

ASSESSMENT REPORT

**Modern University for  
Business and Science (MUBS),  
Damour, Lebanon**

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## IMPRINT

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# 1. The Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS)

The Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) was founded in 2000 as MECAT University College (Middle East Canadian Academy of Technology) with a main campus in Damour, south of the Lebanese capital, Beirut. MECAT University College was officially licensed by the Ministry of Education & Higher Education's (MEHE) decree number 3585, issued by the Council of Ministers in August, 2000. The founding purpose was to offer higher education that overcomes geographic, sectarian, political, and cultural differences in Lebanon.

In 2007, the university changed its name to Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) to reflect its evolving status, vision, and mission. Ministerial Decree Number 868, dated November 2007, approved the change, accompanied by approval of new undergraduate and graduate programmes, within four different schools: International School of Business, School of Computer and Applied Sciences, School of Education and Social Work, and the School of Health Sciences.

Ever since the university grew steadily, attracting students from across Lebanon who now attend their studies in five MUBS campuses in Damour, Beirut (Spears district), Aley, Semqanieh, and Rashaya. Given the growing importance of life-long learning in Lebanon, MUBS Continuing Education Center in Jal el Dib offers certificate programmes and specialized diplomas for professionals and adult learners. Special attention is paid to learners in rural and under-served communities. MUBS has a strong third mission in integrating a culture of community service and volunteerism among students and staff to accomplish the university's founding purpose of responding to community needs and active contribution to the development of communities through education and research. For this reason, MUBS has established the National Wellness Network (NWN) that works on the mental and physical wellbeing of students and the community.

Currently, around 2,200 students are enrolled at MUBS across its 30 undergraduate and graduate programmes in 4 academic units ("faculties/schools"<sup>1</sup>):

- International School of Business
- School of Computer and Applied Sciences
- School of Education and Social Work
- School of Health Sciences

Besides, MUBS offers double-degrees and postgraduate programmes through the British Academy of Lebanon which was established to organise partnership with several universities in the UK.

Table 1 shows an overview of MUBS in numbers.

<b>Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS)</b>	
Founding year	2000
Number of students	2,206
School of Computer & Applied Sciences	413

<sup>1</sup> "Faculty" and "school" are used synonymously.

International School of Business	1,251
School of Education and Social Work	397
School of Health Sciences	145
British Academy in Lebanon	72
Full-time academic staff	104
Part-time academic staff (heads and FTE)	287 / FTE 143.5
Administrative and technical staff	132
Academic units	4
Number of programmes:	30
Undergraduate	21
Graduate	9
1 <sup>st</sup> year students	1,044
Graduates	979
Average annual tuition fee	5,000 \$
Drop-out rate	1.87
Percentage of international students	34%
Percentage of international staff	2%

Table 1 – MUBS in numbers (Academic year 2021-2022, Source: MUBS)<sup>2</sup>

The academic year starts in October and ends in August of the following year. It consists of two semesters (Fall & Spring, each of a 16-week duration including the examination period) and a Summer Session (eight weeks).

MUBS uses the following credit system: Each course is assigned a credit rating reflecting the number of weekly contact hours. In general, a three-credit course indicates three hours of lectures per week for one term. Credits also reflect the amount of effort required of the student and generally assumes two hours of personal study for each contact hour. How many credits are required varies from degree programme to degree programme; a Bachelor degree usually requires minimum 94 credits.

As a private university, MUBS does not receive any public funding. Thus, the university relies on student fees as its main source of income.

## 2. The accreditation procedure

The assessment procedure was carried out with an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by MUBS. Due to the pandemic, the site visit was made by only two members of the expert panel while the others participated online in

<sup>2</sup> The budget of MUBS was also considered in the assessment. For reasons of data protection, no figures are given in the public report.

the meetings.<sup>3</sup> Following the visit, the experts prepared their report (this document), which formed the basis for the **evalag** Accreditation Committee's decision.

The procedure applies the fitness for purpose approach which assesses to what extent the institution is able to achieve its self-set objectives. The point of reference is **evalag**'s criteria for international institutional accreditation<sup>4</sup> that follow the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area dated 15 May 2015.<sup>5</sup>

These criteria focus first of all on the profile and the strategies of the institution which are in the centre of the procedure. The governance structures which are used to implement strategies, the fields of activities of the institution and cross-cutting issues which influence the implementation and the success of the institutional strategies are also examined. By assessing compliance with the criteria, **evalag** checks whether the institution has objectives with regard to each criterion, whether it implements activities which serve to reach the defined objectives, and whether it uses mechanisms to assess the results of its activities. Additionally, **evalag** assesses if the institution meets academic standards that are accepted in Europe and internationally.

The following criteria are used:

- Institutional profile and strategy
- Governance
- Resources
- Teaching and learning
- Research
- Institution and society
- Quality assurance

The experts express the extent of compliance of the criteria with the following assessments: "passed", "passed subject to conditions", "suspension of the accreditation procedure" or "failed". Depending on the degree to which the institution meets the criteria, the institution will be accredited, accredited with conditions or not accredited.

As a first step of the procedure and in preparation for the site visit, MUBS produced a self-evaluation report based on guidelines from **evalag**. At the same time **evalag** formed an international expert panel consisting of two professorial experts, one expert with QM background and one student expert:

Academic experts:

- Prof. Dr. Susanne Meyer, Deputy President of Berlin School of Economics and Law, Berlin, Germany

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<sup>3</sup> For this purpose, ZOOM was used as technical platform, based on a contract between evalag and ZOOM for commissioned data processing in order to ensure that the conferences are carried out in conformity with European data protection law. Only authorised persons had access to the meeting sessions, no discussions during these video conferences were recorded.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.evalag.de/fileadmin/dateien/pdf/akk\\_international/standards\\_kriterien/inst\\_acc\\_process\\_criteria\\_171201.pdf](https://www.evalag.de/fileadmin/dateien/pdf/akk_international/standards_kriterien/inst_acc_process_criteria_171201.pdf) (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>5</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) (accessed 25 January 2022). The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a group of 48 countries that cooperate to achieve comparable and compatible higher education systems throughout Europe. Member countries of the EHEA follow the directives of the so-called Bologna Process to achieve these goals.

- Prof. Dr. Paul Richard Sharp, Professor of Business and Economics at the Historical Economics and Development Group (HEDG) at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark
- Ana Gvritshvili, Head of Quality Assurance Department at European University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Student expert:

- Mari Ruadze, student in Teacher's Training Programme (subject: Geography) at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia, nominated by the QA pool of European Students' Union (ESU)

All experts had declared to be free of any conflict of interest.

From **evalag's** side, Georg Seppmann coordinated and carried out the project, with the assistance of Galina Novikova in Mannheim back office.

The site visit took place from 6 to 8 December 2021 with several meetings on the campuses at Damour, Semqanieh and Beirut (Spears district).<sup>6</sup> During the site visit the expert team met with the President, the Vice President, the Provost, with members of the Board of Trustees, deans and the heads of departments, with academic and administrative staff, students and alumni, and visited selected facilities of the university.

The expert team produced this assessment report which was submitted to the university for correction of potential factual errors on 16 February 2022.

The report is structured along the assessment criteria which are the basis of **evalag's** institutional accreditation. After a short description of the criterion, each chapter starts with a presentation of the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information in the self-assessment report of the university and the information gathered during the site visit meetings. On this basis, the expert team assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts list their recommendations for further improvement.

### 3. Institutional assessment

#### 3.1. Institutional profile and strategy

The institutional profile and strategy define the main activities of a higher education institution and therefore are at the centre of the institutional accreditation procedure. Applying the fitness for purpose approach, the experts mainly check whether an institution has a clearly defined strategy that fits the institutional profile and whether the strategies and profile of the institution comply with internationally accepted standards. The experts also review the processes for the definition of strategies. Furthermore, they look whether the strategies are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

#### Current status

##### *Strategic profile*

According to the self-report, MUBS positions itself as an institution that strives for excellence and social development. Its vision formulates commitment to developing conscientious leaders with a lifelong passion for learning, innovation, and service. Moral integrity, creative and critical thinking, community engagement, internationalization,

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<sup>6</sup> Prof. Meyer and Prof. Sharp participated online.

and sustainable development constitute MUBS' strategic imperatives which are reflected in the university's declared core values:

- commitment to excellence in education, research, and service
- transformative social impact through a commitment to address social needs and critical challenges nationally and globally
- fostering creativity and innovation by encouraging critical thinking, openness to new ideas and experiences, interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship, and innovative pedagogies
- inclusion, tolerance, and dialogue as central principles for social justice, development, and social prosperity
- integrity and adherence to the highest ethical standards in personal and professional behaviour
- sustainability and well-being, through a commitment to achieving sustainable development goals preserve and protect our natural resources and cultivate a culture of social responsibility and holistic well-being.<sup>7</sup>

As a non-profit private institution dedicated to the creation and dissemination of knowledge in all fields of education, MUBS tries to empower students from diverse backgrounds to develop their creative and critical thinking. In the university's learning environment faculty, staff, and students are expected to discover, critically examine, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that contribute to improving quality of life for all.<sup>8</sup>

MUBS sets a strategy every five years following its strategic planning policy. The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 defines the strategic goals of MUBS as follows:

1. Expand and strengthen academic programmes and initiatives
2. Develop a comprehensive student enrolment management plan
3. Enrich the learning and work environment to enhance recruitment and retention of competent faculty and staff
4. Continued commitment to diversity in programmes, student body, and staff
5. Cultivate partnerships at distinct levels
6. Create a new model of a global university that reflects principles and builds on the achievements
7. Develop resources and educational facilities
8. Strengthen research, technological infrastructure, and develop the digital curriculum
9. Develop a culture of civic engagement, volunteerism, wellness, and health promotion

The permanent institutional enhancement is mentioned as a key component of the university profile.

Upon the adoption of the strategic plan and the approval of Board of Trustees and the University Council, schools and departments should implement specific goals or objectives to be assessed and followed. The main administrative departments (Registrar Office, Quality Assurance Office, Alumni Office) set their own strategies.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mubs.edu.lb/en/about/history.aspx> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. self-report p. 8

### *Definition process*

The definition of strategies is generally understood as a continuous process. MUBS follows a designated strategic planning policy to ensure that the institution's vision and mission is continuously implemented and improved. This policy covers the planning of the institutional strategy, the teaching and learning strategy, the research strategy, the quality assurance strategy, and the different schools' strategies at MUBS.

The mission of the university is reviewed based on the achievements accomplished in the last five years and emerging trends and needs. The mission is then updated according to the University Council view of the next five years. SWOT as well as PESTEL<sup>9</sup> analyses are conducted at university level, schools' level, and administrative departments' level to support the planning process. The strategic plan is categorised into clear goals, each goal is translated into a number of direct and measurable objectives, the objectives are specified in task-oriented action plans, the action plans are reflected in indicators, achieved within a specified timeline, and delegated to specific teams or staff members.

The procedure of defining strategies includes the following steps:

1. The University Council prepares the first draft of the institutional strategy.
2. The draft is sent to all heads of administrative departments and deans of schools for feedback.
3. The feedback is sent back by email and discussed in a general meeting.
4. All schools and departments send a document including their contribution to the institutional strategy.
5. A general meeting is conducted for each school and department to present their contributions.
6. The contributions of schools and the main departments are included within their own strategic plans.
7. Students have no active role in this process.

The strategic plans at MUBS are revised annually at the beginning of the academic year (October) based on collected data on demographic changes, the Lebanese labour market, and national and international professional requirements. Strategic planning also takes into consideration the fact that higher education institutions have been under increasing strain to respond to multiple threats and challenges in recent years including:

- meeting the demands of an evolving workplace environment and the learners' need to meet employers' requirements, and to develop new skills and ways of thinking;
- facing the threat presented by emerging ventures (e.g., online-teaching during pandemic) that offer alternate teaching models that can replace the classic, face-to-face, on-campus classroom model;
- finding solutions to questions of educational access and balancing quality with scale: meeting the need to recruit new students from untapped sectors in a highly competitive environment;

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<sup>9</sup> A PESTEL analysis is a strategic framework used to evaluate the external environment of a business by breaking down the opportunities and risks into political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors.

- integration of novel modes of teaching and pedagogies in the context of the “fourth industrial revolution” (e.g., developing learners’ digital skills, integration of novel technologies, integration of life-skills training, etc.).
- adapting to the post-pandemic world, and the ability to forecast the future of tertiary education under circumstances of uncertainty and evolving threats to long-standing conceptions, capitalising on lessons learned during the pandemic to maximise benefit and shape the new educational ecosystem.

The continuous update of the strategic planning aims to take these developments into account.

## **Assessment**

### *Strategic profile*

In the experts’ view MUBS has a clear profile with a strong emphasis on social responsibility and progress. The educational mission of the university is directly linked to its social mission. The experts appreciate the multicultural and tolerant educational approach of MUBS, since the university addresses all factions of the Lebanese society and opens up study possibilities to students in rural areas and to those who suffer educational disadvantages.

The expert panel experienced a strong university community. During the site visit, the experts talked to students and staff explicitly convinced about having chosen the right institution to study or to work for. Furthermore, all staff, students and alumni whom the experts interviewed expressed their strong commitment to the university’s goals and mission, they know and accept what is expected and how to contribute.

According to the expert panel, profile and strategies of MUBS correspond to internationally accepted standards in higher education. It should be emphasised that, especially in the current difficult economic situation in Lebanon, MUBS is making great efforts to enable its students to study and also to retain its teaching staff. The commitment of MUBS to its students is evidenced by a great deal of individual support in social and financial matters.

### *Definition process*

The experts appreciate that regular processes to reflect and adjust the strategies are already implemented at MUBS. Most of these processes were just recently adopted. They appear well thought out, based on indicators, and dynamic. They take place on several levels and are well organised and transparent.

Strategic planning goes ahead together with budget planning on annual basis, considering input and participation from all relevant departments. The experts gained the impression that really all areas of the university are taken into account. The planning processes appear structured, with clear responsibilities and deadlines.

Monitoring of the implementation of strategies up to the review of the original targets set are procedural components. The annual plans follow a five-year overarching strategy, which, according to the expert panel, offers a high degree of planning security and strategic perspective.

However, the student body has no formal active role in this process (apart from the appointed member of the University Council). The university should improve this in the sense of greater participation of the student body in planning processes.

In particular, suggestions from the student body as well as from alumni should also be taken into account when setting the five-year goals. It was emphasised several times in the meetings that alumni should be tied more strongly to the university. The experts would like to note that the involvement of graduates and alumni in the strategic further development of the university would offer great opportunities.

#### *Adequacy of the strategies*

The experts assess that the strategies that MUBS uses to reach its objectives appear consistent and fit for purpose. All activities not only consider the university's mission and the original intentions of the founders but go far beyond. The university's acquired reputation give evidence that the chosen strategies are adequate.

In the experts' view the strategies both on university and on school level appear to conform to the university mission.

#### *Areas for improvement*

In the meetings, the strong third mission of the university was always in the foreground: social responsibility and the goal of providing educational opportunities in disadvantaged regions and directly supporting the local communities through various services. However, the core areas of a university – teaching and research – should not be pushed into the background. It would do the university's external image good to take action here, for example by highlighting the specific study programmes and research activities, including exemplary success stories of graduates.

In public presentation (e.g., the website), the study offers could be much more strongly related to the concrete needs of the labour market (in Lebanon as well as in the region). In this context, the research profile could also be sharpened.

### **Recommendations**

The SWOT analyses that are carried out in the course of the five-year planning should be expanded and become general components of the university planning processes.

Students should become a more active part in the planning processes, in addition to their already existing representation in the University Council, for example by presenting and discussing intended plans at specially convened student assemblies.

The university should give every student the guaranteed right and equal opportunity to be elected (by all students) and to participate in the work of governing bodies, including the board of trustees and faculty councils.

### **3.2. Governance**

The criterion focuses on the internal governance and decision-making processes of the institution. The experts check the clarity and transparency of the organisational provisions and governance structure. They examine whether governance structures are adequate to support the institutional strategies and how decision-making processes are organised. Furthermore, the experts check how stakeholder groups are involved in governance, whether the institution provides relevant information about its activities for the internal and external public and whether academic freedom is assured.

## Current situation

### *Governance structure and decision-making processes*

In the past years, the organisational structure and the whole set of policies and procedures were reviewed and updated.

Table 2 shows the organisational chart of the university.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that this chart no longer represents the current status (for example, the position of the provost is missing).

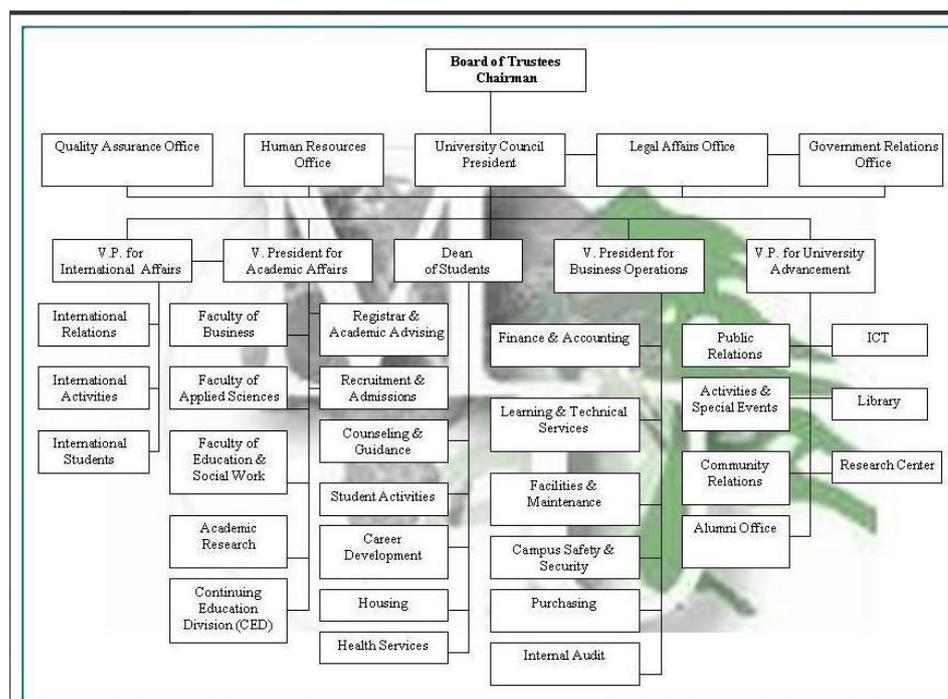


Table 2 – Organisational chart

The affairs of MUBS are managed by the Board of Trustees (as supreme authority) and administered by the University Council headed by the President. In 2019, the University created the new position of the Provost as the chief academic officer directly reporting to the President and the Board of Trustees.

All functional powers and duties are determined in accordance with the provisions of the university's bylaws and the provisions of the national laws and regulations.

The Board of Trustees is composed of 12 members as follows:

- four members selected by the Founding Body
- four members known for their leadership in the scientific, economic, developmental, or public affairs who are not founders or employees at MUBS
- four members of the recognised personalities in the academic fields of the university who are not founders or workers at MUBS.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

<sup>10</sup> Source: [https://www.mubs.edu.lb/en/about/university/university\\_chart](https://www.mubs.edu.lb/en/about/university/university_chart), accessed 25 January 2022.

- drawing up the university's general policy in light of the laws, regulations and decrees that govern higher education in Lebanon;
- ratifying the cooperation agreements between the university and higher education institutions and institutions related to the activities of higher education institutions in Lebanon and abroad;
- supervising matters related to financial auditing, granting of financial disclosure and financial acquittal certificates, and the management's commitment to quality standards in its performance;
- appointing the University President and faculty deans in accordance with the standards and conditions stipulated in the provisions of the university regulations and the higher education laws in Lebanon;
- appointing the Provost;
- amending the university's bylaws and regulations;
- supervising the management of university properties;
- supervising contracts and transactions conducted by MUBS in accordance with the provisions of the university's financial system;
- approving the financial and administrative regulations, the salaries, wages and related compensations of the educational, administrative, and technical staff and the university's employees, in addition to any other regulations required for the university's operation and wellbeing, and amending and cancelling regulations as required;
- approving the University Council decisions and recommendations;
- determining university tuition fees and seeking resources to support financial needs and organize their investment;
- approving the university's annual budget;
- approving the institutional strategic plan;
- approving the establishment of new schools and departments at MUBS within the framework of the Lebanese laws and regulations;
- approving the filing and defence of cases and conducting reconciliations in disputes;
- accepting charitable donations, gifts, and endowments.

The University Council constitutes of:

- University President
- the Provost
- the vice presidents (currently three)
- school deans (currently four)
- two faculty representatives
- student representative

The tasks of the University Council include the following:

- overseeing and working towards achieving the university's goals and mission and the smooth running of its schools;
- making decisions on contracting and appointing faculty members and other staff members at the university. Resolutions and decisions are submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval;
- proposing amendments in majors, programmes, and departments, establishing colleges, and submitting recommendations to the Board of Trustees to take appropriate decisions;
- discussing reports prepared by the deans, the University President and the Vice Presidents;
- recommending the development of the university's policies and regulations pertaining to student life, examinations, assessments, curricula and administrative work, and submitting them to the Board of Trustees for approval;
- carrying out the tasks of the supervision and disciplinary authority for faculty members, employees, and other staff at the university, and taking behavioural measures when necessary, in accordance with the internal regulations and bylaws of the university;
- approving the performance evaluation reports of faculty and staff that are submitted by the relevant performance assessment committees across all university schools;
- recommending the establishment of partnerships and agreements with institutions in Lebanon and abroad, and submitting them to the Board of Trustees;
- taking appropriate decisions on the university's participation in conferences and seminars in Lebanon and abroad;
- approving the reports of the academic and scientific committees and school councils related to equivalencies for degrees, years of study, or curricula;
- approving the school councils' recommendations regarding nominating student candidates to benefit from scholarships and financial aid provided by the university.

The Scientific Council (whose members are appointed by the University Council) focuses on research.

MUBS central administration handles the major amount of the administrative work and is entrusted with conducting business that does not require central resolutions or other transactions by the departments and schools. The Central Administration consists of the following offices and departments:

- Students Services Department
- Human Resource Department
- Financial Affairs and Accounting Department
- Communication Department
- Department of Information Technology
- Quality Assurance Department
- Library Department

Each school is supervised and managed by a school council and a dean, assisted by a head of administrative affairs. The dean's authority includes all its staff, administrators, technicians, and all the school's employees. In the absence of the dean, the University President assigns a representative to manage the affairs.

The duties of the school councils are the following:

- setting academic and educational plans, which the dean submits to the University Council for approval and follow-up of their implementation in the school and with the relevant departments in the central administration;
- monitoring and following up on the progress of work in the academic and administrative departments of the school;
- making recommendations to amend and develop curricula, programmes, and teaching methods, then submitted to the University Council for approval;
- following up on exam preparations and validating their results;
- making recommendations for hiring or appointing faculty members and technicians/staff;
- preparing the school's budget and identifying the technical equipment needed;
- submitting recommendations for certificate equivalencies, number of years, courses, or curricula, presented to the University Council for approval;
- appointing Advisory Boards to fields of studies.

#### *Stakeholders' involvement in governance*

MUBS applies practice-oriented study. Disciplines such as Education, Business, Health Science, Design, and Computer Science have Advisory Boards appointed by each school council. They may come from academic institutions, research organisations, industry or out of the alumni. The advisors may influence the academic faculty on the latest needs of the market and on curriculum changes needed to meet these needs. Besides, they act as honorary ambassadors to promote the faculty's interests, leveraging the Board's connections for internships, funding, and other strategic initiatives.

The Student Council is elected on November, and every board or committee includes a student representative to consider matters related to teaching and learning and student support including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provisions.

### *Clarity and transparency and information policy*

All strategies and policies are published and available online on MUBS website at <https://www.mubs.edu.lb/>.<sup>11</sup> They are regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date. Academic services are also presented on the website including the academic catalogue, freshman academics, undergraduate and graduate majors, course offerings, rules and regulations, student services, and the exchange programmes.

MUBS also uses social media services to address the public: Facebook (about 20,600 followers), Instagram (about 4,100 followers) and Twitter (about 805 followers). The university's YouTube channel has 372 followers.

In a formal communication policy document, MUBS sets out the rules and regulations for representing the university to all internal and external stakeholders. This policy extends to all forms of communications in which the university is being represented as an institution. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all communication that takes place on behalf of the university is done in a manner that is consistent with the university's quality standards, branding, and strategic positioning.

### *Academic freedom and hiring procedures*

Professional autonomy and academic freedom in teaching and research are guaranteed and described by MUBS official academic freedom policy document. The document mentions guarantees as well as responsibilities. Academic freedom is named fundamental to the protection of the rights of faculty and students. All school members are entitled to full freedom of research and the publication of the results in affiliation with the university. They have the freedom in research topics as well as the freedom in selecting the approach of their research as long as it is in compliance with the university's ethics. Teachers are free to choose their teaching style and methods to achieve the learning objectives of the courses. There shall be no adverse consequences to employment status (hiring, promotion, and retention) as a result of expressions protected by academic freedom.

MUBS considers internal candidates for any vacancy before announcing it for external candidates attempting to promote existing staff. Vacancies are posted on MUBS social media platforms and website.

The Human Resources (HR) Department filters the received CVs and sends the relevant ones to the concerned school or department for selecting the candidates for the job interview. The interviews are conducted by the HR director, dean of the school or head of the department, and the Dean of Quality Assurance. The interview process is formalised and documented. In some instances, and depending on the position, the candidate may be asked for a second interview with the Provost. At the end, the dean of the school or the head of department finally decides on the recruitment.

## **Assessment**

### *Governance structure and decision-making processes*

The experts assess the governance of MUBS as clearly structured and documented. The responsibilities and procedures of the main university bodies are set and described in the constitution, the bylaws, and in the several policies. All appears well thought out and applicable. All the people working in the administration and

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<sup>11</sup> Accessed 25 January 2022

management that could be talked to appeared very experienced and competent. The university is well equipped in terms of governance. The creation of the position of Provost was an important step towards efficiency.

A high number of documents regulates almost every conceivable situation. The experts almost got the impression that much of it went into too much detail after all. According to the experts, the focus seems also to be more on the policies and less on the processes in implementing them. However, MUBS itself seems to have recognised this and is currently working very hard on its process management. In this context, more simplified graphical representations of processes and procedures would certainly be helpful.

### *Adequacy*

The experts assess the presented governance structures as working in both formal and informal ways. They have no doubts about the efficiency and applicability of the university governance. In terms of management personnel, the university is currently excellently positioned with some people who have many years of (international) university experience. According to the experts, these good conditions are also reflected in the fact that MUBS has so far coped well with the current crises (including the economic situation in Lebanon, the Corona crisis, etc.), and that it also has concepts ready to continue offering students a good university education against all odds. It is to be hoped that, despite the current severe crisis in the country, the good staffing levels will be maintained and even expanded. According to the experts, management structures and processes need to be further developed so that they function more independently of individuals and thus mitigate risks.

### *Stakeholders' involvement in governance*

The university makes efforts to get its stakeholder groups involved. The experts explicitly appreciate the institution of advisory boards as a practical model to connect studies with the needs of the labour market. This special feature should be communicated even more strongly to the public.

There is no doubt that the Board of Trustees plays an important part in the affairs of the university. The experts note that the Board of Trustees has a certain imbalance in terms of people from the higher education and science sectors. It would be good for MUBS if more representatives from this area were included in the Board of Trustees. This would bring new impulses to the university, could strengthen the connection to the academic world and also raise the status of research.

### *Clarity and transparency and information policy*

The experts note that since the new position of Provost was filled, bylaws and policies have been intensively reviewed and revised, and those that are published are not in all cases the latest versions. For instance, the organisational chart on the website should be updated.

As mentioned before, graphical representations of responsibilities ("who towards whom") and processes would be helpful, also for the further development of the institution.

### *Academic freedom*

The responsibility for research and teaching lies with the academics. Based on the discussions held and the documents provided by the university, the expert panel concludes that independence is guaranteed in both academic and teaching activities. During the interviews, the experts experienced a genuine commitment of the academic staff to MUBS.

### *Areas for improvement*

The representation of higher education and science on the Board of Trustees should be strengthened in the medium term.

## **Recommendations and conditions**

MUBS should proceed further in its continuing efforts to improve modern governance structures and procedures.

All published documents on governance – the constitution, the university bylaws, policies, etc. – must be regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date.

The translation of policies into concrete actions and processes must be intensified and visualized.

The students, who according to the documents are already represented in all committees, should also be formally involved in the annual planning processes.

When filling the advisory boards and councils, all university groups including students should have the right to propose.

## **3.3. Resources**

The criterion focuses on adequate resource endowment and deployment to sustain the core activities. The experts check the existence and sustainability of a professional funding and financial management. They also check whether the qualification and number of the (academic) staff (full-time and part-time) are adequate to support the institutional strategy as well as to ensure the intended learning outcomes. Further, they review which strategies and processes for the staff recruiting and staff development are used and if the search, hiring and tenure procedure are in line with international academic practices. The resources, facilities and equipment are also part of the criterion. Therefore, the experts examine if the amount and quality of facilities and equipment allow the provision of the programme (library, laboratories, teaching rooms, IT equipment) and if the resources are adequate to reach the objectives of the programme and are in accordance with the institutional strategy.

### **Current status**

#### *Financial resources and management*

MUBS operates based on an annual budget covering the period of the academic year.<sup>12</sup> Whereas in the first few years after the university was founded, the Board of

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<sup>12</sup> 1 October to 30 September

Trustees was largely responsible for most of the budget planning, a system has now been established in which the individual departments contribute their specific needs to the planning process. The budget is now prepared based on the previously formulated needs and requirements of the various units, involving individuals in positions of responsibility throughout the institution. The Board of Trustees approves the annual budget based on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Board and the University President. The procedural steps are described below:

1. The Head of Finance at the university prepares a draft budget based on the budget of the past year, and submits it to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, including the University President.
2. The Chairman presents the budget to the Board of Trustees, which deliberates and makes amendments based on anticipated needs, available resources, forecast income, and the institution's strategic plan.
3. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees asks the President to convene the University Council to present the annual budget, which is then disseminated to the schools and administrative departments for amendments and revisions.
4. The schools and administrative departments deliberate and submit their recommendations for amendments to the deans and Administrative Department Heads by mid-January.
5. Deans and administrative departments submit their finalised requests and amendments and submit them to the Head of Finance, University President, and Chairman of the Board by mid-February.
6. The Head of Finance, University President, and Chairman of the Board will meet with the deans and Administrative Department Heads in budget defence sessions during the month of March to agree on a final draft to submit to the Board of Trustees.
7. The Chairman of the Board then submits the amended budget draft to the Board of Trustees for review and approval in its May meeting.

Tuition fees from the students account for practically 95 % of the revenues in the budget.

#### *Human resources and the recruitment process*

Faculty members hold Doctorate and Master's degrees in their areas of teaching and are distributed among all schools and academic departments. The ratio of faculty to student (1:20) is in compliance with the Ministry of Education & Higher Education Decree No. 9274.

Furthermore, MUBS employs a body of staff that comprises line managers, mainly those who head the university administrative departments. Table 3 gives an overview in numbers on the academic and administrative staff of MUBS.

2016	Total	Full time academic staff	% Female	% International	Part time academic staff	Administrative staff
<b>Total</b>	391	104	71%	2%	287	132
With Master degree	258	70	76%		188	40

With PhD degree	133	34	24%		99	7
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Table 3 – Academic and administrative staff of MUBS<sup>13</sup>

The recruitment process has already been briefly described in chapter 3.2. It follows a defined, clear procedure, internal applications are always given preference. For the interviews, there are standardised protocol templates for documentation to ensure comparability in the final selection of applicants.

The welcoming of new staff is a collaborative effort that includes human resources (HR), the hiring department and other related teams throughout MUBS. Preparing for new staff and providing appropriate guidance and information during the first several days of employment follow the New Staff Orientation Policy.

#### *Staff quality assurance and evaluation*

All staff undergo a yearly appraisal. The appraisal is founded on five principles related to various concepts such as face-to-face mandatory attendance, circumstantial based conversation, alignment with strategy, meeting documentation and conflict resolution. Both parties share responsibilities towards each other in respect of confidentiality.

The HR department ensures that staff performing work affecting product or service quality are competent on the basis of appropriate education, training, skills and experience according to competence, awareness, and training policy. For each employee the HR department files the following information as a minimum:

- relevant job description
- qualifications and experience
- letter of appointment/employment contract
- record of successful completion of induction
- training undertaken, including results where appropriate
- appraisal feedback and planning.

Managers assess the competence, awareness and training needs of all staff at regular intervals, as a minimum once per annum. Job descriptions are reviewed on annual basis and determined if there has been any significant change. If so, the job description should be updated and referred back to the HR Director. Change in the scope of the job would result in a reassessment for the position and possible allocation to another salary range.

All employees receive appropriate training in line with their responsibilities. Department managers review the training needs of their subordinates and discuss these needs with each person, as part of the appraisal process. General training issues identified between these reviews are discussed at department unit level, and the outcomes are documented and reported to the HR and quality assurance departments for actions to be taken as appropriate. Employees may also be provided with opportunities to gain further development and experience. Department managers ensure that staff actually undertake the training identified by the annual reviews and that training needs are

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. self-report, p. 20

satisfied. A training evaluation form is to be completed for all training undertaken and a copy forwarded to the HR department.

The Academic Classification and Promotion Policy provides the framework for classification and promotion applicable to all permanent members of MUBS academic staff. The criteria set out therein include the evaluation of faculty members' performance in research, teaching and administration (internal service, external including community service and leadership).

### *Facilities*

MUBS operates five university campuses: in Damour, Beirut, Aley, Semqanieh and Rachaya. In addition, a centre for continuing education was established in Jal el Dib.

There are three auditoriums, one in each of Aley, Beirut and Semkanieh campuses that are equipped with accommodation, communication and display systems. Regarding catering, there exist cafeterias spread across all campuses.

Four campuses contain a number of computer labs dedicated for PC and MAC. Aley, Damour, Rashaya and Semkanieh campuses each has one dedicated video conference room while Beirut campus has two. The Damour campus has an additional lab dedicated for Optometry.

According to the self-report, the condition and number of classrooms is described as good on each campus. The Beirut campus was severely damaged by the August 2000 explosion, and the damage was repaired in an extremely short time.

All campuses are equipped with a high-speed wireless Internet connection that can be used by all university members. During the pandemic most of the education took only part online.

The library situation is described as unsatisfactory. For improvement, MUBS has established a Library Committee to help build better libraries and to ensure the best use of library resources. The committee deals with all issues relating to the operations, development and maintenance of the library. The committee actively encourages staff and students to contribute to the expansion and use of the library, to ensure a higher level of learning and research capability.

Students have access to a high number of electronic resources through an agreement between MUBS and EBSCO, a provider of research databases namely e-journals, magazines, e-books and discovery service to libraries of various types. MUBS students use continuously EBSCO resources having registered a total of 3,623 electronic transactions within six months, an average of 453 transactions per database type.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, MUBS and the other Lebanese universities shifted completely to the virtual learning model. Undergraduate and postgraduate classes were all given online via Microsoft Teams. Activities, videos, case studies, and relevant articles were shared with students on Moodle.

The university management is already planning the renovation of all physical spaces namely the auditorium, catering, classes, computer labs, conference rooms, copy centres, laboratories and libraries. This will include the hard physical space in addition to all accommodation, communication, display and supply equipment.

## **Assessment**

Altogether, MUBS provides sufficient resources to sustain its operation at the desired quality level. The campuses appear well-maintained.

### *Financial resources*

In the experts' view the financial management is professional; the process of preparing the yearly budget is clear and executed with the collaboration of the faculties. The university relies for its funding almost exclusively on its tuitions. This seems very risky to the expert panel, but it is also clear to the experts that at the moment it is practically impossible for the university to tap additional sources of funding

The expert panel appreciates MUBS's general policy to keep the tuition fees on a reasonable level, especially in the current crises. Given the severity of the current crisis, it is very difficult for the experts to make a real judgement. So far, the university seems to be weathering the times well and does not seem to have lost as much staff as reported from other universities in Lebanon.

### *Staff*

The experts agree on that the staff of the university seems appropriate to provide high quality education to its students. All teachers the experts could talk to presented themselves as highly motivated. The students who could be spoken to emphasised the good teaching climate and the open-door policy that characterises the teaching staff. The university's procedures for recruiting and later continuous training and developing staff seem appropriate and fulfil academic standards: The selection of academics is always based on an academic decision that is justified and documented in a standardised manner.

According to the expert panel, the dynamic staff members, both academic (full time and part time) and administrative are a big asset of MUBS. The proportion of full-time teachers is low at around 25%, but does not seem to have a direct impact on teaching. The annual appraisals as well as a solid structured monitoring practice of teachers' performances and needs support the further development of the teaching personnel.

International mobility exists on certain individual levels, mostly for short periods, e.g., participation of conferences, workshops etc. The university should make further efforts to increase the level of mobility, especially for longer periods abroad. The experts estimate the existing contacts and partnerships with universities abroad as a good starting point.

### *Facilities*

By and large, the facilities of the university are appropriate for sustaining the activities of the university. The buildings are in good condition, as are the classrooms. There is a need for renovation in some places. Due to the pandemic, only very few people were present at the sites visited, so a true impression of class sizes etc. could not be gained. There were no negative remarks from the students interviewed.

It should be noted, however, that students with disabilities face insurmountable obstacles at all university campuses visited. This is mainly due to the basic building structure, which can only be converted to be barrier-free with great effort – which in turn would have great impact on diversity, inclusion and equity! Not least in view of its own

claim to provide higher education to disadvantaged groups in particular, the university should act urgently and ensure accessibility at least on the main campus.

The library situation is presented as unsatisfactory by the university itself. MUBS has already addressed this issue with the establishment of the Library Committee and a budget increase for the library sector. The expert panel welcomes this development. They also welcome the agreement with ESCBO, which can mitigate some of the weaknesses of reference libraries. Apparently, MUBS provides practical support to students by qualified staff in working with digital libraries, e.g., in finding and dealing with relevant sources (proof of validity, references, citation rules, plagiarism, etc.). However, it must be noted that both students and alumni are not aware of the existing databases, which, according to the panel, indicates that their use in teaching and learning is not actively promoted.

The IT infrastructure of the university is up to date and equipped with modern and functional software which was also affirmed by different stakeholder groups during the site visit.

The offer and use of virtual learning environments has become an integral part of the university portfolio. The experts appreciate all efforts the university makes to train teaching personnel in the use of Microsoft Teams and Moodle as well as in general methods of effective and interactive online teaching.

#### *Areas of improvement*

The conversion of the learning environments towards more accessibility is indispensable from the experts' point of view, but is a challenge in view of the building fabric. Good planning is needed to cope with this.

Wherever possible, the university – in cooperation with the local communities – could also change the external appearance of campus buildings and campus areas towards more greenery.

The further expansion of the library towards a good reference collection has already been started and should be intensified. However, weaknesses in the reference collection can be compensated for by good access to digital international libraries. It would be then important to ensure that access for students and teachers also works from home.

The university should consider becoming part of the eduroam network. This would be an important contribution to internationalisation, both with regard to the university's own members and to international guests.

#### **Recommendations and conditions**

The university must ensure that it adequately cares for students with special needs and makes provisions in case further such situations arise. Initial measures must be taken to create barrier-free accessibility, with the aim of enabling disabled people to study at all locations in the medium term, at least at one location in short term.

MUBS must enhance its libraries and increase the possibilities for students and staff of using international electronic libraries from home as well.

MUBS should subscribe to academic databases for its current study programmes and work closely with academic staff to promote their use by students.

The university should establish more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses. Overall, the number of work spaces permanent available should meet at least 13% of the number of students.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.4. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is one of the main topics of higher education institutions. In the accreditation procedure the experts check whether the study programmes comply with the institutional strategy and national regulations. They also check the academic standards of the study programmes and how research and teaching are linked. The experts review whether the institution employs student-centred teaching and learning processes which pay respect to the diversity of students and their needs. Moreover, they assess how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and how the student life cycle is organised.

#### Current status

##### *Academic standards of the study programmes*

The MUBS has set up a Teaching and Learning Strategy that provides a shared framework for faculties, departments and programmes to ensure excellence in teaching and learning. It communicates the university's teaching and learning aims which guide the development of engaging learning experiences that enable students and staff to fulfil their potential within an inclusive and innovative academic environment. Teaching and learning is permanently monitored and improved.

All MUBS schools and departments act in accordance to local and international associations when developing their competencies framework for the offered studies:

- The International School of Business has four majors: Accounting, Banking & Finance, Marketing, and Management. All follow standards set up by the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA)<sup>15</sup> without being formally accredited.
- The School of Health Sciences has four majors: Nutrition and Dietetics following the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)<sup>16</sup>, Optometry based on the World Council of Optometry (WCO)<sup>17</sup>, Public Health major abides with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC Foundation)<sup>18</sup> standards, and Nursing following the seven standards issued by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> According to a study by the German HIS Hochschul-Informationen-System GmbH, universities should provide work place for students in an amount of altogether 13% based on the number of students. (Cf. Vogel / Woisch: Orte des Selbststudiums. HIS Forum Hochschule 7/2013, online at [https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub\\_fh/fh-201307.pdf](https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub_fh/fh-201307.pdf), accessed 25 January 2022.)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.en-fibaa.org/en/procedures-at-programme-level/prog-according-to-fibaa-quality-standards/guidelines-and-targets/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>17</sup> <https://worldcouncilofoptometry.info/advocacy/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/professional-standards.aspx> (accessed 25 January 2022).

- The Art and Design department programme was chosen based on benchmarking with national and international universities offering Graphic Design and Interior Design programmes. The competencies of the Graphic Design programme are in alignment with the requirements of the European International Council of Graphic Design Association ICO-D (Icograda)<sup>20</sup>. The competencies of the Interior Design programme are in alignment with the requirements of the Ecia (European International Council of interior Design Association)<sup>21</sup> in addition to the (SBID – Society of British and International Interior Design)<sup>22</sup> and the IFI (International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers)<sup>23</sup>.
- The Education department checked the international literature for skills and competencies then tailored the skills to match with the students' needs.
- As for the Social Work Department, all courses are in alignment with several American universities and the International Federation of Social Workers.<sup>24</sup> English Language courses are oriented towards the European Framework CEFR.<sup>25</sup>
- The Computer Science department designed their courses against the recommendations of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)<sup>26</sup> as well as those from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).<sup>27</sup>

All programmes and courses are reviewed at the end of every academic year. Key performance indicators (KPIs) submitted by schools are measured at the end of every semester, to check if any updates are required to maintain an up-to-date curriculum.

The contents of the study programmes are divided into modules; an overview of the modules required for each degree programme (without detailed descriptions) can be found on the university's website. Each module is assigned a number of credits; the total number of credits required for a degree is not uniform across all schools, e.g., for a Bachelor's degree the number varies between 94 and 108 credits.

MUBS provided the expert panel with exemplary module descriptions; these follow a fixed scheme in their structure:

- Course outline
- Course description
- Course objectives
- Learning outcomes
- Grade allocation
- Teaching methods
- Course plan
- Student contribution
- How the module is assessed
- Grading scale

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.theicod.org/en/resources/icograda-documents> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>21</sup> <https://ecia.net/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.sbid.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>23</sup> <https://ifiworld.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ifsw.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.acm.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ieee.org/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

### *Student-centred study*

According to the self-report and to the interviews, MUBS has always been keen on setting a student-centred teaching paradigm to ensure a consistent and regular flow of assessment. This is reflected in the policy “Student Centered Assessment Plan and Processes” including process, methods of teaching, tools, and criteria that assist in monitoring. The pursued objectives follow the university’s mission, they ensure that students will eventually acquire competencies through the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities. They are attained by means of an assessment process consisting of identifying learning outcomes, a diversity of methodologies of assessment down to the sought evaluation.

The teaching process adopted by the university academics focuses on enhancing student critical thinking. Personal and academic support is an integral part of MUBS students’ experience and is pivotal to supporting students to succeed and reach their full potential. Despite of them having different preferences and needs MUBS aims to provide all students with access to the same levels of academic and personal support. The Student Success Committee also actively monitors the availability of and engagement with the support available. At the same time, academic integrity is essential at MUBS. The Academic Integrity and Student Fairness Committee decides what sanction(s) may be appropriate in the case of breaching academic integrity and student fairness. Any member of the MUBS community can report a violation of the university code, including fellow students, staff, and faculty. The Academic Integrity and Student Fairness Committee is responsible for promoting an institutional culture that encourages academic ethical conduct, and ensures fair practices across schools and departments.

The teaching dynamic, which is composed of the formulated objectives, processes, methods, instruments and criteria, is confirmed by student, teacher and graduate satisfaction surveys, which are conducted twice per semester, once per semester and three times per year respectively. These surveys are reviewed with a view to their further development. Accordingly, an update of the student-centred teaching assessment plan is carried out. Their results are crucial for the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, as they are a prerequisite for improvement.

Due to the pandemic and lockdown situation the use of digital teaching and learning tools (virtual learning environments like Moodle, conference systems like Microsoft Teams) was increased. This also further strengthened the student-centred study approach.

### *Assessments of intended learning outcomes*

The syllabus of each course offered specifies what is required from the student in the course and how the student will be evaluated. The university academics implement assessment tools that are coherent with methods of teaching applied in class. Assessment tools are diversified encompassing written instruments such as exams and quizzes, verbal instruments such as oral presentations, discussions and interviews in addition to hands-on instruments like projects and portfolios.

In its self-report, MUBS highlights that the deployment of tools takes place according to pre-set assessment criteria that MUBS has long adopted according to a structured evaluation reckoner.

### *Practice-oriented study*

A link between teaching and later professional practice was highlighted by the teachers interviewed as central to their teaching approaches. As mentioned above, all disciplines have also Boards of Advisors, made up of leaders in the field who are at the same time potential employers of the graduates. These advisors may influence the academic faculty on the latest needs of the market and on curriculum changes needed to meet these needs.

MUBS has started the planning of regular surveys among graduates to collect information on their employability status and work experiences after graduation.

### *Diversity*

According to the university's mission, students, faculty and staff come from all religions and from all socio-economic strata. Special attention is given to the individual needs of students from rural locations and to those with less educational backgrounds.

Students who are financially needy may benefit from financial aid. In the current economic crisis, the university is making great efforts to keep studies affordable. Unlike other Lebanese universities, tuition fees can still be paid in Lebanese pounds.

### *Student Life Cycle*

Any potential student who contacts the Admissions Office is a prospect. Prospects turn into applicants as soon as they fill in the application form in person or online through MUBS website. Applicants then sit for a placement test in subjects related to their chosen majors. They are also informed (and encouraged to apply for) about financial aid opportunities. After all required documents are submitted, an ID is generated and access to the University Management System (UMS) and Moodle is granted in addition to generating their MUBS email.

The Student Affairs Office contacts students to collect the ID and meet their academic advisors to plan their studies. The students are also invited to an orientation session to learn about the university rules and regulations. During the students' residency at MUBS, continuous feedback is collected through course evaluation and student satisfaction surveys. Upon graduation, students are asked for an exit interview for final feedback for the sake of continuous improvement. The student remains in contact with the university through the Alumni Office afterwards.

Extracurricular activities are part of students' everyday life; they play important role in student's lives. The university sees a direct link between activities outside the classroom and the development of critical thinking skills, time management and academic competence. It is the firm belief of MUBS that participation in activities as a whole can enhance students' social development by providing a background for student interaction, relationship building and discussion. Working outside the classroom with diverse groups of people allows students to gain more confidence, independence and gratitude for the differences and similarities of others. Participation in extracurricular activities can increase feelings of engagement or connectedness with the university, thus reducing the likelihood of study failure and dropout. So, MUBS actively engages the students in a wide range of extra-curricular activities reaffirming the MUBS commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Organising seminars, workshops and inviting guest speakers are of the main activities in all MUBS schools that can create an interesting era for the course and for the session.

The Education Department at MUBS annually organises a “Reading Day” where more than 100 first grader students from public schools are hosted to read stories and sing them poems created by MUBS students. MUBS education day planned by the education department as well gives MUBS students the opportunity to display their creative projects and present their new ideas for teaching Math, Science, Arabic, and Social Sciences to more than 100 teachers, coordinators, and principals from public and private schools. The School of Health Sciences (SHS) organises a series of health awareness days at schools, municipalities in different regions of Lebanon and refugee camps in collaboration with local and global health institutions. During these events, the school health professionals supported by distinguished and well-trained students of Public Health, Nutrition, Nursing and Optometry & Vision Science provide the attendees a variety of medical services (physical and mental), free of charges.

To raise the awareness about important social and environmental issues and to contribute to sustainable development tackling different sustainable development goals, the Art & Design department provides visits to local museums, galleries and exhibition spaces through different courses. The Art & Design department participates in different exhibitions organised by the local community in collaboration with the municipalities and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

All MUBS students have the chance to be involved in research projects (data collection, data entry, intervention...) in order to improve their research capabilities.

All these activities and more are linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at MUBS webpage.<sup>28</sup>

## **Assessment**

### *Teaching and learning with a view to the university strategy*

MUBS was established to offer higher education that overcomes geographic, sectarian, political, and cultural differences in Lebanon and to reach people in rural areas and in under-served communities.

Teaching and learning is considered the central activity of the university. MUBS aims also to adjust its study programmes to the needs of the Lebanese labour market and the surrounding communities. The expert panel views positively the approaches in the field of teaching and learning, especially the use of new media.

In terms of its portfolio of study programmes, the university is well positioned given its size and opportunities. In the view of the experts the university allocates appropriate resources to teaching and learning. The staff met during the site visit was very dynamic and motivated and expressed a high commitment to MUBS. In general, the experts deem the student-staff ratio to be appropriate.

### *Student centred study system*

In the view of the experts MUBS cares for its students and shows interest in the students' success: The students' learning process is continuously observed, and problems and difficulties are dealt with in close consultation between students, student

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.mubs.edu.lb/sdg.aspx> (accessed 25 January 2022).

services and academics. It is worth to mention how the university cares even for students in financial, social and psychological straits.

MUBS generally seems to assure an appropriate and applicable workload of its study programmes. The students whom the experts could talk to explicitly appreciate the services offered by the university and report a well organised study process with flat hierarchies and a policy of open doors.

#### *Academic standards and curriculum development*

The expert panel assesses the academic standards of the study programmes as generally being met. The university has appropriate procedures for the development of study programmes. The responsibility of the programme content is up to academics, the compliance with university and national regulations and an appropriate study organisation are ensured.

However, it is incomprehensible that no uniform credit point system is used. For the experts, it seems incoherent that there are Bachelor's degree programmes with 94 credits alongside other Bachelor's degree programmes with over 100 credits. The experts do not see any technical justification.

According to the university, the content of the study programmes is based on professional and international standards and recommendations, but no programme accreditations have yet been carried out. In the view of the experts, the advisory boards and the subject expertise in each school and department most certainly provide the competence to develop study programmes of high quality, and the success of previous graduates also indicates that high-quality teaching is being carried out and that graduates have later good opportunities on the labour market. However, it seems all the more important to redesign and standardise the structures of the study programmes with a fixed number of credits in Bachelor's and in the Master's programme. The experts would recommend the European system.<sup>29</sup>

An intensive evaluation of the content of individual study programmes could not be carried out within the framework of the institutional assessment, but the impression that emerged from the on-site discussions was that there should definitely be a stronger reference to research in teaching. Practical relevance seems to be present in all programmes.

#### *Areas of improvement*

Projects related to fields of modern research should be incorporated more frequently into teaching. In accordance with the university's self-image, local communities and their requirements could be included. Transformative teaching approaches that in recent years have received much international attention may be of interest to MUBS.

Virtual international cooperation, which regularly takes place with partner universities within the framework of individual study programmes, would offer great potential for almost all subjects and could be expanded. The university may also use its existing

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<sup>29</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/levels/higher-education/inclusion-connectivity/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system#:~:text=The%20European%20Credit%20Transfer%20and%20Accumulation%20System%20\(ECTS\)%20is%20a.and%20study%20periods%20abroad%20recognised.](https://education.ec.europa.eu/levels/higher-education/inclusion-connectivity/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system#:~:text=The%20European%20Credit%20Transfer%20and%20Accumulation%20System%20(ECTS)%20is%20a.and%20study%20periods%20abroad%20recognised.) (Accessed 25 January 2022).

systems (e.g., its Moodle platform) for implementing its own exchange platform for the entire campus community (beyond Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

Interdisciplinarity between faculties and study programmes could also be increased and brought into teaching.

Accreditation of study programmes (especially in business and computing) would enhance the reputation of degrees.

### **Recommendations and condition**

MUBS must harmonize the credit structure of all study programmes against international standards like ECTS in order to achieve true international recognition of degrees.

Mobility windows for outgoings and (in the context of increased cooperation with other universities) also for incoming students should be established in all degree programmes in order to promote internationalisation. Even more opportunities of virtual exchange should be examined.

MUBS should start a university-wide discussion process to improve the connection between teaching and learning and research.

Students as well as alumni and their experiences should be formally involved into curriculum development and into the review of study programmes.

## **3.5. Research**

The criterion focuses on the research profile and academic goals of the institution and whether the profile fits the institutional strategy. Moreover, the experts check whether the academic standards are fulfilled, how the research process is organised and supported by the institution and how research is evaluated within the institution. They also check how the training of young researchers is organised, how the institution assures the academic standards of the training of young researchers and their rights.

### **Current status**

#### *Research and institutional strategies*

MUBS has declared its intensive engagement in research a core institutional value for further development and enhancement. The university has explicitly committed itself to the development of young and mid-career researchers, the development of collaborative frameworks that support the cooperation between researchers in and outside the university, and to community-based-participatory research.

A dedicated Research Office was established to build a support system for faculties and students to plan, develop, and conduct interdisciplinary research that addresses problems and needs at the regional and national levels.

In the self-report, the following research priorities for years 2021-2025 are named:

- Education in Emergencies (EiE) Research;
- Global Business and Market Research;
- Pedagogy and Learning Sciences;
- Health Promotion & Global Health;
- Rural Community Development research;

- Internationalization and Cross-Cultural Research.

The strategic plan for the next five years includes optimizing strengths and improving weaknesses, while taking into account external opportunities and challenges. The strategy also takes into account the structuring, governance, implementation of a culture of quality in research as well as the definition of priority axes in all fields. The strategic goals consist of:

1. creating a collaborative research culture, by facilitating cooperation within schools, and between schools, students, staff, industry, and national and international scholars while evaluating constantly these collaborations and their outcomes;
2. integrating research into education programmes and curriculum, supported by faculty mentors;
3. evaluating and improving the research infrastructure on the basis of innovative programmes and best practice models;
4. building a unified, coherent, and transparent research evaluation system;
5. improving the visibility of research in the institution;
6. establish the Office of Grants and Technology Transfer.

Thus, the objectives for 2021-2025 are developing a culture of research across university schools and departments, offering young scholars and researchers the opportunity to develop their research careers, involving students in research endeavors, developing sustainable national and international research collaborations and connecting the work of the National Wellness Network (NWN) to research conducted at MUBS to address the needs of local communities and design data-driven interventions.

MUBS is also preparing to start the Center for Civic Engagement that should help in research collaboration with scholars from other universities in research related to community service and volunteering.

The university is encouraging faculty members to conduct research and enrich their research profile and publications by reducing teaching load and providing incentives and bonuses among publishing.

#### *Research and promotions*

Table 4 presents the research activities at MUBS.

	Number of researchers	Research expenditure (2020)	Publications during the last 3 years
Total	19	50,000 \$	52
School of Health Sciences:	8		28
International School of Business:	4		7
School of Education and Social Work	3		3

School of Education and Social Work	3		3
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Table 4 – Research activities at MUBS

Coordination tasks and monitoring are the responsibility of the MUBS Research Committee that aims to build the research capacity and enhance the quality and quantity of academic research, and promote interdisciplinary research, and develop a culture of scientific inquiry at the university. Members of the committee are

- the Director of the Research Office
- the Provost
- a representative from the School of Health Sciences
- a representative from the School of Business
- a representative from the Department of Education
- a representative from the Department of Computer Science
- a representative from the Department of Social Work
- a representative from the Department of Art and Design

Besides, the MUBS Institutional Review Board (IRB) exists, responsible for protecting the welfare and rights of human participants in research activities being conducted under MUBS authority. The IRB provides review, approval, and oversight monitoring to ensure that all human research under the authority of MUBS is conducted ethically, in a manner that protects human subjects, and in accordance with regulations, laws, policies, and standards.

#### *Training of young researchers*

According to the self-report, research development, particularly among young researchers, is still a challenge at MUBS.

In order to address most of the gaps shown in the need assessment, a support programme of early and mid-career MUBS researchers was implemented. Training is an essential step in capacity building so the programme contains a series of activities destined to the young researchers aiming to develop the skills needed for integrating in research activities such as workshops, seminar and conferences. Launching opportunities for internal research grants as well as communicating external ones are essential actions in this program. The organisation of a “Research Café” seems to enhance the motivation of young researchers through their engagement in the process of research discussions.

MUBS does not offer Doctorate programmes. However, faculty members who hold Master degrees are assisted to pursue their doctorate studies with MUBS partner universities.

#### **Assessment**

In the view of the experts, both investment in research and research output of the university seem fairly low. This may be broadly consistent with the mission of an educational university, but it does not do justice to the aspirations of a university in the long run. However, the university has already taken important steps to improve this situation with dedicated research units and committees.

The experts acknowledge single engagement examples of the staff in research activities and its integration in the curricula through projects and during internships. Most recently, interesting approaches could be observed in joint research projects realised through online transnational courses. According to the experts, there is still a lot of potential hidden there.

As the experts experienced from the interviews with the heads of departments and with staff, the significance of the research profile of applicants in staff recruitment is obviously growing.

The university officials illustrated how researchers can work on their own projects and how the university within the limited budget supports them to carry out individual applied research. The experts appreciate that research activities of the academic staff are encouraged by the university. It could also be observed that students are encouraged to participate in research projects.

There are already approaches to generate research projects together with the local communities.

#### *Areas for improvement*

MUBS does not have PhD programmes in any field of study but cooperation agreements exist that allow individuals (in limited numbers) to do the doctorate at one of the partner universities. In the eyes of the experts, these possibilities should be increased.

More applied research projects could be implemented that address public problems: pollution, environment protection, employability etc., and could be made topics of teaching, too.

If MUBS wishes to strengthen its applied research activities, the expert team sees it indispensable to invest more resources and to raise additional research funds. International networks might help with publications, since the situation on the ground in Lebanon is of great general research interest.

#### **Recommendations and conditions**

Research activities must be intensified along the already existing strategy. The university's international networks should also be used.

MUBS should consider more incentives in order to support and enhance the research output of its academic staff. Even sabbaticals for research should be thought of.

On department level, systematic measures must be taken to identify the talents of those students to put into research and later to be promoted.

Strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to offer more postgraduate/doctorate for the young scientists. Future master programmes of MUBS should be designed as compatible with international postgraduate programmes.

### **3.6. Institution and society**

The experts check whether the strategy of the institution takes the needs of the society into account. They also examine the activities with which the institution connects to the society among others with cooperation, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, diversity. In addition, the experts review whether the activities fit the strategy.

## **Current status**

### *Considering the needs of society*

In alignment with MUBS' mission strategy, the university established the National Wellness Network (NWN) as a national effort to promote a culture of wellness among under-served communities and populations living in rural areas. Hence, MUBS works towards promoting these services and enhancing partnerships with the community, last not least carrying out community research with international and local organisations.

MUBS regularly provides ongoing guidance for experimental projects and real-world experiences that develop students and interns' leadership qualities and guarantees them successful careers. "Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan" annual training is one of the events that MUBS students get engaged and introduced to the taxation system in Lebanon and public finance issues.

MUBS main interest is to reach out to high number of members in the community and succeeded to have an impact on more than 4,500 members from activities and events of NWN. For instance, MUBS Faculty of Health conducted a health day in Beqaa District and provided people with medical care including blood tests and Covid-19 Rapid Antigen Test. NWN staff members and volunteers took the extra mile and helped make MUBS' and NWN's vision a reality by helping to deliver outstanding healthcare support to all participants in health days.

MUBS continuously works to empower community members through a number of projects to give back to the community with high hopes of setting the foundation for better communities. The Social Work department has been involved in the International Scientific Conference on Social Work on "Towards a Social Action Strategy for Intervention in Crises" and been part of the Beirut blast Support programme where family members of MUBS contributed to aiding victims and by supporting rehabilitation efforts, rebuilding infrastructure, and supplying essential items like food, clothing, and medicine to those in need.

### *Connection to civil society*

The university has developed a systemized network that connects NGOs and others with the people who need their support.

As shown in table 5, MUBS is one of the only six universities ranked in Lebanon among over 1,200 worldwide universities in Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings> (accessed 25 January 2022).

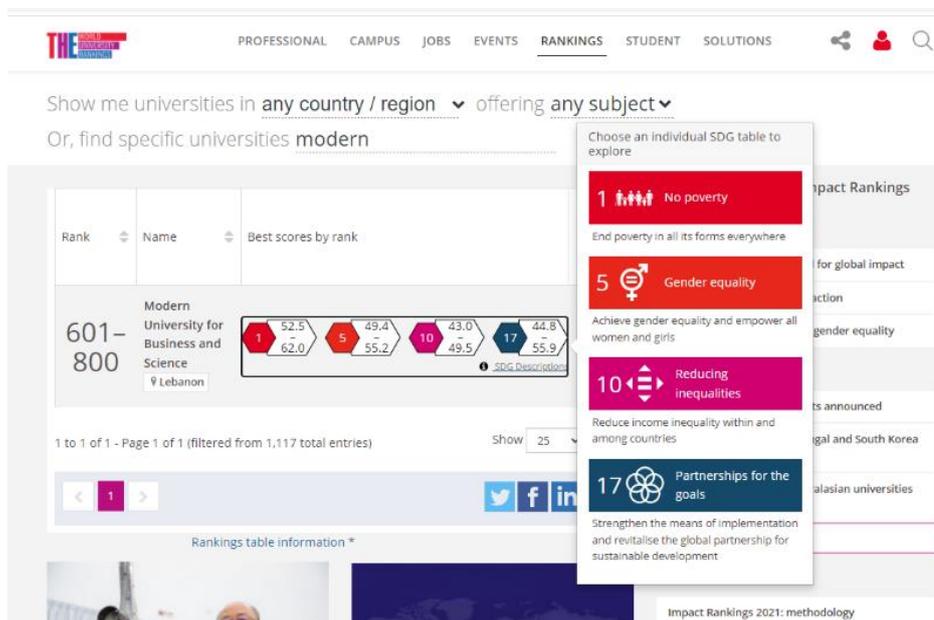


Table 5 – MUBS in the THE Impact Rankings 2021

THE Impact rankings assess the university against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).<sup>31</sup> Some examples for activities in connection with the SDG:

- To promote for “SDG 1: No Poverty”, MUBS campuses are located in rural and urban regions to ensure that all have an equal chance of completing their higher education. In 2019 and 2020, all MUBS students were granted a financial aid discount ranging between 25% and 100% summing up to a total of 3.5 million dollar. Students are offered flexible payment plans as well. Scholarship and financial aid forms are available to the public to apply to.
- To promote for “SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being”, MUBS has launched collaborations with national and international institutions such as NGOs, hospitals, universities, schools and municipalities in order to organise continuous events and projects to help protect, preserve, and promote the wellbeing, and empower community individuals to live healthier lifestyle.
- To promote for “SDG 4: Quality Education”, MUBS dedicates a significant amount of its programmes to promote education and skills development among members of the community, beyond the student body. The university offers on weekly basis opportunities for attending seminars, lectures, educational events, art exhibits, town-hall meetings, and other forms of professional and personal development. All events are announced to the public on the website and through the university’s social media channels.
- To promote for “SDG 5: Gender Equality”, MUBS follows a strict policy against discrimination in recruitment and admissions on the basis of gender and sexual orientation. Women recruitment is encouraged through women empowerment programmes in rural areas and continuous institutional research is conducted to track applications and takes action accordingly. MUBS has an explicit non-discriminatory policy to ensure that the university is a safe place for

<sup>31</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (accessed 25 January 2022).

all students irrespective of sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or cultural background. In addition, MUBS established the Equality and Sustainability (E&S) Center in October 2020 which advocates for gender mainstreaming and empowerment approaches.

During the past years, MUBS organised innovative events for high school students providing scholarships for the winner. Recently, MUBS collaborated with KIRON<sup>32</sup>, a German NGO which helps Syrian and Palestinian refugees continue their education and offered their students scholarships between 20% to 60%.

MUBS established the Student Success Office that provides supportive workshops to students for their success and development to achieve their full potential. The Academic Services Department supports students and helps them get the most out of their MUBS experience. MUBS organises charitable campaigns to donate various essential services and products. These initiatives, led by MUBS staff and students, include food, health services, clothing, medication, and training.

MUBS is also active in organising round table discussions, lectures, and seminars on different themes of societal interest.

### **Assessment**

The experts highly appreciate the strong and active affection of MUBS to its local neighbourhood as well as to Lebanese society needs. The university's mission confirms both commitment and responsibility for the society.

The self-evaluation report and the interviews during the site visit also gave proof that university executives, staff and students give high attention to the needs of society. The many activities that the university carries out together with civil society are impressive. In the view of the experts, it can be seen as great asset of MUBS to offer higher education even for societal groups that otherwise could not afford a study.

The experts also gained the impression, that academic training is closely connected to the labour market and to the communities as possible future employers.

### **Recommendations**

As mentioned above (see 3.5), the good connection to society should be used to implement more applied research projects with society that focus on problems of modern Lebanon and could become topic of teaching. Additionally, this could open doors to international researchers.

MUBS should further develop its methods and mechanisms to obtain feedback from employers, graduates and the labour market at large with the aim of obtaining more valid and measurable information.

## **3.7. Quality assurance**

The criterion focuses on the internal and external mechanisms used by the institution to monitor and improve its quality. The experts check the existing quality assurance

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<sup>32</sup> <https://kiron.ngo/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

concept of the institution, which indicators are used for monitoring the achievement of objectives and how the institution and the persons responsible for the programme systematically collect, analyse and use relevant information about their activities. Moreover, the experts examine whether quality assurance is used regularly, systematically and effectively for quality enhancement, if quality feed-back loops are closed and how the institution fosters the development of a quality culture in general.

## **Current status**

### *The quality assurance concept*

Quality assurance is seen as a central organisational task. Coordination and implementation lie with the Quality Assurance (QA) Office, which focuses on strengthening a continuous assessment and improvement process through the collection, analysis and dissemination of tactical data across academies and administration to support decision-making, policy development and strategic planning. The mission of the QA Office is to contribute towards improving the university's performance in all areas of administration and academia through policy governance, coordinating accreditation, and institutional research activities to encourage and oversee continuous assessment and improvement of the university's academic programmes and administrative services to support student learning.

The office uses valid and reliable measures to generate timely and accurate data and analyses, practicing its activities in an ethical, co-operative, and collaborative manner.

The functions of the QA Office involve a full range of performance analyses, which are fully incorporated into MUBS's ongoing review and planning activities. These functions are:

- Strategic planning: Monitoring and reviewing performance against targets through assisting all departments in identifying their expected outcomes and the strategic objectives of the university;
- Planning: Feasibility and viability analyses for academic programmes and non-academic projects;
- Policies and procedures: Maintaining the official policies and procedures of the University. This includes updating all changes to policies and procedures, and systematically reviewing policies for consistency, completeness, and continuity. The office addresses practices, policies, and procedures that ensure students' engagement and learning, students' success and graduation, and post graduate employment. All policies are published on the MUBS website.<sup>33</sup>
- Survey research: Data and interpretations are collected from students, staff, alumni and employers and analysed for developing planning reports and monitoring quality;
- Enrolment analysis: The QA Office is responsible to analyse student admissions, enrolments, progression, retention rates and graduation rates. These datasets are used for monitoring the functioning of MUBS as well as for future planning of facilities and faculties;
- Benchmarking: The QA Office conducts studies to develop and compare MUBS performance with educational institutions through benchmarking;

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.mubs.edu.lb/policies.aspx> (accessed 25 January 2022).

- Auditing: Internal auditing activities include planning the scope and scheduling of the audit project, review and reporting, follow-up verification of responses given and successful implementation of corrective actions;
- Accreditation: The QA Office is the institutional coordinator for documentation related to licensure and accreditation;
- Subject/instructor evaluations: The QA Office is responsible for enhancing the implementation of appropriate learning and teaching methodologies suitable for each programme. Designing and updating the evaluation and assessment methods appropriate for each category of programmes and verifying all development plans. Ensuring that all existing and planned curricula meet the required standards and have well defined outcomes. Students evaluate every subject and instructor each semester at MUBS.
- Ongoing feedback: The QA Office maintains a continuous feedback opportunity to MUBS students, staff, and visitors through standardised comment forms. These are collected regularly and forwarded to the relevant deans or managers. The QA Office tracks all actions related to the comment and subsequent action.
- Miscellaneous projects: Short-term projects conducted in cooperation with faculties and departments. The Dean of the QA Office develops the designs of these projects with the relevant executive, director, dean, or manager, to ensure that valid and reliable studies are conducted in an accessible and useful manner to the user.

#### *Indicators and collection of information*

The quality assurance and review procedures at MUBS mainly look at the academic, academic support and administration units including:

- Assessment of teaching quality
- Assessment of student learning
- Academic program review
- Evaluation of instructional equipment and facilities
- Evaluation of library and electronic information resources
- Evaluation of academic support services
- Evaluation of student services
- Evaluation of administrative units
- Evaluation of research activities

The QA procedure mainly includes the following steps:

1. Collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data;
2. Discussion and agreement upon changes for improvement;
3. Recommended changes forwarded for action by appropriate bodies;
4. Approved changes included in updated unit operational plans and proposed annual operational budgets;
5. Updated unit operational plans reviewed and acted upon; approved plans incorporated into updated institutional plan;
6. Unit's Annual Budgets reviewed & acted upon, Approved Budgets Incorporated into Annual Institutional Operating Budget

7. Authorisation to units to implement the changes for improvement included in updated unit operational plans and approved unit annual operating budgets.

The quality assurance review key performance indicators (KPIs) are presented below in table 6:

<b>Academic, Academic Support, and Administrative Units Review</b>	<b>Quality Assurance KPIs</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of teaching quality</li> <li>• Assessment of student learning</li> <li>• Academic program review</li> <li>• Evaluation of Instructional equipment and facilities</li> <li>• Evaluation of library and electronic information resources</li> <li>• Evaluation of academic support services</li> <li>• Evaluation of student services</li> <li>• Evaluation of administrative units</li> <li>• Evaluation of research activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student Success: Recruit, Retain, Graduate the Best Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospects inquiries</li> <li>• Prospects applications</li> <li>• Prospects enrolled</li> <li>• Retention rate</li> <li>• Graduation rate</li> </ul>	<p><b>Provide Quality Academic Programmes and Support Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty/course evaluation results</li> <li>• Students' institutional satisfaction survey results</li> <li>• Student participation in study abroad programmes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attract and Retain Outstanding Faculty/Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average faculty salary and benefits</li> <li>• Faculty satisfaction survey results</li> <li>• Staff satisfaction survey results</li> <li>• Number of endowed chairs and professorships</li> <li>• Staff turnover rate</li> </ul>

Table 6 – Key performance indicators (Source: self-report p. 38)

The QA Office contributes to the Institutional Strategic Plan through a QA strategy that is updated every five years and includes specific goals, objectives, and actions that are monitored with specific indicators. The QA strategy for 2021-2125 includes seven main goals:

- to coordinate and prepare international accreditations on school and institutional level;
- to ensure alignment of institutional policies and procedures in schools and departments to harmonize the institutional effectiveness;

- to identify gaps in data, to establish procedures to maintain quality of data, and to ensure the proper use of knowledge and internal/external assessment data.
- to enhance the implementation of appropriate learning and teaching methodologies suitable for each programme;
- to include MUBS within world ranking bodies;
- to support the institutional strategy in strengthening research among faculty and students;
- to establish new centres to support the institutional strategy in developing a culture of civic engagement volunteerism, wellness, and continuing education.

The goals are to be achieved through specific objectives and actions within a timeline and measured through key performance indicators.

#### *Systematic analysis, and closing feedback loops*

The quality assurance at MUBS is maintained through a continuous process of planning, assessment and improvement. The quality assurance review process is annual and takes place on June of every year. MUBS develops and maintains processes for the collection and analysis of evidence to verify congruence between its mission and goals, and the outcomes of its institutional/programme research, academic planning and budgeting activities. The strategic planning and operations of MUBS are based on these processes.

MUBS also utilizes the information from the quality system to provide documentary evidence to support assertions of quality made in its self-study and other communications made with its associate universities, Ministry of Education and Higher Education and other external bodies.

The measurement of institutional effectiveness within MUBS encompasses a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques. These techniques are not utilized in isolation but rather are an integral part of relevant frameworks, procedures and activities. Inputs used to measure institutional effectiveness include:

- a. Student, staff and external stakeholder questionnaires including alumni and job market representatives
- b. Key performance indicators
- c. Feedback comments from stakeholders, including inputs at relevant committee and advisory group meetings
- d. Implementation and training

The quality assurance review cycle includes a periodic collection of the following reports and surveys:

- Admissions report: per semester
- Registrar report: per semester
- Student affairs report: per semester
- Student Affairs Office: annual updated alumni data report
- Course/instructor evaluation: twice each semester
- Student annual institutional satisfaction survey
- Faculty satisfaction survey: per semester
- Staff satisfaction annual survey
- QA review process

- QA assessment committee meeting for corrective actions
- Faculty appraisals and promotions: per semester
- Annual staff appraisal
- Institutional research

The collection of the above reports and surveys is done in coordination with the QA Office and the Institutional Research department. The Institutional Research department operates under the Office of the Provost. It provides the university executives, academics and staff with insight on the university performance across various levels such as students' recruitment, academic achievement, support and success. It carries out research of both quantitative and qualitative nature serving this purpose. The Institutional Research department is central to gathering institutional information. It liaises practically with all the university departments. It collaborates with the university departments' managers over the design of data collection, the methodology of collection, the analysis of data and presentation. The Institutional Research department recommends actions to executives and managers for improvement purposes based on results.

To close QA feedback loops, the Quality Assurance Committee<sup>34</sup> supports the Quality Assurance department to take corrective actions where areas of improvement exist based on the QA review process for the sake of continuous improvement. Any recommendation for policy amendments and introduction of new policies made by the Committee is raised to the University Council for review, and, if approved, are to be raised for approval to the Board of Trustees at the university.

#### *University quality culture*

To foster the development of a quality culture, MUBS departments have reviewed all policies, procedure, forms, rules, and regulation during the first five months of 2021. The institutional vision, mission, and strategy are cascaded to all the academic and administrative departments at the institution. Everything is documented in updated handbooks, guides, and manuals.

In addition, prior to the start of each semester, the QA Office supervises the review of policies, procedures, and handbooks done by the head and team of each department. After that, the dean of QA and the head of the department conduct a workshop to reinforce these policies, procedures, and internal operations documented in the handbook. During these workshops, any updates about the reporting system and the appraisal system are shared and discussed.

To monitor quality assurance within daily operations within each department and take corrective actions of any gaps, the QA office developed a QA monitoring process. This process helps to avoid any gaps, problems, or barriers within all the academic and administrative departments through reporting the problems to the Quality Assurance department. Investigation about these problems, and taking corrective actions should help in reducing them. This also applies to any area of improvement that may lead to updates in policies, guides, or handbooks.

#### **Assessment**

The experts observe a well-developed quality assurance system supported by a wide range of policies, guidelines and formal processes. Without a doubt, the university

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<sup>34</sup> MUBS Quality Assurance Committee includes members from all schools and main administrative departments

attaches great importance to institutional effectiveness. Efforts are also made to monitor the teaching area comprehensively (with surveys, polls, regular SWOT analyses) and the findings from this are also incorporated into teaching.

In the experts' view, responsibilities of teachers, department, faculty and administration are clear, and the quality assurance instruments, which are currently in place, seem to be broadly accepted and implemented. The QA Office works efficiently and closely with the university management. In the discussions with teachers and administration, a broad acceptance for the QA activities was evident, and the trusting cooperation was emphasised several times.

Assessment criteria and indicators are clearly defined, some of them most recently.

However, the experts cannot confirm that all rules and regulations for each department have already been implemented in clear guidelines and lived procedures. Here, the university rather gives the impression of still being in the middle of the implementation process. As mentioned above, visualizations would further promote this.

Besides, students have no clearly identifiable active role, apart from the surveys and polls. It remains unclear whether they really receive feedback on their contributions. No student the experts talked to could really name what has already been taken up and implemented by the university based on a suggestion from the student body. The feedback loops should therefore still be worked on.

### **Recommendations**

MUBS should further proceed in its continuous quality improvement.

Feedback loops with students must be closed.

Students should be given a more active part in the QA process.

## **4. Final assessment**

### *Overall assessment*

During the site visit the expert panel experienced a university community with a strong social mission and emphasis on social responsibility and progress. Despite the current crisis in Lebanon, all individuals the experts were able to talk turned out to be enthusiastic members of an institution that aims to contribute to social progress through education. All university staff is committed to this mission.

The expert panel enjoyed two days of open discussion, and they would like to thank the organisers of the visit schedule for the good atmosphere and all the opportunities for additional questions.

MUBS's multicultural and tolerant educational approach addresses all factions of the Lebanese society and opens up study possibilities even to students in rural areas and to those who suffer educational disadvantages. This can certainly be seen as a unique selling point of the university. The experts highly appreciate the strong and active affection of MUBS to its local neighbourhood as well as to Lebanese society needs. The university's mission confirms both commitment and responsibility for the society. However, the core areas of a university – teaching and research on a high level – must be further developed. The expert panel assesses the academic standards of the study programmes as generally being met. The university has appropriate procedures for the development of study programmes. The responsibility of the programme content is up

to academics, the compliance with university and national regulations and an appropriate study organisation are ensured. However, it is incomprehensible that no uniform credit point system is used. The experts urge that MUBS must harmonize the credit structure of all study programmes against international standards like ECTS in order to achieve true international recognition of degrees.

Students as well as alumni and their experiences should be formally involved into curriculum development and into the review of study programmes. Projects related to fields of modern research should be incorporated more frequently into teaching. In accordance with the university's self-image, local communities and their requirements could be included.

In the view of the experts MUBS cares for its students and shows interest in the students' success: The students' learning process is continuously observed, and problems and difficulties are dealt with in close consultation between students, student services and academics. It is worth to mention how the university cares even for students in financial, social and psychological straits. The interviewed students explicitly appreciated the services offered by the university and report a well organised study process with flat hierarchies and a policy of open doors.

The staff of the university seems appropriate to provide high quality education to its students. The university's procedures for recruiting and later continuous training and developing staff seem appropriate and fulfil academic standards: The selection of academics is always based on an academic decision that is justified and documented in a standardised manner. Even more attention should be paid to recruiting and developing good researchers. In the view of the experts, both investment in research and research output of the university seem fairly low. This may be broadly consistent with the mission of an educational university, but it does not do justice to the aspirations of a university in the long run. Research activities must be intensified along the already existing strategy. MUBS should consider more incentives in order to support and enhance the research output of its academic staff. Even sabbaticals for research should be thought of.

MUBS does not have PhD programmes in any field of study but cooperation agreements exist that allow individuals (in limited numbers) to do the doctorate at one of the partner universities. These strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to the benefit of young scientists. Future master programmes of MUBS should be designed as compatible with international postgraduate programmes.

Mobility windows for outgoings and (in the context of increased cooperation with other universities) also for incoming students should be established in all degree programmes in order to promote internationalisation. The opportunities of virtual exchange should also be further enhanced: Impressive examples were presented during the site-visit that would be worth to be implemented in all schools.

The governance structures of MUBS are clearly structured and documented. The responsibilities and procedures of the main university bodies are described in the constitution and in the bylaws, governance procedures appear well thought out and applicable.

The financial management of the university appears as professional. The expert panel appreciates MUBS's general policy to keep the tuition fees even in the current crisis on a reasonable level and to spend a significant amount on student financial aid.

The facilities of the university appear appropriate for sustaining the activities of the university. The buildings are in good condition, as are the classrooms. There is a need for renovation in some places. And the experts note that MUBS must enhance its libraries.

Students with disabilities face insurmountable obstacles at all universities visited. This is mainly due to the basic building structure, which can only be converted to be barrier-free with great effort. Not least in view of its own claim to provide higher education to disadvantaged groups in particular, the university must act urgently implement a concept to create barrier-free accessibility for future handicapped students.

The experts observe a well-developed quality assurance system supported by a wide range of policies, guidelines and formal processes. The university attaches great importance to institutional effectiveness. The QA Office works efficiently and closely with the university management and is broadly accepted, assessment criteria and indicators are clearly defined.

Due to an extensive revision process of almost all specifications and guidelines as well as a readjustment of processes, many of the procedures are still considered new or have not yet firmly established themselves in the consciousness.

Besides, students have no clearly identifiable active role, apart from the surveys and polls. It remains unclear whether they really receive feedback on their contributions. No student the experts talked to could really name what has already been taken up and implemented by the university based on a suggestion from the student body. The feedback loops should therefore still be worked on – but all this is nothing that cannot be solved in the foreseeable future.

All in all, the team of experts sees MUBS well positioned for the future.

#### Assessment levels

Level	Assessment	Description
A	<b>Passed.</b>	The institution fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the profile and objectives of the institution and provided at a high academic level.
B	<b>Passed subject to conditions</b>	The institution does not fulfil some relevant criteria. However, the institution should be able to remedy the shortcomings <b>within nine months</b> after the assessment.
C	<b>Suspension of the accreditation procedure</b>	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely, that it will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment. The HEI may apply for a resumption of the accreditation procedure.
D	<b>Failed</b>	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria, and is not expected to be able to meet all assessment criteria within 18 months' time.

#### Assessment grades

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
1	Institutional profile and strategy	A

2	Governance <i>Conditions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All published documents on governance – the constitution, the university bylaws, policies, etc. – must be regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date.</li> <li>The translation of policies into concrete actions and processes must be intensified and visualized.</li> </ul>	B
3	Resources <i>Conditions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The university must ensure that it adequately cares for students with special needs and makes provisions in case further such situations arise. Initial measures must be taken to create barrier-free accessibility, with the aim of enabling disabled people to study at all locations in the medium term, at least at one location in short term.</li> <li>MUBS must enhance its libraries and increase the possibilities for students and staff of using international electronic libraries from home as well.</li> </ul>	B
4	Teaching and Learning <i>Condition:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MUBS must harmonize the credit structure of all study programmes against international standards like ECTS in order to achieve true international recognition of degrees.</li> </ul>	B
5	Research <i>Conditions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research activities must be intensified along the already existing strategy. The university's international networks should also be used.</li> <li>On department level, systematic measures must be taken to identify the talents of those students to put into research and later to be promoted.</li> </ul>	B
6	Institution and Society	A
7	Quality assurance <i>Condition:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback loops with students must be closed.</li> </ul>	B

## 5. Accreditation recommendation of the expert panel to the evalag Accreditation Commission

According to the expert team, the Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) meets **evalag**'s criteria for institutional accreditation. Therefore, the team recommends MUBS for accreditation and recommends awarding the **evalag** label for institutional accreditation.

The team recommends MUBS to consider and implement the following conditions (C) and recommendations (R) to further improve the university:

### **Institutional profile and strategy**

- R 1** The SWOT analyses that are carried out in the course of the five-year planning should be expanded and become general components of the university planning processes.
- R 2** Students should become a more active part in the planning processes, in addition to their already existing representation in the University Council, for example by presenting and discussing intended plans at specially convened student assemblies.
- R 3** The university should give every student the guaranteed right and equal opportunity to be elected (by all students) and to participate in the work of governing bodies, including the board of trustees and faculty councils.

### **Governance**

- R 4** MUBS should proceed further in its continuing efforts to improve modern governance structures and procedures.
- C 1** All published documents on governance – the constitution, the university by-laws, policies, etc. – must be regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date.
- C 2** The translation of policies into concrete actions and processes must be intensified and visualized.
- R 5** The students, who according to the documents are already represented in all committees, should also be formally involved in the annual planning processes.
- R 6** When filling the advisory boards and councils, all university groups including students should have the right to propose.

### **Resources**

- C 3** The university must ensure that it adequately cares for students with special needs and makes provisions in case further such situations arise. Initial measures must be taken to create barrier-free accessibility, with the aim of enabling disabled people to study at all locations in the medium term, at least at one location in short term.
- C 4** MUBS must enhance its libraries and increase the possibilities for students and staff of using international electronic libraries from home as well.
- R 7** MUBS should subscribe to academic databases for its current study programmes and work closely with academic staff to promote their use by students.
- R 8** The university should establish more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses. Overall, the number of work spaces permanent available should meet at least 13% of the number of students

### **Teaching and learning**

- C 5** MUBS must harmonize the credit structure of all study programmes against international standards like ECTS in order to achieve true international recognition of degrees.

- R 9** Mobility windows for outgoings and (in the context of increased cooperation with other universities) also for incoming students should be established in all degree programmes in order to promote internationalisation. Even more opportunities of virtual exchange should be examined.
- R 10** MUBS should start a university-wide discussion process to improve the connection between teaching and learning and research.
- R 11** Students as well as alumni and their experiences should be formally involved into curriculum development and into the review of study programmes.

### **Research**

- C 6** Research activities must be intensified along the already existing strategy. The university's international networks should also be used.
- R 12** MUBS should consider more incentives in order to support and enhance the research output of its academic staff. Even sabbaticals for research should be thought of.
- C 7** On department level, systematic measures must be taken to identify the talents of those students to put into research and later to be promoted.
- R 13** Strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to offer more postgraduate/doctorate for the young scientists. Future master programmes of MUBS should be designed as compatible with international post-graduate programmes.

### **Institution and society**

- R 14** The good connection to society should be used to implement more applied research projects with society that focus on problems of modern Lebanon and could become topic of teaching. Additionally, this could open doors to international researchers.
- R 15** MUBS should further develop its methods and mechanisms to obtain feedback from employers, graduates and the labour market at large with the aim of obtaining more valid and measurable information.

### **Quality assurance**

- R 16** MUBS should further proceed in its continuous quality improvement.
- C 8** Feedback loops with students must be closed.
- R 17** Students should be given a more active part in the QA process.

## 6. Statement of MUBS to the assessment report

On 15 March 2022, MUBS submitted a statement to the recommendations and conditions set in the report:

### Statement to EVALAG Accreditation Commission

Based on the conditions and recommendations stated by **evalag** experts panel, MUBS will work on the following points within a timeframe of nine months:

- ❖ Institutional Profile and Strategy:
  - Apply Student Presentation in Boards and Committees:
    - Students/Alumni selection is based on the selection procedure within the policy.
    - Invite students' representative in the University Council to the Strategic Planning follow up meetings conducted every semester.
    - Invite students' representative to every Board, committee, and council meeting within the academic and administrative department and following the policy for each board, committee, or council.
  - Emphasize on the core activity of the University: Teaching and Research:
    - Study programs and research to be more related to the labour market needs in Lebanon and the region
    - Improve research skills among faculty to encourage for more publications
  - SWOT Analysis to be conducted every year with the review of Strategies and following the Strategic Planning Policy
- ❖ Governance
  - Organizational Chart updated on Website (new Organizational Chart attached)
  - Implementation of all new policies and procedures
  - Simplified graphical representations of processes and procedures
  - Management structures and processes to be further developed so that they function more independently of individuals and thus mitigate risks
  - Advisory boards as a practical model to connect studies with the needs of the labour market and to be communicated more strongly to the public
  - Include more academics in the Board of Trustees to strengthen the connection to the academic world and also raise the status of research
  - All published documents on governance – the constitution, the university by-laws, policies, etc. – to be regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date
  - Translation of policies into concrete actions and processes
- ❖ Resources
  - The library committee to help build better libraries and to ensure the best use of library resources.
  - The university to promote the existing databases for both students and alumni to use in teaching and learning. Ensure that access for students and teachers also works from home.
  - The university management is planning the renovation of all physical spaces namely the auditorium, catering, classes, computer labs, conference rooms, copy centres, laboratories and libraries.

- The university to consider becoming part of the eduroam network as an important contribution to internationalisation, both with regard to the university's own members and to international guests.
- The university to work on establishing more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses to meet at least 13% of the number of students.
- Change the external appearance of campus buildings and campus areas towards more greenery.
- Work on additional sources of funding beside students' tuition fees
- Increase the number of full time academic staff
- The university to make further efforts to increase the level of mobility, especially for longer periods abroad.
- The basic building structure will be converted to be barrier-free that would have great impact on diversity, inclusion and equity. In view of providing higher education to disadvantaged groups in particular, the university will act to ensure accessibility at least on the main campus.

#### ❖ Teaching and Learning

- A more detailed description of the modules required for each degree programme to be posted on the university's website.
- Unify the total number of credits required for a degree across all schools at the Bachelor and the Master levels, the European system to be considered. Harmonize the credit structure of all study programmes against international standards like ECTS in order to achieve true international recognition of degrees.
- Have a stronger reference to research in teaching. Projects related to fields of modern research to be incorporated more frequently into teaching. In accordance with the university's self-image, local communities and their requirements will be included for transformative teaching. Start a university-wide discussion process to improve the connection between teaching and learning and research.
- Interdisciplinarity between faculties and study programmes to be increased and brought into teaching.
- Accreditation of study programmes (especially in business and computing) to enhance the reputation of degrees.
- Mobility windows for outgoings and (in the context of increased cooperation with other universities) also for incoming students to be increased in all degree programmes in order to promote internationalisation. Even more opportunities of virtual exchange to be examined.
- Students as well as alumni and their experiences to be formally involved into curriculum development and into the review of study programmes.

#### ❖ Research

- Development of:
  - Research career of young and mid-career researchers.
  - Collaborative frameworks that support the cooperation between researchers in and outside the university at the national and international levels.
  - Community-based-participatory research.
- Involving students in research endeavors.
- Connect the work of the National Wellness Network (NWN) to research conducted at MUBS to address the needs of local communities and design data-driven interventions.
- Encourage faculty members to conduct research and enrich their research profile and publications by reducing teaching load and providing incentives and bonuses among publishing.

- Training young researchers aiming to develop the skills needed for integrating in research activities such as workshops, seminar and conferences.
  - Cooperation agreements that allow faculty members to do the doctorate at one of the partner universities.
  - More applied research projects to be implemented that address public problems: pollution, environment protection, employability etc., and could be made topics of teaching, too.
  - Attract international research funds to help with publications since the situation on the ground in Lebanon is of great general research interest.
  - Design further master programmes compatible with international postgraduate programmes.
  - On department level, systematic measures must be taken to identify the talents of those students to put into research and later to be promoted.
- ❖ Institution and Society
- More applied research projects with society that focus on problems of modern Lebanon and could become topics of teaching with the possibility of collaboration with international researchers.
  - Develop methods and mechanisms to obtain feedback from employers, graduates and the labour market at large with the aim of obtaining more valid and measurable information.
- ❖ Quality Assurance
- Regular, systematic, and effective use of quality assurance for quality enhancement to foster the development of a quality culture in general.
  - All rules and regulations for each department to be implemented in clear guidelines and lived procedures.
  - Work on closing feedback loops from students:
    - Identifiable active role of students, apart from the surveys and polls, in the quality assurance process
    - Students to receive feedback on their contributions
    - Update students on quality assurance implementation processes

## 7. Accreditation decision of the evalag Accreditation Commission

### 7.1. Decision

The **evalag** Accreditation Commission appreciates that MUBS has already started implementing the recommendations and conditions given by the panel.

In its meeting on 22 March 2022, the Commission unanimously decides to accredit the Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) with the conditions (C) and recommendations (R) mentioned in Chapter 5.

### 7.2. Compliance with the conditions

The Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) submitted a detailed report on the fulfilment of the set conditions in due time.

In its meeting on 24 March 2023, the **evalag** Accreditation Commission decides unanimously that the conditions C1, C2, C3, C4, C6 and C7, which were initially set during the institutional accreditation of the Modern University for Business and Science, are to be regarded as fulfilled.

The **evalag** Accreditation Commission acknowledges the progress MUBS has made and encourages the university in its further efforts.

The conditions C5 and C8 remain in place; the university is requested to report again in one year on its activities on these issues.

In its meeting on 22 March 2024, the **evalag** Accreditation Commission decides unanimously that the conditions C5 and C8 are to be regarded as fulfilled.

## Annex: Site visit schedule

### Monday, 6 December 2021

09:30am – 10:30am	Welcome meeting with leadership and quality management
10:30am – 11:00am	Damour Campus tour
11:00am – 11:30am	Transport to Semqanieh Campus
11:30am – 12:30pm	Welcome meeting in Semqanieh Campus
12:30pm – 01:30pm	Semqanieh Campus Tour

### Tuesday, 7 December 2021

09:30am – 10:00am	Internal online meeting of expert panel
10:00am – 11:30am	Meeting with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• University President</li><li>• Provost</li><li>• Vice President</li><li>• Directors and deans ....</li><li>• Member(s) of University Council</li></ul>
11:30am – 11:45am	Expert panel's internal review / short break
11:45am – 12:45pm	Meeting with the heads of schools and deans
12:45pm – 03:00pm	Expert panel's internal review / lunch break
03:00pm – 04:00pm	Meeting with teachers (full-time & part-time)
04:00pm – 05:00pm	Meeting with students and alumni
05:00pm – 06:30pm	Expert panel's internal review

### Wednesday, 8 December 2021

09:30am – 10:00am	Internal online meeting of expert panel
10:00am – 11:00am	Meeting with employers, members of the local community
11:00am – 11:15am	Expert panel's internal review / short break
11:15am – 12:00pm	Meeting with academic support units: registrar, library management, laboratory management, student services
12:00pm – 01:00pm	Meeting with quality management
01:00pm – 04:00pm	Expert panel's internal review / lunch break
04:00 pm – 04:45 pm	Closing meeting with representatives of MUBS