

## **INSPECTION REPORT: INTERIM INSPECTION**

**INSTITUTION:** AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION

**ADDRESS:** Badaro Campus:  
Tayouneh Roundabout  
Omar Bayhom Street  
Beirut, Lebanon

PO Box 14/5840 Mazraa  
Beirut, Lebanon 11052070

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Dr Pierre Gedeon, President

**Dates of BAC inspections:**

Full inspection: 15-17 March 2010

Interim inspection: 11 April 2011

**BAC Inspection team**

Reporting Inspector: Professor William Callaway, BA, MSc, DipTP, FRSA

**Accreditation status:** **Accreditation expiring April 2014**

**DATE OF CONSIDERATION BY  
THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE**

**16 JUNE 2011**

<b>NAME OF INSTITUTION</b>	<b>AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Badaro Campus: Tayouneh Roundabout Omar Bayhom Street Beirut, Lebanon</b>  <b>PO Box 14/5840 Mazraa Beirut, Lebanon 11052070</b>
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<b>DATES OF INSPECTION</b>	<b>11 April 2011</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector</b>	<b>Professor William Callaway, BA, MSc, DipTP, FRSA</b>

<b>Subject/award</b>	<b>Awarding body</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Enrolments FT</b>	<b>Enrolments PT</b>
<b>Bachelor of Business Administration</b>	<b>American University of Culture and Education</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Bachelor of Science</b>	<b>American University of Culture and Education</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Bachelor of Arts</b>	<b>American University of Culture and Education</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Masters Programmes: MBA, MS</b>	<b>American University of Culture and Education</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>STAFF DETAILS - NUMBERS</b>	<b>Permanent</b>	<b>Temporary</b>	<b>Self-employed</b>
<b>Full-time teaching staff:</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Part-time teaching staff:</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Administrative staff</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Ancillary staff</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>STUDENT DETAILS</b>	<b>Total students</b>	<b>General visas</b>	<b>Student visitors</b>	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>Under 16</b>
<b>Full-time</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Part-time</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>INSTITUTIONAL DATA</b>	
<b>Date of establishment</b>	<b>2000 as university institution, with origins in 1993</b>
<b>Date when teaching commenced</b>	<b>2000 in present form</b>
<b>Type (limited company etc)</b>	<b>Private Limited Company</b>
<b>Company name</b>	<b>American University of Culture and Education</b>
<b>UKBA licence number (if applicable)</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Current number of CAS awarded (if applicable)</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Maximum student capacity per 15 hour teaching block</b>	<b>500</b>

<b>OTHER ACCREDITATION</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Last inspection</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Next inspection</b>
<b>ABLS Accreditation</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>Accreditation UK</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>ASIC</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>CoE Ministry Division</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>ODLQC</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>N/A</b>	
<b>AUCE is an accredited university under the Presidential Decree 2292 dated 2 June 2009</b>	<b>Accredited</b>	<b>April 2009</b>	<b>Awarded</b>	<b>n/k</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION – TAKEN FROM THE REPORT OF MARCH 2010 AND EDITED**

The American University of Culture and Education (AUCE or the University) is a privately-owned institution that currently has 10 campuses around Lebanon, although some are likely to be consolidated shortly. It is licensed as a university and can use that title under a specific law of the Republic.

Independent higher education in Lebanon is state-regulated. Private institutions require a licence from the Directorate-General of Higher Education, at the Ministry of Education. The Director-General, with whom inspectors held a meeting in 2010, indicated that international accreditation is welcome, and is aware of BAC's scope and approach to international accreditation. The Association of Universities in Lebanon, with the National Office of TEMPUS, is working with the Ministry to establish national standards for quality in higher education, and evidence was seen of considerable international input.

Beirut is a tolerant and multicultural city. As such, it is attractive to students, particularly from other parts of the Arabic world or from the Lebanese diaspora, and this is reflected in the student body. The University is avowedly non-sectarian, non-religious and non-political. As part of its proposition to be business-oriented, it teaches wholly in English. The use of Arabic in the classroom and for administrative purposes is prohibited, and the buildings are signed in English. The linguistic abilities of both staff and students are high, although tri-lingualism (Arabic, French and English) is common among the Lebanese population. Almost all documentation in the University is held in English.

The "American" designation carries no formal status, but reflects that the programmes are designed on the US model, using US assessment and grading systems, and fully modular in structure. The most famous Lebanese institution, AUB (the American University of Beirut) dating from 1866, established this pattern; AUB is used somewhat as a point of reference. The AUCE management specifically state that their aim is to offer quality education at a reasonable price, and as such states that their fees are considerably lower than those at AUB.

AUCE is one of many private institutions which have grown since the re-establishment of peace. Though government and civil society have been re-established, the culture of Lebanon is one of private enterprise rather than tight state control and there is a highly competitive private education sector, with 39 licenced higher education institutions in a country of four million people.

AUCE applied for BAC accreditation as an external quality assurance of its activities. It was the first Lebanese institution to do so, and has been advised on procedures and requirements by a long-accredited BAC institution in London that has a partnership with AUCE. This advice continues in 2011. The University now states correctly in its publicity that it is the first BAC-accredited institution in Lebanon.

Discussions continue on possible validation of the AUCE degree programmes by a UK university. Progress has been slow with the chosen partner (the University of Wales), and another UK university has expressed interest. Discussions with the new university were to commence immediately after the interim inspection. Such UK validation would mirror the arrangements of several existing overseas BAC-accredited institutions.

AUCE has intentions to extend its activities, possibly in the Gulf states. It must be made clear that accreditation is specific to an institution's activities at a specified level at the sites as seen, and not extensible without further review.

## **2. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION**

The University remains broadly as seen in the full inspection. The premises remain as previously seen, well-kept and secure for students and staff. The academic programmes on offer have not changed.

However, there have been changes to management, as the former President (and Founder of the institution) has passed day-to-day oversight to a new President, although the Founder remains as Chair of the governing body and retains an office at the Badaro campus. A recently-introduced formal University council meets each Friday.

The new President has very good US and French qualifications. He has a formal engagement with the government's development of the quality assurance process for the Republic's higher education

institutions, as a member of the commission developing a university accreditation agency for the Republic, broadly following the model set out in the Bologna Declaration. The inspector considered that AUCE will benefit from its President being engaged in this important development to further align Lebanese higher education with the European system.

Since the full inspection, the University has made progress with international links. Lebanon is eligible for TEMPUS and Erasmus support, and there is evidence that this is being followed up, although the visa requirements for students to enter the EEA inhibit what can be done at individual student level.

The structure for management of the academic programmes has been revised, although the programmes remain unchanged. Two new deans with good international qualifications and experience have taken separate responsibility for business and for science, alongside the existing Dean of Arts. This three-faculty structure appears rational and there is evidence that the new arrangements work. The deans have oversight of the work of the programme coordinators, who remain as the leaders of programmes and close to the delivery of teaching and the students.

The Institute of Hospitality Management (IHM) continues to operate as a fourth faculty, with its management and academic programmes unchanged. The inspector went to the main Badaro campus to discuss the overall operation of the University with the administration, and also IHM to discuss the plans for expansion of programmes in the hospitality management field. The Director of IHM indicated that the Al Hadath campus (briefly seen at the full inspection) is under-used and gives scope for extra teaching; she reports that the hospitality management sector is buoyant in Lebanon and the demand for graduates is high.

Discussions with the President indicated that there is careful planning for expansion overall, and that consideration is being given to introducing new subjects in science and engineering. The University remains stable and has good recruitment. It states that it continues to abide by local law. The student experience offered remains good.

### **3. RESPONSE TO REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF LAST FULL AND, IF APPLICABLE, SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT**

*The University must reconsider the programming of external assessor moderation of examination papers, to ensure that the content and/or level may be adjusted before the examination takes place.*

This has been done. The external assessors, who are appropriate persons and originate from more than one country, now receive the documentation for comment well ahead of the date of the student examination, enabling adjustments to be made.

*The University must develop a form of overall institutional self-appraisal and performance assessment.*

The shift to a new management structure is facilitating this, with deans overseeing the activity and putting in place systems for self-assessment.

The inspector discussed this in detail with the recently-appointed President. The development of a university accreditation agency for the Republic will probably demand such a report on institutional performance, and the University is likely to be required to submit such reports. The University President is assisting the national university accreditation agency formally for one day a week, and considerable staff development opportunities are arising from this initiative. There remains space for development, but the University is progressing.

*The University should consider introducing professional guidance on information-seeking skills for students.*

There remains scope for development in this area. Teaching staff clearly guide students to sources of information, but there remains the risk of students relying on unregulated online sources, which is a common issue in education.

*The University should consider how to address the issue of varying levels of classroom teaching skills and expose staff to current pedagogic methods.*

*The University should consider how to use more assessment vehicles which examine students' analytic skills as well as knowledge.*

The preparation for UK university validation has contributed to the approach to both of these matters. Although validation has yet to be achieved, the documentation is good and is also transferable should the validation partner eventually be a different university. It addresses explicit learning outcomes course by course, and the means by which to test students' skills. The engagement of the University at national level with the process of developing a comprehensive system of quality assurance in higher education is importing current thinking, and evidence was seen of international examples. The University needs to ensure that this thinking is disseminated among all staff, and reflected in course and assessment design.

*The University should ensure that all students have access to quiet personal study spaces.*

This has been done. The concern at the full inspection was particularly about IHM. At the interim inspection a new calm and pleasant library space was seen at IHM, with a small collection of reference books in English relevant to the subject area. The study space can accommodate over 20 students. There is also a new, well-equipped computer room at IHM with 12 terminals, available at all times during opening hours.

#### **4. COMPLIANCE WITH UKBA REQUIREMENTS, IF APPLICABLE**

Not applicable; this is an overseas institution and states that it complies with local law.

#### **5. CONCLUSION INCLUDING FURTHER REQUIREMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The University has strengthened its academic management and its governance structure, with well-qualified new senior staff and a clearer role for the University council. It is actively engaged with the process of establishing national standards of quality in higher education.

#### **5. REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **5.1 Requirements that must be met before continued accreditation can be recommended**

None.

##### **5.2 Requirements that must be met before the first inspection after continued reaccreditation is confirmed**

None.

##### **5.3 Recommendations to institution**

5.3.1 The University should continue to pursue the current development of a system for reflection on institutional performance. (3)

5.3.2 The University should consider extending staff development on teaching methods and assessment methods, and advise BAC accordingly. (3)

#### **6. DECISION ON CONTINUED ACCREDITATION**

6.1 The Accreditation Committee agreed that accreditation of the American University of Culture and Education should continue to term.

**APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION, BEIRUT  
16 JUNE 2011**

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