



UNIVERSITÉ LA SAGESSE

Quality Assurance Policy

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In this document, the use of masculine singular pronouns to designate people has no other purpose than to lighten the text and has no discriminatory intention.

INTRODUCTION

Objective

This policy outlines ULS priorities for governance and quality assurance. It provides guidance for ULS staff and student body in the institutional and transparent application of internationally recognized quality standards, as implemented by American and European accreditation agencies.

Concerned Stakeholders

The enforcement mechanisms described in this text are put in place by the ULS Governance, its full-time and part-time academic staff, its administrative staff (administrative support services: Office of the Registrar, Office of Student Affairs, Office of Human Resources, Office of Exams Management, etc.) as well as its student body.

I. REFERENCE TEXTS

This policy has been drafted in perfect harmony with the statutory and legal texts governing higher education and scientific research in Lebanon as well as within ULS:

- Law 285/2014 on higher education in Lebanon;
- Decree 9274 of 5/10/1996 on higher education and the operating conditions of higher education institutions;
- Decree 2178 of 12/1/2018 on the recognition of programs and diplomas;
- Code of contracts and contractual obligations 9/3/1932;
- ULS Bylaws, promulgated in 2015 by the Chancellor and the ULS Council;
- ULS Academic Staff Manual, promulgated in 2021 by the Chancellor and the ULS Council;
- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate Studies, promulgated in 2018 by the ULS Council;
- Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Studies, promulgated in 2018 by the ULS Council;
- ULS Rules and Regulations for Scientific Research;
- ULS Administrative Staff Manual;
- ULS Strategic Plan 2021-2026, promulgated in 2021 by the ULS Council;
- ULS Mission, Vision, and Values, promulgated in 2021 by the ULS Council;
- Law on Student Elections, promulgated in 2022 by the ULS President.

II. POLICY INSPIRATION FRAMEWORK

II.1. ULS Mission

A Lebanese, Catholic, and private, non-profit institution, ULS was founded in 1875 by the Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut.

Open to the international community, it prepares generations of Lebanese men and women for the evolving job market and supports active members of society in their quest for knowledge. The ULS students and alumni are called upon to be vectors of progress and innovation. Free, open, and committed, they work for a united citizenship and a society based on justice, transparency, and ethics.

II.2. ULS Core Values

Rooted in Greater Lebanon witnessing its founding and subsequent development, ULS promotes, in its mission of education, research, and community involvement, the Christian and universal values of freedom, justice, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity.

II.3. ULS Vision

ULS intends to become a center for fundamental and applied research that meets the evolving needs of the market. An environment conducive to pluralism and cultural diversity, ULS aims to be a privileged space for intercultural dialogue. It strives to form the entrepreneurial spirit of young people, thus facilitating their professional integration. Rooted in the City, ULS strives to promote the culture of life and family. Aware of the role of the university in the building of the public space, it will promote a culture of institutionalization, transparency, the fight against corruption, and human well-being.

III. POLICY

ULS has a set of practices that guarantee the quality of its academic and administrative services. The ULS strategic development plan that was developed and implemented in the 2021-2022 academic year, focuses on a set of objectives aimed at quality assurance and institutional and program accreditations. As a primary objective of this plan, ULS is launching its Quality Assurance service called "*Institutional Effectiveness*" in 2023, consolidated by a « *QA steering committee* ». The new service that will be headed by one of the ULS academic staff will also be made up of academic staff from several ULS faculties. The QA steering committee is made up of one representative per faculty as well as three representatives of the administrative staff and one representative of the student body. ULS intends to apply the main quality standards recognized worldwide. ULS values good governance, ensuring reliable and sufficient resources for the smooth running of the work and activities of its units, career development allowing the development and professional advancement of its academic staff, and diploma and professional training for its students ensuring their professional, specialized, and quality integration.

III.1. ULS Quality Standards

ULS adopts nine quality standards inspired by European and American¹ accreditation agencies' guidelines.

III.1.1. Good Governance

ULS Bylaws clarify the governance model adopted to ensure the smooth running of activities within the university. The Chancellor, the ULS Council, and the faculty councils are the main bodies of ULS Governance. The President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Deans exercise their responsibilities in accordance with the ULS Bylaws. The teaching staff participates in governance and decision-making through the election of its representatives within each ULS faculty. The academic staff representatives sit on the faculty councils and participate in decision-making in these councils. The ULS is launching new elections in 2023 to elect a representative of full-time academic staff to sit on the ULS Council and participate in decision-making within this Council. Similarly, in 2023, ULS is launching the Faculty Senate, which meets periodically and at the request of the majority of its members in order to formulate the needs of its body and convey them via representatives to the main academic, administrative and financial decision-making bodies. The student body participates in the governance of ULS through a democratic process ensuring its representativeness. Student elections take place at the beginning of each academic year following an electoral law approved by the ULS Council and promulgated by the President. Student representatives sit on faculty councils to advocate for the student body within each governing body. The president of the student committee sits on the ULS Council for the same purpose.

¹ Standards adopted by the American agencies members of the "CHEA" network as well as by the European agencies members of the "ENQA" network.

III.1.2. Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

ULS and each of its faculties have a vision that is common to all of its members and that represents its future. The visions of ULS and its faculties are stimulating while being realistic. Similarly, ULS and its faculties have a mission that states the services they offer in a long-term perspective. These missions and visions serve as a framework guiding the development of academic programs within ULS. They are broken down into general goals, specific objectives, and actions that better serve ULS students. The objectives established by ULS and its faculties are means of achieving the missions and reaching the places that the visions indicate to the university and its faculties. As part of its strategic development plan, the vision and mission of ULS are approved and promulgated by the Chancellor as well as by the ULS Council. Those of the faculties are approved and promulgated by the respective faculty councils.

III.1.3. General Resources

ULS provides its academic, administrative, and student bodies with general resources to enable the smooth running of academic and administrative activities within the university. Through its budget, ULS ensures the availability of an academic infrastructure to enable the accomplishment of missions, facilitating and strengthening teaching and learning. The faculties and research centers are equipped with specialized laboratories, equipped in accordance with the latest standards and requirements for each discipline. ULS provides its students and academic staff with the world-renowned POWERCAMPUS, which is a software of academic management SIS. It enables students to fulfil academic requirements, track progress, manage schedules, and access important academic records.

ULS empowers digital transformation and innovation. It offers advanced digital support platforms to enhance and optimize the learning experience. These platforms provided the essential mode of distance learning during the pandemic associated with the COVID disease between 2020 and 2022.

III.1.4. Career Development for Academic Staff

ULS values the active involvement of its academic staff in all activities carried out by its faculties and the services offered to students and the community.

In 2021, the University promulgated a new Academic Staff Manual explaining the rights and obligations of each instructor. Through this Manual, ULS values the qualifications of its academic staff by determining professorial ranks², the salary scale by professorial rank, seniority compensation³, various social benefits⁴, work and teaching responsibilities by professorial grade, academic benefits,⁵ and course releases by academic position⁶. ULS is

² ULS adopts the following four professorial ranks, in accordance with the academic qualifications of its academic staff and their years of experience: Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor.

³ The instructor benefits from a salary increase based on his years of seniority at ULS.

⁴ A full-time instructor benefits from a set of social rights including health insurance granted to him and his family members, an end-of-service allowance, and an education bonus for his children.

⁵ The full-time instructor benefits from a set of academic rights including funding for his research work and sabbatical leave depending on his seniority and his research project.

⁶ A course release may be granted to a full-time instructor based on the responsibility he holds within his affiliated unit, for example, a Dean, a Chair, or a Course Coordinator.

dedicated to the professional development and skill enhancement of its instructors. In this regard, ULS has launched its own Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) dedicated to supporting instructors by offering targeted training courses that address didactic, pedagogical, and disciplinary aspects to enhance their teaching practices. The CTL organizes its activities in cooperation with international organizations including the AUF⁷, USAID,⁸ and HECD⁹. The CTL also offers a support and feedback service for instructors, informed by the Students' Evaluation half-yearly results. Similarly, through its international cooperation agreements, ULS provides its academic staff opportunities for international mobility.

III.1.5. Career Development for Administrative Staff

ULS also places great emphasis on developing the skills of its administrative staff and on career development. Staff recruitment is done through calls made public on the university's social networks. Equal opportunities are ensured in recruitment at ULS. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) takes charge of the recruitment process in consultation with the affiliated unit for which the recruitment takes place. The qualifications, experience and skills required are publicly announced in a recruitment form. Interviews are organized through recruitment committees that decide on the final selection of the candidate who joins ULS. The OHR regularly prepares job profiles, performance evaluations, and training for administrative staff to strengthen their managerial and disciplinary skills. The OHR has a specific status for administrative staff explaining their rights and obligations.

III.1.6. Teaching and Learning

ULS offers a wide range of academic programs across its faculties, all designed to meet local, regional, and international employment demands. They are closely aligned with the mission of ULS and the specific goals of its affiliated faculty. They are offered in two teaching cycles¹⁰. ULS plans to launch its first doctoral program in the third cycle soon. ULS has specific academic regulations for each teaching cycle. The various academic criteria are explained in the Rules and Regulations for Academic Affairs, including course registration, credits allocation, summative assessment grading, academic distinctions, student status, degree requirements, and conditions for academic probation. The program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes are posted in the course syllabi and program reference documents. In collaboration with the faculties, the CTL consistently updates these reference documents and conducts periodic reviews of the academic programs offered at ULS. The University Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Curriculum Committees oversee program revision processes in consultation with each faculty's advisory board ensuring alignment with evolving employment trends. The biannual evaluations of teaching by students contribute to the improvement of teaching practices as well as the course content update.

⁷ Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

⁸ US Agency for International Development.

⁹ Higher Education Agency for Capacity Development.

¹⁰ The first cycle is about undergraduate studies and the second is about graduate studies.

III.1.7. Scientific Research

Scientific research, one of the three core pillars of higher education institutions¹¹, holds a vital and central role at ULS. The university is committed to promoting scientific research in line with its vision. ULS intends to become a center for fundamental and applied research, addressing the evolving needs of the market. To this end, ULS provides its own funding for the research work of its academic staff and continually works with the private sector and international bodies to develop new funding programs for scientific research. ULS supports its academic staff in their research work and grants them the necessary facilities by consolidating a serene environment that is favorable to research work. ULS grants a course release and a reduction in the teaching load of its professorial ranks in order to allow its academic staff to advance in their work. It places strong emphasis on integrating research outcomes into its teaching, ensuring the transferability of results. This is done periodically as part of the review of its academic programs. Other arrangements are granted to its researchers, namely sabbaticals and international mobility. ULS has a set of search engines and databases¹² to support its researchers in their research work. Special regulatory texts¹³ are provided for in the context of the University's strategic development plan. ULS seeks to support and encourage the participation of its academic staff in conferences and scientific events and the publication and dissemination of research results in internationally recognized and peer-reviewed editorials.

III.1.8. Services Provided to Students

With students at the core of its mission, ULS carries out its academic and administrative activities to ensure they receive the best possible education, achieve societal growth, develop their skills, and build their knowledge. The university provides its students with a range of resources and services to facilitate their integration and ensure the smooth progress of their studies. The software for managing their academic path¹⁴, labs and equipment, and research infrastructure are the main general resources made available to students. Student activities, club organizations, and student elections enable each student to engage in practices and activities they are interested in while actively participating in governance and decision-making at both the university and faculty levels. ULS has made several services directly available to its students. The Office of Registrar supports students throughout their academic journey in terms of registration and academic progress. Each student is assigned an academic advisor by their faculty, who supports and advises them from admission through graduation and alumni membership. The Office of Student Affairs organizes activities, provides guidance throughout the academic path, and offers support to help students overcome any challenges they may encounter. The Financial Aid Service provides financial assistance to students who need it and ensures the connection between students and the institutions and NGOs whose mission is to finance the paths of students who need it. A psychological support service and a medical service¹⁵ are made available by ULS to its student body. The Center for Career Development (CCD) offers ongoing support to ULS students in securing internships and

¹¹ According to the Lebanese Law 285 on Higher Education, the three pillars are: Teaching, Scientific Research, and Community Services.

¹² Search engines such as CAIRN, PROQUEST, JSTOR and EBSCO.

¹³ ULS Regulations for Scientific Research as well as various scientific research policies.

¹⁴ SIS, Moodle and ULS social media.

¹⁵ Via the ULS Center for Primary Health Care.

connecting with the job market for effective professional integration. With an extensive network of employers across various fields and sectors, the CCD provides numerous job opportunities each year to ULS students. To this end, ULS has made available to its students and employers involved in the training offered at ULS, a *SYMPPLICITY*¹⁶ professional integration software designed to streamline connections with employers and systematically display job opportunities to ULS students¹⁷. In addition, the CCD offers students training and workshops aimed at facilitating their professional integration and strengthening their skills. The ULS Office of Alumni Relations maintains ongoing communication with ULS alumni and manages an up-to-date database to track their professional development in the job market.

III.1.9. Community Services

With community involvement at the heart of its mission, ULS is actively engaged in numerous projects aimed at serving the community. ULS has signed several cooperation agreements with NGOs and municipalities to maintain academic, social, and professional activities to benefit the community. In addition, ULS has launched its legal clinic for several years, which has contributed to improving the state of prisons in Lebanon and continues to train and encourage its students to get involved in social and professional projects. ULS offers a wide range of common and general education courses that align with community involvement objectives, namely: fighting corruption, human rights, business and professional ethics, citizenship courses, and many others.

III.2. Self-assessment at ULS

Since self-evaluation is a voluntary act that allows a higher education institution to verify and strengthen the quality and integrity of its entire institution, those of a unit or those of a specific program¹⁸, ULS continuously conducts self-evaluation exercises to assess its activities. The university prepares self-evaluation reports of its faculties and administrative departments each year. These exercises involve gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, which is then analyzed by several governing bodies¹⁹.

Self-evaluation reports contribute to improving the quality of teaching and services. ULS prioritizes self-evaluation as a core objective and allocates the necessary resources to ensure its effective implementation. Self-evaluation exercises require the active involvement of multiple governing bodies within the university.

The treatment of self-evaluation data adopts an evaluative and comparative approach aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing avenues for improvement. Comparing the results and data between two consecutive self-assessment exercises remains one of the strong and major points that can confirm the progress desired and planned by the various decision-making bodies of ULS. The self-assessment exercise is led by the Quality Assurance Office. Each year, the results of the exercise are presented to the Chancellor and the ULS Council to formulate avenues for improvement. Several academic standards are taken into

¹⁶ SYMPPLICITY is a professional integration software used worldwide by the largest universities and employers from different countries.

¹⁷ The Center for Career Development offers training on CV writing, preparing for job interviews, and improving communication.

¹⁸ In accordance with the glossary of the AQ guide developed by the ANQAHE network.

¹⁹ The Chancellor, the ULS Council, and the Faculty Councils.

account as part of this exercise. Each year, ULS develops ratios based on Lebanese higher education regulations and accreditation standards, using a comparative approach to track their evolution over time.

III.3. ULS Accreditations

III.3.1. Institutional Accreditation

It consists of assessing the quality of the entire institution, without focusing on specific units or programs. It is an approval of the functioning of the institution according to certain standards regarding the adequacy of facilities and resources. This adequacy concerns staff, academic services, student support, study programs, student experience, faculty members, and other components of the educational institution. This is usually done by an accreditation authority based on specific standards and for a specific period²⁰.

With institutional accreditation becoming a requirement under the regulations governing higher education in Lebanon²¹, ULS has made achieving this accreditation a top priority objective in its strategic development plan²². ULS views institutional accreditation as a vital tool for certifying the quality of its operations. Once validated by a third party, this certification will enhance ULS's credibility and reputation among students, employers, academic partners, and society at large. Institutional accreditation reinforces ULS's attractiveness and positioning, adds value to ULS degrees, and improves the professional integration of its graduates. Stakeholders regard institutional accreditation as an additional mark of excellence certifying that the ULS academic and research activities comply with international higher education standards, further promoting the career prospects of students from accredited institutions.

III.3.2. Accreditation and Certification of Programs

Program accreditation is a recognition granted by an authority or organization to a specific university program, typically for a determined period, following a thorough assessment of the program quality based on its adherence to international standards and best practices²³.

In addition to institutional accreditation, ULS has prioritized program accreditation in its strategic development plan²⁴. ULS aims to accredit a set of its programs across several faculties, including the programs of the Faculties of Business Administration²⁵, Engineering²⁶, Law,²⁷ and Public Health²⁸. Furthermore, ULS holds various program certifications from international organizations and partners. Its two Hotel Management programs are certified

²⁰ With reference to the glossary of the QA guide developed by the ANQAHE network.

²¹ Article 36.2 of Law 285/2014.

²² Orientation 4: Register the ULS in a new "quality" approach, goal 4.3: Complete institutional and program accreditations, objective 4.3.2: Conduct the institutional accreditation exercise.

²³ With reference to the glossary of the QA guide developed by the ANQAHE network.

²⁴ Orientation 4: Register the ULS in a new "quality" approach, goal 4.3: Complete institutional and program accreditations, objective 4.3.3: Conduct the program accreditation exercise.

²⁵ Its Business Administration programs (bachelor's and master's degrees) can be accredited by one of the following agencies: AACSB, ACBSP, IACBE, FIBAA, EQUIS, or AMBA.

²⁶ The Engineering degree can be accredited by the ABET agency, the EUR-ACE agency, or the CTI.

²⁷ Its Law degree can be accredited by the FIBAA agency.

²⁸ In particular, the degree in Physiotherapy and the degree in Nursing Sciences.

by the EHL Lausanne Hotel School²⁹. Its Canon Law program³⁰ is certified by the Latran University in Rome. The benefits of program accreditations are numerous, encompassing enhanced program reputation, alignment with employment needs, improved professional integration and career advancement for its graduates, elevated qualifications of its instructors, national and international program positioning as well as strengthened intellectual contributions from the accredited programs' academic staff.

²⁹ The Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and the Master's degree in Hotel Management

³⁰ The degree in Canon Law (5 years of study).