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Commission

Overview of the Higher Education System

Lebanon



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Erasmus+

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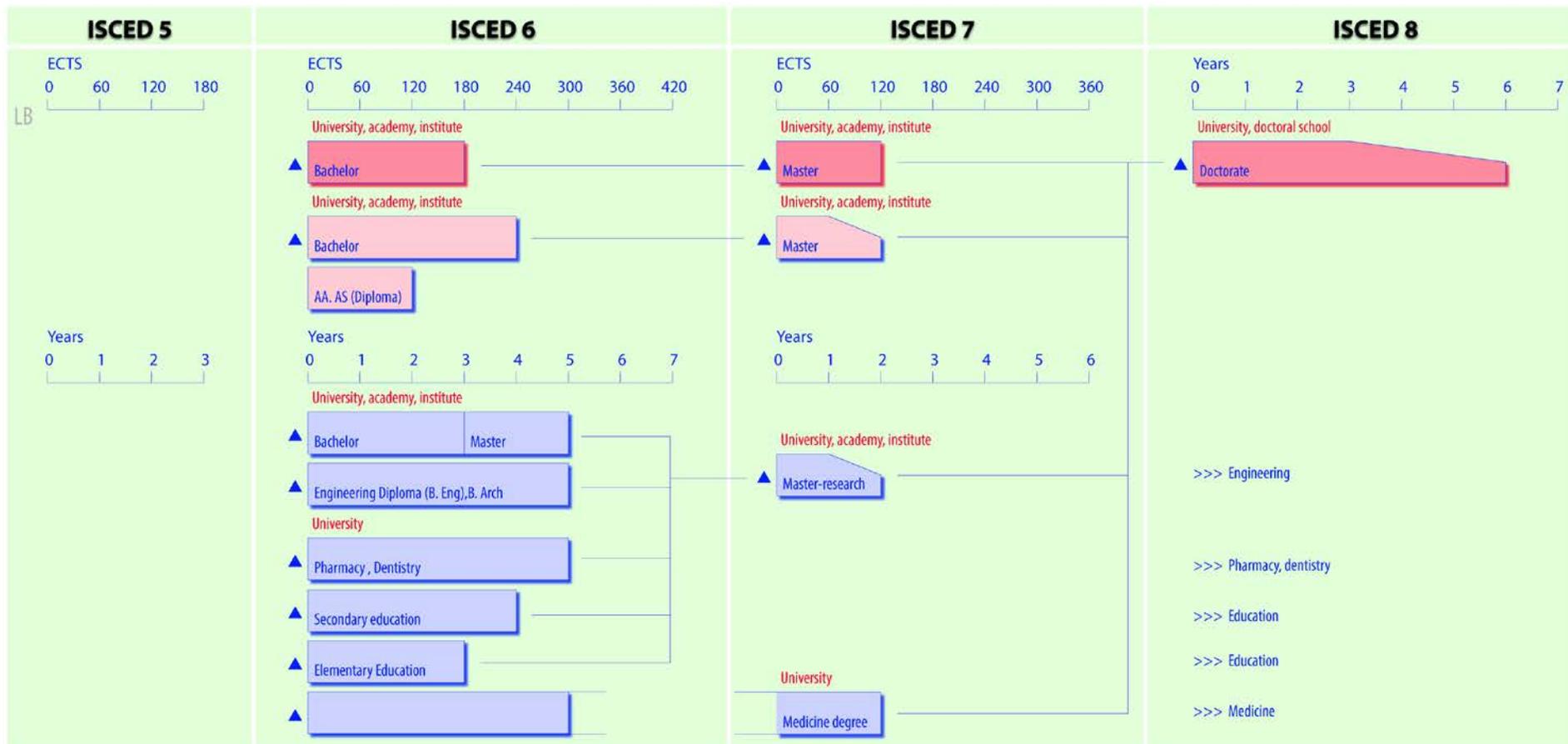
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The higher education system in Lebanon



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Professional programme

- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme non Bologna

ECTS:
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

		regulated at national level	decided at institutional level
All	programmes have admission requirements	▼	▲
SOME		▽	△

Table of Contents

1	OVERVIEW.....	1
1.1	Fundamental Principles and National Policies.....	1
1.2	Lifelong Learning Strategy.....	1
1.3	Organisation of Private Education.....	2
1.4	National Qualifications Framework.....	2
1.5	Statistics on Organisation and Governance.....	3
1.6	Distribution of responsibilities.....	3
2	HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING.....	4
2.1	Public Education.....	4
2.1.1	Financial Autonomy and Control.....	4
2.1.2	Fees within Public Higher Education.....	4
2.2	Private Education.....	5
2.2.1	Financial Autonomy and Control.....	5
2.2.2	Fees within Private Higher Education.....	6
2.3	Financial Support for Learners' Families.....	6
2.4	Financial Support for Learners.....	6
3	THE STRUCTURE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	7
3.1	Types of Higher Education Institutions.....	9
3.2	First Cycle Programmes.....	9
3.2.1	Branches of Study.....	9
3.2.2	Admission Requirements.....	9
3.2.3	Curriculum.....	10
3.2.4	Teaching Methods.....	10
3.2.5	Progression of Students.....	11
3.2.6	Employability.....	11
3.2.7	Student Assessment.....	11
3.2.8	Certification.....	12
3.3	Short-Cycle Higher Education.....	12
3.3.1	Branches of Study.....	12
3.3.2	Admission Requirements.....	12
3.3.3	Curriculum.....	12
3.3.4	Teaching Methods.....	12
3.3.5	Progression of Students.....	12
3.3.6	Employability.....	12
3.3.7	Student Assessment.....	13
3.3.8	Certification.....	13
3.4	Second Cycle Programmes.....	13
3.4.1	Branches of Study.....	13
3.4.2	Admission Requirements.....	13
3.4.3	Curriculum.....	13
3.4.4	Teaching Methods.....	13
3.4.5	Progression of Students.....	13
3.4.6	Employability.....	13
3.4.7	Student Assessment.....	13

3.4.8	Certification	14
3.5	Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure.....	14
3.6	Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes.....	14
3.6.1	Organisation of Doctoral Studies	14
3.6.2	Admission Requirements	15
3.6.3	Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates.....	15
3.6.4	Supervision Arrangements	15
3.6.5	Employability.....	15
3.6.6	Assessment	16
3.6.7	Certification	16
4	TEACHERS AND EDUCATION STAFF	16
4.1	Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education.....	16
4.2	Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education.....	16
4.2.1	Planning Policy	17
4.2.2	Entry to the Profession.....	17
4.2.3	Professional Status	17
4.2.4	Salaries	18
4.2.5	Working Time and Holidays.....	18
4.2.6	Promotion, Advancement	18
4.2.7	Retirement and Pensions	18
4.3	Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education	19
4.3.1	Organisational Aspects.....	19
4.3.2	Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities.....	19
5	MANAGEMENT AND OTHER EDUCATION STAFF FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.....	19
5.1	Requirements for Appointment	19
5.2	Conditions of Service	21
6	QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION	21
6.1	Responsible Bodies	21
6.2	Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance	21
7	EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE	22
7.1	Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education.....	22
7.1.1	Definition of the Target Group(s)	22
7.1.2	Specific Support Measures	22
7.2	Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education	23
7.2.1	Academic Guidance.....	23
7.2.2	Psychological Counselling.....	23
7.2.3	Career Guidance.....	23
8	MOBILITY AND INTERNALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION	23
8.1	Student Mobility.....	24
8.2	Academic Staff Mobility.....	25
8.3	Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education	25
8.3.1	European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development.....	25
8.3.2	Partnerships and Networks.....	26
8.4	Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation	26

8.4.1	Bilateral Agreements.....	26
8.4.2	Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations	26
9	ON-GOING REFORMS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS.....	26
9.1	Overall national education strategy and key objectives.....	26
9.2	Overview of the education reform process and drivers	27
9.3	National reforms in Higher Education	27
9.3.1	2015	27
9.3.2	2014	27
9.3.3	2013	27
10	LEGISLATION	28

1 Overview

The Republic of Lebanon, “Al Joumhouria al lubnaniah” or simply Lubnān as pronounced in Arabic, is one of the 4 countries spanning the East coast of the Mediterranean. Its area of approximately 10 452 km² is a combination of mountains and a narrow coastal strip stretching along 225 km on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

It has a population of nearly 4.5 million¹ and 95% of them are Arabs; the country has other ethnic groups like Armenians, Kurds and others. In 2015, the population was estimated to over 6 million as the country received 1.2 million Syrian refugees added to the 450 000 Palestinians already living in the country.

The official language in Lebanon is Arabic. However, commonly spoken languages include English and French besides Lebanese Arabic. The minority languages mainly spoken among their respective populations are Armenian, Kurdish, Greek, but many others are present.

In Lebanon, there are 18 recognised religious communities. Lebanese population is distributed as Muslim 54% (27% Sunni, 27% Shia), Christian 40.5% (includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, 6.5% other Christian), Druze 5.6%, and other minorities in very small numbers.

Lebanon’s economy is mainly based on services (banking, tourism, healthcare, higher education, media), wine production and transformational light industries.

The annual GDP growth in Lebanon was estimated at 2.0% in 2014, rising from an estimated 0.9% in 2013, while the Lebanese GDP at market prices has been US \$45.73 billion in 2014 according to the World Bank. The government expenditure on education has been 2.6% of the GDP in 2013.

Public finances are structurally weak, impacted by the current Syrian crisis and in urgent need of reforms. Public debt as a ratio of GDP continued to rise (to 145.6% of GDP at the end of 2014), due to the slow growth and a relatively high cost of debt financing.²

1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

The freedom of Lebanese Higher Education is guaranteed by the Constitution. According to the Article 10, chapter 2 of the Lebanese Constitution, “Education shall be free” and every religious community has the right to have its own schools or universities.

As far as private Higher Education is concerned, up to 2014 the sector had been governed by a law which dated back to 1960. A new law regulating the Lebanese private Higher Education sector was adopted by the Parliament on 30 April 2014 and it is now in the implementation phase. The sector is supervised by the **Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE)** in the **Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)**.

The public Higher Education sector, represented by only one Higher Education institution named the “Lebanese University” (**LU**), is governed by its own law, decrees and bylaws under the tutorship of the MEHE and enjoys a high degree of independence and autonomy.

1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

In Lebanon, there is no real policy addressing lifelong learning neither as part of the national strategy nor

¹ <http://countrymeters.info/en/Lebanon>

² The World Bank, September 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

in its subsequent action plans.

However, many private Higher Education institutions, particularly those following an American style of education, have engaged LLL initiatives in their settings or in their curricula. Some have clearly underlined LLL in their mission statement. In 1993, a Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) was established as a division of Haigazian University. Through their respective Continuing Education Programme and Division of Continuing Education, the Lebanese American University and the Notre Dame University have been involved as partners in a Tempus project called EU-MILL (Euro-Mediterranean Integration through Lifelong Learning), which aims at turning lifelong learning into a bridge between Higher Education and the industry. The University for Seniors UfS³ is a new lifelong learning initiative launched in May 2012 by the American University of Beirut to promote lifelong learning and active aging, offering lectures, study groups and a social community to older students. This initiative is first of its kind in Lebanon and the Middle East and it is part of the AUB's Continuing Education Centre.

As LLL is becoming a trend, a very new Higher Education institution (Azm University, established in 2015) has introduced LLL as one of the objectives sought by the university.

1.3 Organisation of Private Education

Lebanon has a very developed and significant private Higher Education sector. It represents more than 60% of the total student enrolment in Higher Education. Private Higher Education institutions do not receive direct public funds in Lebanon. All direct public funds in Higher Education go to the Lebanese University. As from 2014, the private Higher Education is governed by a new law. The sector is under the tutorship of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through the Directorate General of Higher Education.

The state control of the private HE sector essentially deals with the licensing process when an institution presents its request to be studied by technical and specialised committees. The recommendation to legalise an institution is taken by the **Council for Higher Education** while the final decision remains in the hands of the Council of Ministers. In granting the licensing of an applicant institution, political and sectarian considerations are taken into account. According to the new law, the licensing process includes many phases such as verification and audit followed by the recognition of degrees 3 years after the starting up. The license will not be given for an unlimited period of time, as it has been the case before. After 5 years, the institution and its programmes shall be subject to a new audit and review process.

1.4 National Qualifications Framework

The need to establish a national qualifications framework has been felt by many stakeholders since 2008, and mainly among those active in reforming the Higher Education. Many Tempus projects helped to raise awareness about this issue. However, a decision by the Ministry to start the process of establishing a Lebanese National Qualification Framework (LNQF) was taken in 2010 only. This came as a result of a grant offered by the Italian government to the Lebanese MEHE implementing for over 2 years a project led by the European Training Foundation, located in Turin (Italy), through a Lebanese Committee created at the Ministry. A draft LNQF based on 8 levels was proposed and was strongly inspired by the European QF. The draft was tested on few disciplines and needed further testing and adjustment. An attempt to complete the creation of the LNQF took place in 2013, but was stuck by the unstable situation in the country and by the lack of a strategic vision at the MEHE. No further progress towards the establishment of Lebanese NQF has been made since.

³ www.aub.edu.lb/seniors

1.5 Statistics on Organisation and Governance

The following figures have been taken from the database of the Directorate General of Higher Education of the Lebanese MEHE:

Number of HEIs (in academic year 2015/2016)	
47	
University	University College
1 (public)	
35 (private)	11 (private)

Number of students (in academic year 2014/2015)	
190 186	
Public	Private
69 994	120 192

1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

The **Ministry of Education and Higher Education** in Lebanon has an overall responsibility for all levels of education in the country. In the application of the article 2 of the law 247/2000 a **Directorate General for Higher Education** (DGHE) was established in the MEHE to regulate the private Higher Education sector, and supervise and coordinate all actions related to it. The DGHE has since been operating within the MEHE with very little staff and resources being still in charge of the 46 private Higher Education institutions currently in operation in the country. The DGHE manages the licensing and the starting up of new Higher Education institutions, the validation of the programmes offered and the recognition of the degrees. All other responsibilities are in the hands of each institution's governing body.

Apart from the conditions that must be fulfilled at the licensing stage, neither the national government nor any local authority is involved in the governance, the funding or the internal management of private Higher Education institutions. The power of licensing or supervising Higher Education by the state is loose and subject to many political and sectarian constraints. The state fails to provide a consistent, regular, structured control over a sector which, although constitutionally free and independent, remains a public good under the responsibility of the state.

The public Lebanese University (LU) enjoys a clear autonomy with its own system of governance. Most of the faculties of the LU have branches spread all over the country. The responsibility of managing the faculties belongs to the **Deans**, while the management of the university is in the hands of the **University Council** headed by the Rector.

2 Higher Education Funding

According to Charbel Nahas⁴ *“it is a fact that spending on Higher Education can, broadly speaking, be divided into government spending, household spending and external or private grants”*.

In Lebanon, direct government spending on Higher Education does not exceed 0.5% of the GDP, which is below the average levels of the OECD countries and lower middle income countries which both amount to 1% of the GDP. The main direct government spending is channelled to the Lebanese University, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the CNRS (National Council for Scientific Research) and covers participation in financing some bilateral programmes, such as CEDRE with France. Indirect spending includes, mainly, the Government's educational allowances and transfers allocated to government employees, for the tuition of their children in private establishments.

According to the same source⁵, when the three sources of financing of education are combined (calculated for the year 2004-2005 due to the availability and representativeness of data), the situation in Lebanon is as follows: about EUR 850 million are set aside for Higher Education (vocational and non-vocational) every year. Public expenditure covers just 16% of this total.

Due to the strong spread of private education at all levels, household spending on education in Lebanon far exceeds government spending. In addition to government and household expenditure, the third source of funding, external or private grants, is not insignificant, especially at the private Higher Education level.

2.1 Public Education

The public Lebanese University is funded by the Government via the MEHE with a moderate contribution from the students. Any other funding, like donations or else, must be approved by the Council of Ministers. The budget allocated to the LU does not follow any performance-based funding and it is mainly designed to cover salaries and administrative needs.

2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

The fund to the public Lebanese University is allocated on the basis of budget lines submitted to the government each year. The LU has the full autonomy to manage the budget according to these budget lines and respecting the institution's internal regulations with no direct control by the government. However, the LU is subject to the general accountability procedures applied in all public institutions.

2.1.2 Fees within Public Higher Education

Education at the Lebanese University is almost free and fees account only for 6.5% of its total budget.

The public Lebanese University is open to all Lebanese and to foreigners who are legal residents in the country. An international student enrolled in the LU has to pay a higher fee than that paid by a national student. The fees are paid directly to the Ministry of Finance.

The following table shows how much national and international students paid for registration fees in the different study levels in the academic year 2015-2016.

⁴ Nahas Charbel, Financing Higher Education in Lebanon, April 2009, Economic Research Forum

⁵ Nahas Charbel, op. cit.

	Lebanese students	International students (*)
Bachelor in faculties of theoretical disciplines	LBP 195 000 (EUR 120)	LBP 945 000 (EUR 570)
Bachelor in faculties of applied disciplines	LBP 245 000 (EUR 150)	LBP 995 000 (EUR 600)
Graduate studies	LBP 745 000 (EUR 450)	LBP 1 745 000 (EUR 1 050)

(*) Palestinians pay the same registration fees as those paid by the Lebanese students.

An extra LBP 35 000 (EUR 20) is paid as a participation fee in those faculties that require an entry exam.

An additional LBP 50 000 (EUR 30) is paid for a health insurance coverage by the Social Security Fund.

2.2 Private Education

Private Higher Education institutions do not receive any direct support from the state. The main source of funding for the private sector comes from tuition fees and different types of resources and donations.

The rapid expansion of the sector during the last two decades, not only responds to a high demand for university studies, but also proves that it is a profitable adventure and becomes an attractive business in itself.

Some universities that follow the American model, like the American University of Beirut (AUB), benefit from endowments and gifts that finance buildings, equipment, programmes and scholarships. For the AUB, whose accounts are available, endowments in 2014 reached EUR 55 million out of an operating budget of EUR 360 million. 43% of the total revenue came from patient care, pharmaceutical and medical supplies at their university hospital (AUH).

Foreign governments provide support to some universities and schools through the provision of professors or teaching material, or the support to joint programmes. This is particularly the case with France.

Many charitable and/or political foundations and some foreign governments grant scholarships to Lebanese students.

At least 8 Higher Education institutions, hosting around 21% of the total number of students or 33% of the students in private Higher Education, belong to religious communities that provide not only the land, but also the labour cost of the members of the religious order working as teachers or administrative staff (priests and nuns). It is not easy to assess the value of this complementary financing due to the difficulties in collecting the relevant data related to this type of contribution.

2.2.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

Private Higher Education institutions are independent from the state in terms of managing their financial affairs and resources. No control by the government is in place. They are only accountable to their respective founding bodies and organisations.

However, in the new law for the organisation of private Higher Education, the government set out some guidelines to ensure more transparency in the financial system of each private Higher Education institution. New obligations concerning the different spending areas (staff, equipment, libraries, etc.) have been defined and, particularly, the level of spending on research and the support to students' services.

2.2.2 Fees within Private Higher Education

The diversity of the Lebanese Higher Education system can also be reflected in terms of the cost of study at the different institutions. In general, the fees for studying at a private university or institute start from EUR 3 000 and could reach EUR 25 000 per year. An amount covering the cost of living and other relevant expenses like books and courses should also be added.

The fees are directly paid to the Higher Education institutions.

The following gives an idea about the differences in tuition fees in some Higher Education institutions:

- American University of Beirut: For Engineering around EUR 22 000 per year
- Beirut Arab University: For Engineering EUR 8 500 per year
For Medicine EUR 9 150 per year
- Lebanese International University: For Engineering EUR 7 200 per year
- Haigazian University: Undergraduate EUR 8 100 per year
Graduate EUR 10 950 per year

2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families

In general, no financial support is offered to families whose children are enrolled in Higher Education. However, 75% of the civil servants, representing between 15-20% of the total Lebanese workforce, get lump-sum educational allowances as a support to cover a part of the cost of their children's education at private universities that are considered to be of better quality.

These education allowances make up a large portion of government spending on education, however, due to the strong presence and spread of private education, household spending on education in Lebanon far exceeds that of government spending at all levels of education.

Employees of the LU get higher financial support to cover part of the cost of their children's Higher Education also for studying abroad.

2.4 Financial Support for Learners

Generally, no national scheme of financial support for learners is in place. However, at the public Lebanese University, a limited number of merit-based grants are awarded to students on the basis of academic performance at the end of their Bachelor degrees in the aim of supporting these students in continuing their studies in Lebanon or abroad.

No public lending programme exists for students in Higher Education.

In the private sector, student aid and scholarships are offered either directly according to the social situation of the student or in the form of assistantships. Another form of aid is fee exemptions. These are based on the number of students and social considerations. Some exemptions can be offered to students carrying out some work inside the university.

A student lending programme has been launched in Lebanon since 2010 by Byblos Bank in collaboration with the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), through a credit line of € 25 million. For the time being, these loans are proposed to students of 9 partner Lebanese private universities, from their first academic year. Other banks like SGBL, the BLF and Audi had already been offering studentship loan

schemes, but these remain far from the standard low interest student lending programmes known internationally.

According to the “Country Partnership Strategy” for Lebanon published by the World Bank in July 2010⁶, “*financing of the education sector is highly fragmented and inefficient, and leads to inequities*”. According to the same paper, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), drawing on the experiences of its student loan programmes in other countries in the MENA region, will explore possibilities of developing student lending programmes delivered through the banking sector, targeting low and middle-income students.

3 The structure of the Higher Education system

According to the law 75/67 dated 26/12/1967 which governs the public Lebanese University:

The Lebanese University is the only institution in Lebanon which offers public Higher Education in all fields and levels; it also conducts scientific research and provides continuing training as part of its national, human and developmental role in all the sectors and the regions of the country.

Although the public Lebanese University is not governed by the law 285/2014 for private Higher Education, Lebanon has spelled out, in this law, its vision for its Higher Education by stating the following:

Higher education is a public service provided by higher education institutions, it responds to the needs of the society in building its capacities, developing its capabilities and in scientific research, with full respect of the basic freedom of individuals and groups and of all the noble values stated by the international Conventions, particularly those values related to academic freedom (Law 285/2014).

In 2007, the government adopted a new national education strategy in which a vision for Higher Education was included. It aims at an education of good quality and available on the basis of equal opportunity; education contributes to social integration, economic development and to the creation of a knowledge society.

This strategy remained without feasible action plans until 2010 when the MEHE announced its quinquennial action plan for general education. In 2011, the newly appointed Minister of Education and Higher Education reconfirmed this action plan and put the following issues on the Ministry’s agenda:

- The organisation of the private Higher Education sector;
- The Quality Assurance in Higher Education;
- The organisation of private university branches spreading all over the country;
- The organisation of Master and PhD degrees;
- The modernisation of Higher Education management, particularly of the Directorate General of HE;
- The reform of the Lebanese University system and the development of its resources;
- International cooperation projects for developing Higher Education structures and scientific research.

Achievements have been made in some of these issues: a new law for the reorganisation of private Higher Education was adopted in 2014, two laws, one for the creation of a National Agency for Quality Assurance in HE and another for the restructuring of the DGHE, have been drafted and are in their final stage of ratification at the Lebanese Parliament, an audit campaign targeting the chaotic opening of

⁶ World Bank Report No. 54690-LB: Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Lebanon for the period FY11-FY14

university branches all over the country has been launched and many have been asked to readjust their status, a decree for the organisation of doctoral studies has been issued.

Although Lebanon is not a signatory country of the Bologna Process, it has been invited to the Bologna Policy Forum meetings and many universities have started implementing some of the Bologna principles since 2002. The majority of the faculties at the public LU are now applying the LMD 3-cycle system together with the ECTS. There is a widespread complaint that this implementation concerns form more than substance as it has not reached out the real spirit and philosophy of the Bologna principles. Many private universities have also started implementing the Bologna system.

The reform in the Lebanese Higher Education has been considerably inspired and supported by many EU Tempus projects and the team of Higher Education Reform Experts working under the guidance of the DGHE. However, the highly diversified sector together with the absence of a comprehensive national plan for reform has made this modernisation process fragmented, somehow chaotic and depending on the individual strategy of each Higher Education institution.

The Higher Education sector in Lebanon offers two types of studies: academic studies delivered by universities, and applied studies delivered by all types of Higher Education institutions. Other vocational and technical studies are delivered by technical schools and institutes which are not considered as Higher Education institutions.

Higher Education is mainly divided into three cycles: First cycle (Bachelor or License), second cycle (Master) and third cycle (PhD). All types of Higher Education institutions can deliver degrees of the first two cycles. PhDs can only be delivered by universities and university colleges.

First cycle of studies includes:

1. Undergraduate academic studies (Bachelor or Licence) – lasting for 3-4 years, carrying 180 to 240 ECTS, or 90 to 120 American credits (contact hour credits).
2. Bachelor of technology – lasting for 3 years, carrying 180 ECTS or at least 90 American credits.

Second cycle of studies includes:

1. Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MS) – lasting for 1-2 years and carrying 60 to 120 ECTS (based on the duration of the Bachelor degree) or 30 to 39 American credits.
2. Specialised Applied Studies (Teaching Diploma, Postgraduate degree) – lasting for 1 year and carrying 60 ECTS or 21 to 24 American credits.

Third cycle of studies includes:

1. Doctoral academic Courses (PhD) – lasting for a minimum of 3 years of study carrying 180 ECTS or 40 to 45 American credits.
2. Professional Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) – lasting 3 to 4 years.

In the field of medical sciences, a Medical Doctor (MD) degree is awarded as a professional qualification after a minimum of 7 years of study, other specialities require by the law different durations of study: a minimum of 5 years for Dentistry, a minimum of 4 years for Physiotherapy and a minimum of 5 years for Pharmacy.

In Engineering, a student must complete 5 years of study to be awarded a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) or a Master of Engineering (ME) (300 ECTS or 150 American credits).

There is no national rule for the definition of an academic year. However, this academic year is organised by the Higher Education institutions and it starts normally between September and October.

An academic year may be divided as follows:

- At the institutions following the American system: two semesters, each lasting 15 weeks with the possibility of including one or 2 summer short semesters of 6 to 9 weeks each,
- At the institutions following the European system: two semesters, each lasting 15 weeks of 30 ECTS per semester.

3.1 Types of Higher Education Institutions

There are three types of Higher Education institutions in Lebanon:

A **university** (الجامعة) which should have at least 3 faculties each specialised in one of the main study fields that are recognised by international bodies including the UNESCO and deliver programmes of at least 9 specialties leading to a first cycle degree. Other requirements, related to budget issues and to the profile of the teaching staff, need also to be met.

A **university college** (الكلية الجامعية) which should have at least one faculty specialised in one or two of the main study fields as described above, in addition to the same requirements related to budget issues and the profile of the teaching staff. A university college could deliver study programmes of academic or technological nature.

A **higher institute of technology** (المعهد التقني العالي) which prepares skills of middle level (short cycle or 2 years after the baccalaureate) in one applied technical fields such as industry, agriculture, water and other administrative services.

All vocational and technical schools and institutes whether in the pre-university level or in the post-secondary level are governed by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education and are not part of the higher education governance system.

3.2 First Cycle Programmes

There are two types of first cycle programmes; one is leading to a Bachelor degree after 3 to 4 years (180-240 ECTS) and another one leading to a Bachelor of technology after 3 years (180 ECTS).

3.2.1 Branches of Study

The different Lebanese Higher Education institutions offer more than 165 study programmes. These are regrouped using the ISCED/UNESCO categories as follows:

- Education
- Arts and Humanities
- Trade, administrative sciences and law
- Engineering, Transformational Industry and Production
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery and Veterinary
- Health Sciences
- Services

3.2.2 Admission Requirements

The **Lebanese General Secondary Certificate**, commonly known as Lebanese Baccalaureate or any equivalent is the basic requirement for a student to enter a first year university programme. The Lebanese Baccalaureate is considered as Grade 13 in the pre-university education system.

Specialties like Engineering, Medical and Health sciences in all higher education institutions and Fine Arts and Business Administration at the Lebanese University require an entry exam or a *numerus clausus* set by each institution on the basis of its capacity to host a maximum number of students.

Some American style institutions require additional qualifications like SAT1, TOEFEL or IELTS with a scoring threshold as a pre-condition to enter the first year of the university.

Some Higher Education institutions impose additional preparatory courses in a foreign language (English or French) or in Maths, Physics and Chemistry for those students holding a Bacculaureate from Technical and Vocational secondary schools.

Foreign students or Lebanese nationals who had spent more than 3 years abroad, can apply during the secondary school to follow a foreign programme leading to an equivalent to the Lebanese Bacculaureate like the International Bacculaureate, the French Bacculaureate, the German Bacculaureate and can be admitted to the Higher Education on the basis of this equivalent bacculaureate. Students following the American high school system have to obtain Grade12+ SAT1+SAT2+ Freshmen (a 1-year study of 30 credits) in order to enter into Higher Education institutions.

3.2.3 Curriculum

The development of curricula is not regulated at national level; each institution is autonomous in designing the contents of its programmes. However, general rules and guidance are set for the private sector by the **Council of Higher Education** and the respective **Technical Committees**. When an institution submits an application for a programme to be certified or accredited by the MEHE, all the details related to the description of the courses, whether compulsory or elective, the number of ECTS/credits and the learning resources are provided.

At the public Lebanese University, the curricula are decided by the Council of the University respecting a set of laws and decrees regulating the university academic management.

Only law programmes at private and public Higher Education are defined by a presidential decree in which 10 courses on the Lebanese law are included. The other courses are left to the decision of each institution delivering a law programme. The Lebanese Bachelor of Law is obtained after 4 years of study and is equivalent to 240 ECTS or 120 American credits.

Apart from subjects like Arab literature, History, some courses in Sociology, Political Sciences, and Law, the language of instruction at the Higher Education institutions is either French or English. In some universities including the public LU, both French and English are used as teaching languages.

3.2.4 Teaching Methods

Teaching methodologies are regulated at national level in Lebanon neither for the private nor for the public sector. However, the quality of delivery methods reflects the reputation of the different higher education institutions. Higher Education teachers have to organise their lectures in compliance with the curriculum with no teaching methods prescribed.

Teaching materials are sometimes freely chosen and in some other cases they are imposed or simply recommended.

At the public LU and in Faculties of theoretical sciences large classes are the norm. In Faculties for which an entry exam is required, small classes are more dominant. The picture is different in the private sector.

Thanks to the accreditation process in which many private Higher Education institutions are being engaged, teaching and learning environment have considerably improved in terms of number of students in class, use of ICT in the teaching and learning process, video-conferences and in some cases digital learning. Although the full e-learning is not legally recognised by the educative authorities, many universities have introduced some e-learning or blended mode of learning in their curricula. The Arab Open University, an institution shaped on the British Open University, is based on ICT, on-line and Audio-Visio materials. This is accepted as long as it does not exceed 40% of the total delivery in each course.

3.2.5 Progression of Students

The progression of students in the first cycle is as diversified as is the higher education sector itself.

In the universities following a European-like system, a student cannot fail more than 2 consecutive years in the same programme; otherwise he/she will be dropped out of the programme. A score over 50% must be obtained in order to pass from one course to another. The progression in such system is generally less flexible than in an American style system.

In the universities following an American style system, a student should maintain at least a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 70%. Otherwise, the student will be put on probation until the 70% GPA is reached. 3 consecutive probations will result in the student dropout from the programme.

Some universities follow a module system in which a minimum average in all the courses of the module is required in order to succeed.

3.2.6 Employability

In a deteriorating economy with a rise in the unemployment rate, particularly among university graduates, and with high number of Lebanese migrating abroad, employability has become an issue of concern in the higher education community. A call for aligning programmes with the needs of the economy is being loudly spelled out. Still the university/business cooperation is not well structured and not formally regulated. However, many higher education institutions, inspired by the Quality Assurance and accreditation requirement and supported by many international and EU projects, have started building internal structures to enhance the employability of their graduates. Offices of liaison, career guidance centres, open door exhibitions, job fairs, joint conferences, competitions are examples of initiatives that different institutions have launched in the aim of helping students to find a job or be engaged in an entrepreneurial venture.

Some institutions have introduced entrepreneurship in their curricula. The University of Saint Joseph has established Berytech⁷ to support entrepreneurs, invest in start-ups and SMEs and create jobs. Some have established sustainable networks with the industry and built Innovation Parks in their campuses. Internships are part of the curricula in many disciplines particularly in applied sciences, engineering, business administration and finance. Many universities have permanent conventions with the business sector, particularly with banks and insurance companies.

3.2.7 Student Assessment

Although the final exam remains the main assessment mechanism, continuous evaluation during the study is taken into account in the final result of each learner. The ratio of this continuous evaluation out of the overall assessment differs from one university to another.

⁷ <http://berytech.org/>

At the Lebanese University, students sit for a partial exam which counts for 30% of the total score while 70% are left for the final exam. 50 over 100 is the success score, a score between 60 and 69 is considered as fair, between 70 and 79 as good, between 80 and 89 as very good, between 90 and 100 as excellent.

At the private sector and mainly at the American style institutions, quizzes, class attendance, partial exams, homework and final exam are all used in the assessment of the student in a given course.

3.2.8 Certification

Each Higher Education institution is responsible for the certification of its first cycle degrees. Upon completion of the first cycle study, the student receives a diploma with relevant title, average score and the number of credits earned. Some institutions deliver also a diploma supplement like document, which contains information on the studies successfully completed.

There is no national format for issuing this first cycle certificate. Each institution uses its own format to explain the content of the given certificate.

In case a graduate from a private Higher Education institution is applying for a job in one of the state institutions, recognition of the diploma by the Commission of Equivalences at the DGHE is needed.

3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education

Although all types of Higher Education institutions have the right to deliver short-cycle education, this kind of programmes is not common in Lebanon. Technical diplomas of 1 to 2 years of study delivered by vocational and technical schools or institutes are not considered here as they are not part of the Higher Education. However, few short-cycle studies of 2-year study are offered by some Lebanese Higher Education institutions like the Répertoire National de Certificat Professionnel (RNCP) level 3, Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS). The University of Saint Joseph offers many university diplomas (DU) of 1-year study (for instance a diploma in school management).

3.3.1 Branches of Study

Only few are open, but any of the disciplines mentioned in paragraph 3.2.1 is possible.

3.3.2 Admission Requirements

The admission requirements are the same as for the entry to the university.

3.3.3 Curriculum

Please see section 3.2.3.

3.3.4 Teaching Methods

Please see section 3.2.4.

3.3.5 Progression of Students

Please see section 3.2.5.

3.3.6 Employability

Please see section 3.2.6.

3.3.7 Student Assessment

Please see section 3.2.7.

3.3.8 Certification

Please see section 3.2.8.

3.4 Second Cycle Programmes

3.4.1 Branches of Study

Master degrees are delivered in Lebanon by all types of higher education institutions and in all the branches of study detailed in section 3.2.1. These are organised over a length of 1-2 years with 60-120 ECTS or 30-39 American credits.

3.4.2 Admission Requirements

In order to enrol in a Master degree programme, a student should have completed a Bachelor programme with at least 180 ECTS or 240 ECTS depending on the length of the Bachelor degree obtained.

Additional requirements are also in place for admission to second cycle programmes like a 75% GPA at institutions following an American system or 12/20 at other institutions. Some institutions ask for proficiency in English or French and some organise an entry exam.

Other professional masters like the Master of Business Administration (MBA) and the Executive MBA (EMBA) require 2-4 year work or practical experience.

Some ask for international exams like the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) for medical studies and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) for business schools, in addition to proficiency in foreign languages.

3.4.3 Curriculum

Please see section 3.2.3.

3.4.4 Teaching Methods

Classes in this cycle of studies are usually much smaller than those in the first cycle of studies. This enables better interactivity and communication between teachers and learners. But still there are no specific rules for the second cycle studies regarding the teaching methodologies. Other descriptions are as in section 3.2.4.

3.4.5 Progression of Students

Please see the description for 3.2.5.

3.4.6 Employability

Please see the description for 3.2.6.

3.4.7 Student Assessment

Please see the description for 3.2.7.

It should be noted that during the second cycle continuous evaluation has more weight in the general assessment than it has in the first cycle studies. Students earn some credits by being active in seminars

and sitting periodically in front of a jury. Some earn credits from internships. A thesis at the end of the study is also part of the assessment process.

3.4.8 Certification

Please see the description for 3.2.8.

3.5 Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure

Some study programmes in Lebanon do not fall into the 3-cycle structure and usually last for a long period of time. These are study programmes that lead to well defined professions normally regulated by Orders or Professional Associations.

In the Engineering programmes, only a couple of universities have aligned their programmes with the 3-cycle system (Bachelor after 3 years and Master after additional 2 years). The majority of the universities organise their Engineering programmes over 5 years or over 4 years and 3 summer terms.

In the Medical sciences, there are two types of organisation, either over a period of at least 7 consecutive years after the Baccalaureate, or admission to the Medical school is based on a Bachelor degree in relevant subject like Biology or Chemistry or else followed by an MCAT exam and an additional 4-year study period.

In the Architecture programme, a continuous 5 or 6-year study is foreseen.

A 5-year study is also practised in Dentistry, Pharmacy and Agriculture.

3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

3.6.1 Organisation of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral programmes are regulated by the new law 285/2014 re-organising private Higher Education, the law of the public Lebanese University and by the presidential decree 10068 "Organising the licensing of doctoral programmes in higher education institutions" of March 2013.

According to the law for the re-organisation of private Higher Education, only universities and university colleges can organise doctoral studies. However, the decree 10068 establishes more conditions for the opening of such programmes. Up to now, only 9 universities (out of 47 higher education institutions) offer doctoral studies in Lebanon.

According to the decree 10068, if a Higher Education institution seeks to organise a doctoral programme in a specific subject, it has to fulfil at least the following conditions:

- The HEI should have graduated at least 10 second-cycle promotions and 3 second-cycle promotions in the intended specific subject, or 10 first-cycle promotions in the intended specific subject;
- The HEI should possess all profiles, material and human resources necessary for the opening and running of the requested doctoral programme;
- The HEI should have organisational infrastructure for conducting research;
- The HEI should have an institutional research plan;
- The HEI should have research plan in the subject of requested doctoral programme;
- The HEI should have a documented system of self-evaluation and have already been externally evaluated by Agencies recognised by the Council of Higher Education.

Other conditions related to the academic resources in terms of the profile of the staff and the supervision mechanisms are also described in this decree.

A doctoral study period should last at least for full-time 3 years following the Master degree and not exceed 6 years. An 8-year part-time study can also be accepted. A PhD thesis has to be submitted at the end of the study programme. The preparation procedures and the conditions for the defense of the PhD thesis are all described in the above mentioned decree.

The Higher Education institution is obliged to archive all defended theses and provide electronic versions uploaded on the institution's website or on the website of the DGHE.

3.6.2 Admission Requirements

As long as they comply with the general requirements of the decree on the organisation of doctoral studies, Lebanese Higher Education institutions individually determine their PhD enrolment in line with their strategic plans and taking into account their capacities in terms of technical and human resources.

Admission requirements include:

- a study in at least one course in a foreign language in case the student does not master any foreign language,
- the student's average grades in the Master degree as set up by the institution's own rules,
- special additional requirements in case the student is admitted to the doctoral programme right after the Bachelor degree.

3.6.3 Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates

Doctoral students are legally considered students and not employees. However, if a doctoral student is employed at the institution in which he/she is enrolled, the benefits and the rights will be defined in the employment contract signed by the two parties.

An employed student enrolled in a PhD programme benefits thus from all the rights as defined by the employment status.

3.6.4 Supervision Arrangements

Selection criteria applicable to PhD teaching staff are generally defined in the decree mentioned in paragraph 3.6.1. Such criteria include the academic profiles of the teaching staff, their full-time status and their academic hierarchical ranking. Additional criteria might also be observed by each Higher Education institution.

A PhD supervisor should be a full-time professor of the two highest academic ranks and cannot mentor of more than 4 PhD students at the same time.

Universities which cannot meet the conditions required for the opening of a doctoral programme can engage in a joint PhD programme with universities abroad based on co-tutoring. The student should spend a minimum period of time abroad in order to have his PhD recognised by the Ministry.

3.6.5 Employability

See the description provided in section 3.2.6. However, most of the PhD holders work as teachers and researchers in the Higher Education sector.

3.6.6 Assessment

PhD students are assessed on the basis of their overall performance and engagement, as well as on the basis of courses/credits earned through the study period. The PhD thesis, being the final part of the studies, is assessed on the basis of its scientific or artistic significance and contribution to the field in question. It represents an independent scientific research paper. Each Higher Education institution sets its general rules of application procedure and PhD thesis defense. Courses, seminars, continuous presentations in front of a Jury, publications, participation in conferences and thesis are the main scientific activities on the basis of which a PhD student is assessed.

3.6.7 Certification

Upon completion of a PhD study with a defended thesis, a corresponding diploma will be given. The title of the diploma varies from one institution to another. The competent authority is the Higher Education institution where the PhD studies took place.

4 Teachers and Education Staff

4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education

There is no special programme for initial education of academic staff in Higher Education neither at national nor at institutional level. Typically, a PhD degree is the minimum requirement for recruiting people into the Higher Education academic community, however, in some special cases and for particular disciplines, persons with lower degree levels may be recruited. This is practiced more in the private sector than in the public Lebanese University. A PhD degree generally requires an average of 8 years' study after the General Secondary School Certificate.

Recently, some private Higher Education institutions which were engaged in an accreditation process had to envisage a scheme of initial education training. Such training, lasting for 1-2 semesters, normally covers teaching methodologies and didactics. These accreditation processes together with the implementation of QA procedures have pushed some private higher education institutions to foresee internal professional development schemes for their academic staff. This has also become a necessity as a response to the rapid development in the teaching and learning environment, particularly with the introduction and the growing use of new technologies in the teaching process.

4.2 Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

Although academic staff working in the public sector is considered as civil servants, their conditions of service are regulated by the law of the LU. Issues such as recruitment, professional status of academic staff, salaries and promotion, working time and duties, mobility and retirement are all regulated by a combination of the general rules applied for public civil servants and other rules and bylaws specific to the Lebanese University.

In the private sector, it is up to each Higher Education institution to define its internal rules for regulating these conditions of service. However, at the licensing phases of an institution or a programme, the rules which will govern the conditions of services of the academic staff must be defined and submitted for ratification by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Academic staff works under two statuses:

- a full-time status (permanent or limited duration but renewable contract);

- a part-time status (only with a contract of a limited duration but renewable).

There are only 4 levels of titles within the Higher Education teaching profession: Lecturer, Assistant professor, Associate professor and Professor. This classification is subject in each institution to different rules related to the experience in teaching, research activities and publications in international journals.

4.2.1 Planning Policy

No planning policy has yet been established in terms of teacher supply and demand in Higher Education. The new law (285/2014) for private Higher Education has defined general directives on the size of the teaching staff with respect to the number of students in each institution. However, the policy of recruitment is defined by each Higher Education institution. The practice at the public Lebanese University is totally different and the decision of appointing new teachers is taken by the Government mostly based on political and sectarian considerations and not on the real need of the different faculties of this university. Part-time teachers are recruited with contracts finalised by the Council of the University.

4.2.2 Entry to the Profession

Private Higher Education institutions recruit their academic staff according to their own rules, needs and criteria. All these are defined and submitted to the MEHE for ratification. General rules related to the balance between full-time and part-time teachers, the number of PhD holders and the ratio of teaching staff and the number of students are defined by the Referential Guides published by the DGHE. According to the law, for a study programme to be certified or licensed by the MEHE, at least 50% of the teaching staff involved should be among PhD holders. The other 50% may be Master degree holders with a long experience. In some disciplines where PhD holders cannot be easily found or recruited like Fine Arts, Medical Sciences and Fashion design, experience in the profession counts more than the PhD degree.

At the public institution, the rules that govern the recruitment and the entry to the profession are all well defined by bylaws and decrees. The process starts with the definition of the needs at departmental level, and then the faculty publishes an open call for recruitment. Candidates' applications are reviewed by scientific committees designated by the Dean of the respective faculty. A list of proposed candidates is finalised by the Council of the University. The final decision of recruitment is taken by the Government through the Minister of Education and Higher Education. At this stage, political and sectarian factors are dominant in the final decision on how many and who will be recruited.

4.2.3 Professional Status

Academic staff at the public LU are considered as civil servants subject to special regulations within the institution. An academic staff member can be recruited according to one of the following 3 statuses:

- Permanent contract with pension rights
- Full-time with contract renewable every year, almost all benefits of the permanent position except the pension rights
- Part-time contractual with a yearly based contract determining the number of the teaching hours.

In the private Higher Education institutions, academic staff is considered as any other employees in the private sector. Contracts normally have a duration of 3 to 5 years with the possibility of a renewal.

No professional code of conduct or of ethics exists for the Higher Education academic staff.

4.2.4 Salaries

Although considered as civil servants, the academic staff at the public Lebanese University has a specific salary scale decided by the Government. The latest scale was adopted in 2011 and the salaries were increased by 65%.

In the private sector, it is up to each Higher Education institution to define the salary scale of its staff. Some universities do not have such scale and the salaries are determined arbitrarily.

4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays

All Higher Education institutions in both public and private sector observe the official holidays as decided by the Government. An academic staff member may benefit from paid absence days in situations like attendance of international conferences, illness, maternity leave etc. Each staff member is also entitled to summer holidays. A staff member will get an extra earning for any teaching activity carried out during summer terms.

Other holiday allocation differs from one institution to another and this depends on the organisation of studies and exams at each institution.

At the Lebanese University, the working time is defined according to the professional title of each academic staff. This varies from 175 hours to 250 hours of teaching per year, in addition to 8 office hours per week for students' assistance. The whole month of August is an annual holiday for all university staff.

The working time of an academic staff member at a private university varies from 6 to 12 hours of teaching per week depending on the professional title, whether s/he is a full professor, associate professor, assistant professor or a lecturer. The total working time is around 40 hours per week.

4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement

At national level, there are only general guidelines adopted by the Council of Higher Education for the promotion of academic staff. Moving from a lower professional title to the next in the line, becoming a head of department, a Dean or a committee member are all considered career advancements.

There is no clear and well-defined process for earning higher titles at the Lebanese University. Only research activities and publishing papers in international journals and congresses could lead to a certain promotion. A higher ranking title and each year of working experience bring a salary increase.

In the private sector, there is a diversity of practices regarding the promotion and career advancement.

4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions

In the public sector, teachers retire at the age of 64 with a minimum service of 20 years. No extension of employment is given, however, in very special cases, teachers may continue offering some particular courses and senior teachers with the status of full professor may supervise students preparing their PhDs. An anticipated or early retirement is always possible, but this will result in a reduction of the pension.

In the private sector, there is no retirement age and it is up to each institution to decide on the fate of the contract with each member of staff. An end of service indemnity is paid instead of a pension. Few Higher Education institutions have started to establish a retirement scheme for their employees.

There is no difference between men and women regarding the retirement age or any other indemnities or financial rights.

4.3 Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

4.3.1 Organisational Aspects

There are no requirements determined by the law regarding continuing professional development for academic staff in public or private higher education. Therefore, CPD remains optional and mainly pushed by the wish of each member of staff to improve his/her scientific background and to increase the chances for career advancement.

The CPD of the academic staff is in most cases based on teaching experience and scientific work and research. It can be organised in the form of courses, congresses, seminars, conferences, publication of papers and similar activities. Institutions normally provide conditions for the completion of such activities whether by releasing their staff within regular working hours or by covering travel costs when international missions are required.

A good practice has been noted recently: the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik was the first private Higher Education institution in Lebanon to commit itself to staff professional development initiatives and faculty development programs such as the delivery of Post Graduate certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education with UK and US universities, playing thus a key role in training highly-qualified academic staff. More than 50 staff members, including the Rector and high ranking academics, have undertaken this training over the past three years.

A full time permanent staff member at the public LU benefits from a sabbatical year which the beneficiary should use to enhance his/her scientific background, to do research or to develop a new course. The sabbatical leave is paid by the LU and the teaching load of the beneficiary is to be taken over by other staff members from the same department.

4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities

As CPD is not required by the law, the practice on how the professional development is incentivised differs from one institution to another. The most significant incentive is the sabbatical year paid by the LU to tens of academics each year. Some argue that the cost of this leave is really paid by the different members of staff who are covering the teaching hours left by the beneficiary. Others raise some questions about the outcomes of these sabbatical years regarding the professional development of the beneficiaries with the absence of any real control on the quality of the activities conducted during the leaves.

5 Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education

5.1 Requirements for Appointment

The Lebanese University is a huge, centralized public institution headed, according to the law, by a **Rector** and governed by a **Council of the University** in which each faculty is represented by its **dean** and one academic elected by the teaching staff. Students should also have two representatives in this Council and the government is represented by two persons. According to the law, the Council includes also three independent and qualified experts of high academic reputation chosen by the government. The Rector, with the Council of the University, and through the deans of the faculties, has an influential authority over the management of the university. Each dean manages the branches of his/her faculty through a **director** of the branch. Therefore, governance looks very much centralised through a strict hierarchy. The reality is different and that is due first of all to a weakness common to all state run institutions and secondly to the geographical spread of the university all over the country making the

actual control less efficient. The hierarchic control is stricter in terms of financial and administrative management and more freedom is enjoyed for decision making at faculty branches and departmental levels. For a long time, the political situation prevailing in the country has undermined the re-election of the **Students' Union** of the Lebanese University – something that deprived students from being duly represented in the University Council of the LU.

The Rector of the LU is a full professor appointed by the Council of Ministers, in most cases respecting political and sectarian power sharing. The deans are also appointed by the Council of Ministers which will choose the names formally from a shortlist selected by the university through a series of selection procedures, but in reality the same political and sectarian considerations govern the appointment of the deans. The directors of the branches are appointed via a shortlisting process including elections at branch and faculty levels; confessional balance is also taken into account in the appointment. Heads of departments in each branch of each faculty are elected in a democratic way. No vice-rectors or vice-deans are foreseen in the management structure of the Lebanese University; however, the Rector is free to appoint many advisors for the different academic or administrative issues and to create committees for specific tasks and missions.

At the private sector, the situation is so diverse that one cannot draw a single pattern of how the participatory structures are constituted. However, according to the new law, Higher Education institutions should have a PhD holder as President/Rector, and at least the first two of the following bodies, which have become common in most of the Lebanese Higher Education institutions governing structures:

- Board of Trustees: which includes academic personalities, representatives of the Founders and the Rector with no voting status;
- Council of the University: which include the Rector, the Vice-rectors, representatives of the institution (deans) and representatives of the students;
- Board of Deans: include all the deans and has a pure academic aspect;
- Board of Faculty: created at faculty level includes heads of departments, representatives of professional associations and students.

Any structure adopted by the institution should be reported to the Council of Higher Education at the MEHE for ratification.

The picture in the private sector is not much different in terms of a centralised system of authority. The majority of the universities started with a main campus in the capital Beirut or in Mount Lebanon; others opened from the beginning outside Beirut. Recently, due to the increasing demand on Higher Education, universities have started opening branches in other Lebanese regions, managed by academic staff reporting directly to the central administration of the university. This has created legal problems with the Ministry which requires each branch to meet minimum standards and criteria to be recognised by the state.

As mentioned above, the MEHE via the DGHE has encouraged and pushed each university in the private sector to have a board of trustees where two thirds of the members should be from outside the owners' circle. A university college or institute should have a board of directors. A university should also have a university council in charge of the entire management of the institution. All of these councils should have students' representatives, each faculty should have a faculty council and each department should have a department council. The importance given to an efficient implementation of these bodies varies from one institution to another. The absence of other stakeholders in the governing bodies is clear in most Lebanese Higher Education institutions. Some institutions which have a religious background and are

normally funded by the Church or by other denominational authorities are subject to a special type of governance and appointment related to a system applied to clergy.

5.2 Conditions of Service

The LU Rector is appointed for 5 years by the Government as described above in section 5.1. His salary is defined in the pay-scale of the university teaching staff in addition to some special allowances determined by the university's bylaws. All his conditions of service regarding dismissal, retirement and all other professional status are regulated by the same rules applied for the academic staff of the LU.

The recruitment and the conditions of service at the private sector vary according to each institution and its background. Universities governed by religious institutions appoint clergies at the head of the university. Other universities proceed with open calls and even international call for candidates to appoint their rectors or presidents. The contractual status of these appointments depends on the way they are processed and conducted. Each institution defines in the bylaws its recruitment process and the criteria to be applied at the selection phase. Other conditions of service are normally described and detailed in a contract signed by the institution and the appointed person.

6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education

6.1 Responsible Bodies

No national quality assurance system is in place in Lebanon. However, a law for the creation of a **National Agency for Quality Assurance in HE** has been approved by the government and has been stuck with the Parliament for ratification since 2012.

The new law for private Higher Education (285/2014) requires each institution to start its own internal quality process and to prepare for external evaluation either by the future national QA agency under creation or by international QA agencies. The only quality control conducted currently in the Higher Education sector is the audit and monitoring that the Ministry is carrying out at the licensing and certification stage. Since 2002, the DGHE has introduced in its audit procedures several quality criteria, but these still fall short of a standard quality assurance process. One of the criteria added to the auditing process concerns the periodicity of the evaluation and that certification of any study programme is no longer granted forever. Many Lebanese universities have already established their internal quality process, some with the help of EU Tempus projects. Many have already sought accreditation and evaluation by internationally recognised agencies and bodies.

6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

With the absence of a national QA agency whose standards for evaluation would be public and valid for all, each Higher Education institution is following a set of standards mostly in line with those of the external body that is going to evaluate the institution. A Tempus project implemented in Lebanon between 2011 and 2013 proposed a list of standards for external evaluation based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and trained Lebanese experts on external evaluation with the help of the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the French Agence d'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur (AERES), the latter replaced in 2013 by the Haut Conseil de l'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur (HCERES).

The law which is waiting to be ratified by the Parliament calls for the creation of an autonomous **Lebanese QA Agency** (LQAA), academically, administratively and financially independent. It aims at periodically evaluating all Higher Education institutions according to a transparent and published set of

standards and criteria. The Agency itself will also be subject to an external evaluation by competent agencies. The evaluation process will be based on the internal self-assessment of the institution itself and will cover fields like the mission and vision of the institution, its governance and management, human resources, academic programmes, teaching staff, learning resources, students, services, infrastructures, financial resources, institutional integrity, scientific research, civic engagement and quality of its management system. The LQAA would have a Board of Trustees, an Agency Council in addition to administrative and technical committees. The representation of the different Higher Education stakeholders will be respected according to international standards.

7 Educational Support and Guidance

7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

7.1.1 Definition of the Target Group(s)

Lebanon has a long history of hosting politically disadvantaged people. Until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 and up to its end in 1990, Lebanon had been an ideal refuge for all political opponents in the surrounding regimes. Among those who sought asylum in Lebanon there were intellectuals who joined the best universities and contributed to the cultural richness and diversity of the country. This has not been the case since 2005 and becomes almost impossible after the latest dramatic political developments in the Arab world.

Disadvantaged learners in Lebanon can be categorised as follows:

- Those with acute poverty (no figures available)
- Those with special needs (no figures available)
- Palestinian refugees (400 000 + 60 000 recently fled from Syria)
- Syrian refugees (1 200 000 the latest estimate)

Learners with special needs can be recognised by the law and registered at the Ministry of Social Affairs. They can also be registered as members of state recognised NGOs defending their rights at the relevant ministries and organisations.

7.1.2 Specific Support Measures

The public Lebanese University offers free education for all Lebanese citizens. Students with special needs benefit from the same facilities and measures applied in all public institutions, but no specific measures or facilities are foreseen at the faculties of the LU. Measures are rather applied on a case-by-case basis. The Palestinian and Syrian students are treated equally as the Lebanese nationals, but there is no educational support provided to these students to help them overcome difficulties in language or in other learning competences.

Private Higher Education institutions at the certification phase need to prove they foresee suitable measures and facilities to help learners with special needs. These measures include building facilities, learning environment, special teaching methods and materials, special arrangements for assessment and evaluation and, in some cases, financial support.

Student refugees from the Syrian crisis are mostly covered by many local and international initiatives, particularly by the UNHCR and the EU. There are different approaches to respond to the crisis regarding the students at university level. At the beginning of the crisis, experts found it most suitable to equip the students with transferrable competences like languages and maths and science knowledge. This

approach was based on the conviction that the crisis would end in a short time. Now that it is clear that the crisis would not be over rapidly, the strategy has changed and more integrated educational programmes are deemed necessary for the Syrian refugees in Higher Education.

7.2 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

7.2.1 Academic Guidance

At the public LU, apart from the number of office hours that the teacher should provide for assisting students in overcoming any difficulty in their courses, there is no structured scheme for academic guidance for students. Some faculties are working on an interactive platform to which the students can have access to more information related to their learning environment.

Almost all private Higher Education institutions have a unit, an office or a deanship for student services. This issue has become essential with the introduction of QA principles and particularly for those which are seeking accreditation by international agencies. The areas covered by these services vary from one institution to another. However, academic guidance is well provided in Higher Education following the American system of education.

7.2.2 Psychological Counselling

No information available. However, when institutions apply for accreditation, whether institutional or of a programme, most of the accreditation agencies require that this type of counselling be provided by the specific institution as part of its student services.

7.2.3 Career Guidance

Career guidance has existed in almost all American style universities since long time ago. With the introduction of a quality assurance culture and principles many other Higher Education institutions followed this model. The issue of employability of the graduates has obliged universities to exert real efforts in helping the students in their search for work and increasing their chances of finding a job. Career centres exist in most universities under different names such as *bureau de liaison*.

Career guidance is provided to students under different forms, namely by:

- direct access to the career centres where information is available and counselling can be offered;
- information events in which lectures and printed materials are distributed;
- job fairs where students are put in direct contact with the world of business and enterprise;
- visits to enterprises to introduce students to the world of work;
- finding internships for students.

8 Mobility and internalisation in Higher Education

There is no national strategy for internationalisation in Lebanon. However, the Lebanese Higher Education sector has by nature a strong international dimension. The first two oldest universities in the country are the American University of Beirut (AUB) founded in 1866 and the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) founded in 1875. The AUB was established by the American Christian missionary Daniel Bliss and the USJ by the Jesuits who arrived to Beirut 40 years earlier. Many other universities have foreign affiliations and thus have international connections. The Lebanese Higher Education is characterised by its traditional openness to the outside world. It is hard to find one institution that does not have a

convention or an agreement with one or more institutions in the region, in Europe, in Canada or in the United States. As mobility is at the heart of any internationalisation strategy, most of these conventions and agreements deal with the organisation of student mobility and staff exchange. It is worth mentioning that more than 10 000 Lebanese students study abroad every year and around 11% of the university student population in Lebanon are foreign students.

Since 2002, with the implementation of the EU Tempus programme and later with the Erasmus Mundus and the EU research framework programmes, the internationalisation concept has developed from a simple relationship between two institutions based on bilateral conventions to an idea conceptualised and materialised into institutional strategies and actions.

At least 3 Tempus projects addressed the internationalisation subject directly (BIRD in 2006, TIES in 2009 and MIMI in 2013). Other Tempus projects addressed this subject indirectly through the quality assurance or the governance of Higher Education institutions.

Mobilities were put into practice through many Tempus projects and particularly through the 12 Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects implemented in the country between 2008 and 2013 and which involved 12 partner institutions from Lebanon.

8.1 Student Mobility

There are no national programmes for mobility in Lebanon. However, many state conventions are signed between Lebanon and different countries in the world to exchange students in some priority areas. These conventions and agreements are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education on an open call basis and cover all the levels of the university academic studies.

The bilateral conventions signed between Lebanese and foreign universities from all over the world cover mostly cooperation areas in the field of research and exchange of academic staff, with less focus on student mobility.

The bulk of the mobility activities was implemented by the following Erasmus Mundus Action 2 partnership projects:

JOSYLEEN, ELEMENT, MEDASTAR, WELCOME, PEACE, EPIC, Avempace, DUNIA-BEAM, HERMES, PEACE II, Avempace III, PHOENIX, which involved 10 Higher Education institutions and 2 non-academic partners. Through these projects, 79 students from Lebanon were awarded scholarships between 2007 and 2010 to spend study periods in prestigious European universities, while 395 student mobilities were implemented between 2011 and 2013.

Under Erasmus Mundus Action 1, between 2004 and 2010, 45 students and 4 scholars from Lebanon were awarded scholarships to follow a 2-year Erasmus Mundus Master Course (EMMC) or to teach in Europe. In 2011, 2 fellows were awarded full scholarships to follow an Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate (EMJD).

The Lebanese Higher Education sector can still benefit from 107 Masters and 29 Doctorates offering EU-funded scholarships and fellowships to students and scholars for the academic year 2015-2016.

More Masters will be added to this list through the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD), which will be funded by the EU Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport launched for the period between 2014 and 2020.

Recognition of periods of studies spent abroad remains the main challenge that has to be met not only at the national level but also at the level of each Higher Education institution.

Distance learning is still an issue of debate among the different Higher Education stakeholders. The Ministry does not recognise distance learning if it does not represent a very limited proportion of the whole study programme.

With Erasmus+, the EU will offer more opportunities to Lebanese students to study in Europe. In this new programme the focus on mobility is very clear through the many Key Actions like the International Credit Mobility grants, the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees and, more particularly, with the Special Mobility Strand that can possibly be annexed to any Capacity Building in Higher Education project, if proved to be necessary and relevant.

8.2 Academic Staff Mobility

No national programme or policies exist for academic staff mobility. Only bilateral conventions at state level are signed with many countries and organised through the MEHE by which academic staff exchange can be implemented.

Lebanese academic staff in Higher Education is very active in traveling abroad whether for research or teaching activities. All these exchanges are carried out in the framework of bilateral agreements signed at each institution level. All recognition, monitoring and compensation issues related to these mobilities are regulated by the conventions through which these exchanges are implemented.

Since 2002, the European Union programmes and actions have been the main instruments by which hundreds of academic and administrative staff mobility lines have been implemented. The impact of these programmes and actions has gone beyond the individual exchanges to more solid and sustainable cooperation and partnerships between Higher Education institutions from Lebanon and different EU countries. These programmes have widened the scope of cooperation between Lebanon and the outside world by adding a more prominent international dimension to the Lebanese Higher Education. Lebanon has been involved in 58 Tempus projects involving 22 Higher Education institutions representing more than 85% of the total Higher Education students' population in Lebanon, and in 12 Erasmus Mundus partnership projects involving 10 Higher Education institutions. Between 2002 and 2006, around 100 academic staff from almost all Lebanese universities benefited from Individual Mobility Grants in Europe to enhance their capacities and competences, and upgrade their knowledge in their respective scientific fields.

Lebanese academic staff in Higher Education will continue to benefit from the EU cooperation through the Erasmus+ Programme, as further opportunities for mobility will also be available to them.

Lebanese academic staff have also been benefiting since 1996 from the bilateral programme CEDRE between Lebanon and France which helps research groups to undertake joint research activities with the best research laboratories in France. The programme is based on a co-funding scheme between the governments of Lebanon and France.

Lebanese academic staff also benefits from other international mobility schemes with Canada and the USA like the Fulbright Fellowship programme.

8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education

8.3.1 European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

Since Europe has been one of the main study destinations for Lebanese students and with the large number of Lebanese scholars working in the different European Higher Education institutions, the convergence with the European Higher Education system becomes a natural choice for Lebanon. The

interest in the Bologna Process since its first Declaration in 1999 was clear among many Lebanese stakeholders.

Lebanon is not a signatory of the Bologna Process, but it is part of the Bologna Policy Forum with a very low participation; this is due to many factors including the political situation which the country has been going through since 2005. However, many Lebanese Higher Education institutions have, more or less, aligned their structures with Bologna principles, particularly with the 3-cycle system, the ECTS and the Quality Assurance system. The success in some of these issues is limited.

8.3.2 Partnerships and Networks

The Lebanese Higher Education institutions are very active in international networking and partnerships. The following networks are those in which there is at least one Lebanese member:

- EUA: European University Association,
- AARU: Association of Arab Universities,
- UNIMED: Mediterranean Universities Union,
- Téthys : Mediterranean Universities Consortium,
- Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum,
- AUF : Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie,
- CONFREMO: Conference of Rectors in the Middle East Region,
- ANQAHE: Arab Network for QA in Higher Education,
- AECHE: Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education.

They all aim at fostering cooperation in the Higher Education reform areas and exchanging knowledge and expertise to respond to the common challenges facing the Higher Education sector.

8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation

8.4.1 Bilateral Agreements

No information is available about the different bilateral agreements with third countries. Many agreements deal with co-tutoring, co-direction and co-diploma issues.

The programme CEDRE is the most famous bilateral programme on research, operating since 1996. It is a cooperation agreement for the evaluation and the development of research signed between the governments of Lebanon and France to strengthen cooperation, scientific exchange and research in Lebanon. The programme is managed by a joint committee formed by two national subcommittees.

8.4.2 Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations

No further information beyond the description given in section 8.3.2.

9 On-going reforms and Policy developments

9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives

In 2007, Lebanon adopted its national strategy for education. The following are the main general lines of this strategy:

- Education provided on the basis of equal opportunities;
- Education of good quality contributing to build a knowledge society;
- Education that contributes to social integration;

- Education that contributes to the economic development;
- Efficient management of the educational system.

This strategy remained without action plans until 2010 when the Ministry spelled out its quinquennial action plan based on principles described in section 3.

9.2 Overview of the education reform process and drivers

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is the authority responsible for the regulation of all education sectors in the country.

In the public sector, the Lebanese University is independent and autonomous and the Minister has the authority of tutorship over this public institution. The Minister is the official link between the LU and the Council of Ministers.

In the private sector, the MEHE is regulating the sector according to the law 285/2014 through the Directorate General of Higher Education which supervises the relationship with the 46 Higher Education institutions operating in the country. A Council of Higher Education established by the law, headed by the Minister supervises the implementation of the law. The Council has the right to form as many technical committees as needed in order to properly look after the certification, the licensing and the auditing tasks.

The main driver for reform in Higher Education is the Directorate General of Higher Education through which all local and international initiatives are supervised.

The autonomy and independence of the private Higher Education sector give the Lebanese Higher Education institutions more freedom and flexibility in getting involved in any process of reform and modernisation.

The main reform process was driven by the EU Tempus programme and it will continue with the new EU Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. The attempt by many Lebanese Higher Education institutions to engage in quality assurance processes or/and to seek accreditation from international Agencies has been one of the main drivers for reform and improvement.

The high competition in a rapidly growing sector has also pushed many universities to look for improvement in the quality of the delivered programmes.

9.3 National reforms in Higher Education

9.3.1 2015

A decree has been issued for adding to the COLLOQUIUM exams in medical specialties the Occupational Therapy.

A law for the establishment of a national Medical Board has been approved.

Continuing discussions within the Parliament on the two bills on the creation of the Quality Assurance Agency and the restructuring of the Directorate General of Higher Education in the Ministry (MEHE).

9.3.2 2014

Ratification of the law 285/2014 for the organisation of the Higher Education within the private sector.

9.3.3 2013

A decree has been issued on the profile and organisation of doctoral studies.

A decree has been issued on bridging gaps between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.

During 2012 and 2013, the DGHE, in collaboration with the World Bank, conducted a Governance Screening and a benchmarking study on 5 main axes of university governance. 29 Lebanese Higher Education institutions took part in this exercise.⁸

10 Legislation

1. National Strategy for Education and Learning in Lebanon, 2007

الاستراتيجية الوطنية للتربية والتعليم في لبنان

<http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/sites/default/files/documents/National%20Educational%20Strategy%20Lebanon.pdf>

2. Law number 285/2014: General provisions for higher education and organisation of private higher education:

قانون رقم 285: الاحكام العامة للتعليم العالي وتنظيم التعليم العالي الخاص

http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/HE_Law_No285.pdf

3. Law number 75/1967: Organisation of the Lebanese University:

قانون رقم 75: تنظيم الجامعة اللبنانية

http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/Law%20LU%2075_67.pdf

4. Law 247/2000: Establishment of the Directorate General of Higher Education

قانون إنشاء المديرية العامة للتعليم العالي

<http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/Law%20dghe%2000.pdf>

5. Project law for the restructure of the Directorate General of Higher Education

مشروع قانون هيكلية المديرية العامة للتعليم العالي

http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/Structure_DGHE_Law2011.htm

6. Project law for the establishment of the Lebanese Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

قانون إنشاء الهيئة اللبنانية لضمان الجودة في التعليم العالي

http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/QA_law2011.pdf

7. Decree 10068 of 11/3/2013 (Organising the licensing of doctoral programmes in higher education institutions)

تنظيم ترخيص برامج الدكتوراه في مؤسسات التعليم العالي

http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/projects/Decret_PhD_10068.pdf

⁸ Results of this exercise can be found at http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/Studies/1313877_University_MENA_Book.pdf

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