAU's scholarships and awards. The students on site also indicate that assisting jobs at University institutions, such as the library, are distributed among students experiencing economic shortage. From the experts' perspective it can be confirmed that the tuition fees are well considered. The opportunities for economic release are remarkable.

The experts determine a relatively high amount of exams to be passed during the Psychology study program as there are two continuous written assessments in every course plus a final examination at the end of the course/semester. Thus, the University observes the students' performance by collecting and generating the Course Grade Point Average (GPA), the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and the Cumulative Point Average (CGPA). BAU uses the Point Averages to guarantee feasibility. Students with a SGPA and a CGPA less than 2.00 receive an academic warning and are prevented from registering for more than 12 credit hours in the following semester. Additionally, BAU launched an Assessment Booklet in order to provide teaching staff with practical guidelines to implement a competence oriented testing strategy, employing the full spectrum of test types. Asking the students on site about their workload, they consider the workload and the amount and the examination cycle appropriate. The type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently and at the beginning of the course.

The experts confirm that the feasibility of the study program is guaranteed and the amount of student workload is appropriate. As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

Beirut Arab University aspires to be among the higher education institutions that stand out in the domain of academic advising. Thus, BAU launched a concept about academic advising in order to guide students as to how to handle course selection, social issues and psychological problems. Every newly enrolled student receives a so-called "Academic File" that contains among other things the academic plan for all semesters, an updated copy of the academic transcript, an updated copy of the schedule, copies of any warnings, withdrawals etc. and general rules and regulations. The students on site confirm a very well working consultation and advising system. The teaching staff is easily approachable and students are provided with academic support and guidance required for the accomplishment of the program-related assignments. Students are also provided with social support required for the organization of the learning process. In this regard, the Department of Psychology benefits from a manageable amount of students and a very dedicated head of department. However, as the experts got the impression that the whole spectrum of student support is in charge of the teaching staff, it is recommended to foster

a consultation and advising structure that facilitates a more independent, differentiated and specialized student support.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

#### **3.3.4 Examination system and transparency**

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students and graduates. This is achieved by evaluating the performance of the student through a series of exams and tests that are scheduled during the academic semester in the faculties. The continuous assessment is carried out in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> week of the semester; the final course exam is taken in the 16<sup>th</sup> week at the end of the course/semester. The minimum passing grade for faculty and university requirement courses is "D". Such courses will be included in the CGPA. In case of having a grade "D-", the student must repeat the course. In case of a failed mandatory course, the student can repeat it until he/she passes. Failed elective courses can be repeated or replaced by another elective. Students may repeat any course(s) they passed only once to improve their CGPA. The evaluation and grading system is determined in BAU's Rules and Regulations.

In the experts' opinion the study program requires a very high amount of exams which causes a high workload not only for students but also for the teaching staff. Discussing the issue on site, apparently students and staff are satisfied with the exam procedures and see clear benefits in the current practice. The transparency at the beginning of each term makes the great number of assessments during and at the end of each semester manageable.

Thus, the experts concluded that the examinations, although numerous, serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not. These examinations are focused mainly on students' knowledge instead of being more skill-oriented to stimulate the development of competences. Relying on the Assessment Booklet launched by the University, the experts recommend putting a skill-oriented student assessment more into practice.

To graduate from the Bachelor program "Psychology" students must fulfill the minimum credit hour requirements (99 CP) for all courses including mandatory, elective and university courses as specified in the program's curriculum. Students must also fulfill the university requirements by earning the ICDL

(International Computer Driving License) certificate within the first four semesters of study. Students of the Psychology study program are not required to elaborate a Bachelor Thesis. As this, from the experts' point of view is international standard, and given that research methodology and statistics is to a certain extent underrepresented in the curriculum (see also Criterion 1 and 2), the experts strongly recommend to include the elaboration of a final thesis and/or written papers into the program. From the experts' perspective a Bachelor Thesis and training in academic writing will also contribute to make the study program internationally competitive and prepare the students for further Master studies. Furthermore and to promote international comparability, program it is recommendable to outline the student workload according to the guide lines of the ECTS credit system and to add a diploma supplement to the Bachelor certificate. This eases accessibility to Master programs in the European Union.

In terms of compensation measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, the University can assign a person to assist visually or physically impaired students during examinations. Such students can also use their own special laptops under the guidance of a supervisor. Upon the approval of the course instructor, students with special needs are allowed to record lectures. Up to now, the University reacts individually to students with special needs to guarantee that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to time limits and formal requirements of the study process, as well as all final and course-related performance records. Certainly, in BAU's strategy 2013-2020, the University points out its keenness to facilitate the participation of students with special needs.

Strategic papers and BAU's Rules and Regulations which contain information concerning undergraduate programs, process of education and admission requirements are documented, published on BAU's website and handed out to newly enrolled students.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment**

The Department of Psychology and the respective teaching is run by one professor, one assistant professor, one associate professor and one lecturer who are genuine psychologists. Regarding research methodology and pedagogical



psychology the Department is further supported by two assistant professors, a mathematician and educationist. Except the lecturer position, all teachers hold a PhD degree. However, the study program is focused on clinical and health psychology. Regarding the complexity of psychological disciplines, the experts note a lack of differently specialized staff. The fact that there is no specialized professor for each psychological subject offered does not necessarily impair the quality of the study program though, as the on-site-visit revealed. This is also due to the fact that the academic staff of the department and the college shows strong commitment and extensive professional input not only into the organization of learning content and study process but also into communication with students as well as with other peers and members of the University. Even though, the University should consider possibilities to strengthen the study program by extending the teaching staff, especially with respect to methodology/statistics and general psychology (i.e. experimental and biological psychology, motivation, emotion, perception, memory, cognition).

The experts note that teachers of the study program are provided with opportunities for professional development which is encouraged by the University management. Taking into account the mentioned compactness of genuine psychological teaching staff, these development opportunities are crucial to guarantee up-to-date teaching in the experts' point of view. The teaching staff actively participates in institutional, national and international conferences and workshops, but mostly carried out in the Arabic world. Nevertheless, the Department of Psychology would highly benefit from more frequent involvement in international academic exchange events for teaching staff, which is nowadays a crucial part of academic life and to guarantee an up-to-date teaching. In order to foster the department's aim to offer an internationally competitive program, the experts recommend broadening the possibilities for international staff exchange and to follow international congresses of Psychology.

To conclude, from the experts' point of view the teaching staff of the program is appropriately qualified and experienced for providing students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

During the on-site visit, the experts had the chance to view the library of the Faculty of Human Sciences. The University has appropriate funding to provide the necessary learning resources and material equipment required in the study

program. The on-site visit revealed that 5,000 US-Dollars per year are allocated to new purchase of books for the Psychology Department alone. Regarding English speaking books, this potential has not been used to its full extent from the experts' point of view. Thus, the experts strongly recommend expanding the inventory also with English reference books, also from outside the United States. The equipment with computers being equipped with statistical programs seems sufficient, though latest programs (i.e., for structural equation modelling such as Mplus, R, AMOS) are currently missing. Also the access to and the use of electronic databases could be intensified. However, the University takes part in cooperation between the university libraries within Beirut that students can take advantage of. From the experts' perspective, the qualitative and quantitative sufficiency of the equipment and space resources assures the successful implementation of the study program.

To conclude, the program has adequate facilities and equipment at its disposal for the teaching and learning requirements.

### **3.3.6 Quality assurance**

Beirut Arab University has a well-structured system of quality assurance spread on all of its units. The University's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) is being established at Beirut Arab University and supervised by the university president. At every faculty of the university, a Quality Assurance Unit is being established and supervised by the dean of the faculty. Students are included in Quality Assurance Units in each faculty. Quality assurance rooms are prepared at each faculty where all relevant documents are kept, easily accessible for the responsible staff members. The Quality Assurance Unit of the Faculty of Human Sciences was established in 2011. The Quality Assurance Units are in charge of monitoring the development of the faculties, their programs and regulations. Twice per year the BAU Quality Assurance Committee visits each faculty. The Committee concluded after the last visit at the Faculty of Human Sciences that a significant improvement in all quality assurance works in teaching, learning and documentation has been observed. Furthermore, the psychology program was considered to fit with the conditions of quality assurance to a large extent.

The University carries out internal and external quality assurance procedures on a cyclical basis, among them course evaluations, students' satisfaction survey and exit surveys. At the end of each semester a course report is writ-

ten that contains statistical information about students' attending, students' assessment and examination results, topics taught, used teaching and learning methods, course enhancement suggestions and an action plan for the following semester. Student comments comply with the experts' impression that quality assurance is a highly appreciated value at BAU and at the Department of Psychology. Real-life-handling seems to align with the BAU's quality assurance strategy. The results of the internal quality assurance management are applied for the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analyses of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities**

BAU commits itself in its strategy to provide an embracing environment for academic creativity and development, installing explicitly the concept of social responsibility, while respecting diversity and multicultural understanding. According to that mission, the University presents itself on site as a very tolerant and open minded institution that strives for providing students with a broad education that includes social responsibility and assisting the students and their communities to a better understanding of their rights (see Criterion 1). The University aims at providing higher education to all applicants, regardless of sex and nationality, religious, social and family background. To put that into practice, BAU is known to offer study programs for a well-considered and reasonable price (see Criterion 3). Furthermore, the University provides scholarships for talented students, student assistant jobs and tuition fee reduction for siblings.

On site, the experts had the opportunity to speak to male and female students with different nationalities and different religious backgrounds. The students report to have chosen BAU not only for the competitive tuition fees but also for being tolerated by teachers and students regardless of their individual backgrounds. Both staff and students highlighted the absence of discrimination in any regard as a remarkable feature of BAU. This indicates how strongly issues of "equal opportunities" are anchored in the institution's vision and mission.

Student groups in the psychology program are small, the department's "open-door-policy" seems to enable and support trustful personal contact between students and teaching staff. From the perspective of the staff members and the students this is sufficient regarding gender issues or particular living circumstances. The group of experts feels though that some form of independent institutional unit, released completely from bias by other (teaching and assessing) functions, is possibly a necessity for this institution. The structural implementation of an equality commission and equality regulations would guarantee reliable sustainability in this regard. The experts' suggestion to improve on university/faculty childcare was met with openness. However, the experts register that there were many women in leading positions (i.e. deans), though the executive committee of BAU is solely male.

Regarding students with disabilities, the University has ensured easy access for wheelchairs; ramps and passages have been secured. As BAU explicitly welcomes all students, regardless of potential disabilities or chronic illnesses, the University in collaboration with the respective instructors strives for providing individual solutions in examinations according to the student's disablement.

The experts conclude the University's actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented. To promote the transparent and independent presentation about support and counseling opportunities, the experts foster the University's ideas to establish an Office for Social and Psychological Services. Also the development of a concept of how to provide students with supporting measures in case of particular living circumstances and/or disablement is recommendable.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.4 Summary**

The overall impression of the University is very positive. Beirut Arab University presents itself convincingly as an open-minded and dynamic institution with willingness to import new ideas and recommendations for further enhancement. A number of additional favorable characteristics and achievements of the study program could be demonstrated by the management of the University, the representatives of the faculty, those of the department as well as of

the student body, such as interdisciplinary education, correlation between theory and practice and a strong commitment to personal development and social responsibility. Criteria identified that pointed out room for improvement were recorded attentively from all professionals in charge across the organizational hierarchy; an outstanding attitude for amendments on the basis of the feedback given was apparent.

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the on-site visit, the experts came to the conclusion that the study program "Psychology" offered at the Beirut Arab University fulfills the above assessed criteria. Hence, the experts decided to submit a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

For the continuous development of the study program, the experts have outlined the following recommendations:

- Statistics and research methodology should be offered at an earlier stage of the curriculum. The range and amount of statistics and research methodology should also be extended.
- The course program should be complemented by experimental and biological psychology, perception, memory, motivation, emotion etc. Social psychology should be mandatory. In case this could be accomplished a Bachelor of Science degree might be appropriate.
- Opportunities for extended internships should be implemented.
- A skill-oriented student assessment should be put more into practice.
- The elaboration of a Bachelor Thesis and/or written papers should be included into the program.
- To enhance the international comparability the credit point system should also be given in ECTS units and the Bachelor certificate should contain a diploma supplement that records theoretical and practical competences.
- International staff exchanges and the participation at international congresses of psychology should be broadened.
- The library's inventory should be expanded with English reference books.
- A concept about how to provide students with supporting measures in case of particular living circumstances and/or disablement should be developed.

#### **4 Decision of the accreditation commission**

The resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit covered in the expert report. Moreover, the Accreditation Commission takes into account the response opinion of the University, submitted on January 4, 2017, regarding the study program.

The on-site visit of the University took place on November 7-8, 2016 according to the previously agreed schedule.

Base of the accreditation decision are the Accreditation Criteria developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group and the response opinion of the University regarding the expert report.

The Accreditation Commission welcomes the plans of the University.

The regulated study period in the program "Psychology" is three years. The study program comprises 44 mandatory courses, of which 23 are program-specific and 20 are courses offered by other departments of the University. The bachelor study program "Psychology" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Arts."

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The study program "Psychology" is accredited for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2022.

For further development and enhancement of the study program, as well as of the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendation articulated in the expert report.