

Policies and Procedures

Policy Title	AUBH Teaching and Learning Philosophy	Policy Number	401
Section	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	18 March 2024
Subsection	General Academic Policies	Authorizing Entity	BoT
Responsible Office	Center of Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE)	Effective Date	2 January 2024
Distributed To	Provost Office, VP for Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation, University Curriculum Committee, all faculty members	Next Review Date	3 years after approval date

I. Introduction

The American University of Bahrain (AUBH) Teaching and Learning (T&L) philosophy statement was developed in September 2023 as a result of a collaborative effort between the institution's Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE), overseen by the Vice President of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Deans of the various Colleges and the Academic Program Coordinators.

To determine AUBH priorities in the area of teaching and learning, relevant input was accumulated from the Deans and Coordinators on the actual T&L practices already in place in the colleges and programs that they represent. Feedback regarding the latest innovative pedagogies and T&L strategies in their respective disciplinary areas and fields was also collected.

The T&L philosophy statement was developed in alignment with the already existing AUBH Assessment Policy and with the AUBH vision and mission, and with reference to Theme 2 (Excellence) of the institution's Strategic Plan. The AUBH vision is:

The American University of Bahrain will be internationally recognized for quality and innovation in learning, the success of the leaders it graduates, and its positive impact on social and economic transformation.

Policies and Procedures

While the AUBH mission, which informs all institutional operations and practices and is a cornerstone of the AUBH T&L philosophy, is:

Our mission is to provide transformative, flexible, and innovative learning opportunities to position graduates to launch and sustain satisfying and successful careers. We will foster learner success by promoting interdisciplinarity and entrepreneurial endeavors, providing analytical and technical skills necessary to thrive in the digital economy, and engaging with our communities to foster respect, positive impact, and social responsibility.

The T&L philosophy statement was also informed by the Kingdom of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030; Bahrain's National Strategy; and input from AUBH stakeholders, namely students, faculty members, and employers, in the form of feedback from course and program evaluations and labor market analyses, respectively.

The statement aims to serve as a roadmap guiding relevant and interested parties toward the institution's:

- conception of T&L, related values, and beliefs about how students learn best;
- actual T&L practices and modes being implemented across the institution; and
- justification for why T&L is being implemented the way it is.

The T&L philosophy statement is to be considered as a dynamic document, continuously in progress; as, it is expected to change and evolve with time, depending on how teaching experiences develop in the institution and how institutional strategic directions shift.

Monitoring the adherence to the principles of this statement and the abidance by its philosophy is overseen by various academic committees at different levels, and through the implementation of several mechanisms, among them the Course Evaluations and the Annual Program Reviews.

II. Components of the AUBH Teaching and Learning Philosophy Statement

A. Values

At AUBH students are the highest priority. Supporting students to achieve academic excellence is a major goal and is reflected in Theme 2 (Excellence) of the AUBH Strategic Plan, which emanates from the University Mission. This theme translates into several points that express what AUBH values in relevance to T&L. These mainly relate to outcomes-based education; student-centeredness; an interdisciplinary orientation; the recruitment of excellent faculty and staff with diverse qualifications and backgrounds; and operational efficiency and productivity in terms of leadership and management, resource allocation, academic support, and mechanisms made available to ensure academic integrity and effective communication.

Policies and Procedures

Outcomes-Based Education

At AUBH, it is important for us to first start with a clear picture of what students will be able to know, do, and/or uphold in terms of values, beliefs, or attitudes, and then to organize the curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure that this learning ultimately happens (Spady, 1994). Our approach is guided by four main questions: (1) What do we want the students to be able to know/do/uphold? (2) How can we help students achieve it? (3) How can we be sure of the students' achievement? And (4) How can we close the quality assurance loop for improvement?

Our outcomes-based approach, thus, involves assessment and evaluation practices to reflect the attainment of intended learning outcomes and to reveal mastery in the areas of the educational programs. This approach challenges the traditional time-bound curriculum and encourages flexible and diverse learning pathways and strategies, all directed toward assisting the student to achieve what they are expected to learn.

Student-Centeredness

The AUBH outcomes-based education approach shifts attention and focus to the role of the student/learner as the achiever of the outcomes and highlights the role of the instructor as an important facilitator who guides and supports the learners in achieving their outcomes (Kember, 1997). The main role of the instructor, thus, is not to lecture but to design learning activities that engage students and foster their autonomy and creativity, contributing as a result to their lifelong learning and preparing them for the changing demands of the 21st century, by developing their competencies for personal and professional success. Among those competencies is the ability to think and work with an interdisciplinary orientation.

Interdisciplinary Orientation

At AUBH, we do not aim for our students to only develop certain skills and qualities, as well as knowledge and understanding, in their own discipline of choice. Rather, we aim for them to be able, when tackling any complex issue or problem, to go beyond disciplinary awareness and competence by taking other perspectives, and then comparing and contrasting ideas, findings and standpoints from different disciplines, followed by an integrative process, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem/issue, or find an innovative solution for it.

Achieving the learning goal of *interdisciplinary orientation* in education requires developing an understanding and awareness of what interdisciplinarity is, why it is significant, and how it is necessary, which is important but also challenging and requires special preparation, in addition to solid disciplinary education (Rowan, Angerer, & Wiegant, 2022). This explains the crucial need for highly qualified and distinguished faculty and staff members from diverse backgrounds and fields.

Policies and Procedures

Excellent Faculty and Staff with Diverse Qualifications and Backgrounds

Disciplinary grounding is a key prerequisite for interdisciplinarity, i.e., understanding what a discipline is, how it works and what are its strengths and shortcomings, is an important area of knowledge for faculty to train their students in. AUBH, thus, works hard to attract and recruit faculty members who are strong in their fields of study but who also vary as a group in discipline, area of specialization, background, and experiences; as, the more diverse they are, the more diverse the course contents, curricular activities, teaching methods, and scholarly ideas and perspectives they can present their students with; thus, preparing them better for interdisciplinarity.

Greater faculty and student diversity also enriches students' overall experiences and helps pave the way for a higher degree of inclusivity, to which AUBH has an institutional commitment. As, having faculty and students from different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ideologies, and so on, makes every student feel like they belong because there is someone who is similar to them in some way. This is in addition to making these students more adjusted and prepared for the real world, in which they will deal with all kinds of people.

Operational Efficiency and Productivity

AUBH views its main business as that of providing students with the best educational experience possible, based on a holistic development approach. To provide such an experience, AUBH works hard to maintain its operational efficiency and productivity through ensuring that multiple key elements are securely in place (elements inspired by Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995 characteristics of educational efficiency), among them:

- The implementation of professional leadership, that is based on involvement and is guided by a clear vision, mission, and goals that unite the whole university community, while ensuring a culture of collegiality and collaboration.
- The establishment of an attractive learning-conducive environment, that is clean, safe, and rich in terms of facilities, study spaces, and resources.
- Purposeful and well-planned resource allocation (i.e., budget, human resources, ICT, learning resources and equipment, etc.), facilitating the implementation of best teaching and learning practices.
- Attention to the teaching and learning process through the maximization of teaching time; emphasis on purposeful teaching and academic work; concentration on applicable practical assignments and on achievements; the monitoring of students' progress; and the evaluation of students' results.
- Provision of various types of student support services including academic, psychological, and social.
- Consideration for students' and faculty rights and duties, with development of their self-confidence, sense of responsibility, and commitment to academic integrity.
- The opening of clear lines of communication with all stakeholders and the establishment of learning partnerships within the local, regional, and international community.
- Functioning as a learning organization, with a culture that invites deep and sustained professional learning and development on the part of faculty and staff and continuous

Policies and Procedures

improvement in quality of processes- all of which ultimately has a powerful impact on student learning.

B. Beliefs

What We Believe in Terms of How Students Learn Best

At AUBH, we believe that students learn best:

- In a safe and comfortable environment
- With ample opportunities to participate and engage
- When the content they are provided with is meaningful
- When they are encouraged to interact with their instructors and classmates
- When they receive frequent and detailed constructive feedback
- When they are motivated by having some choice in what and how they learn

- When they are granted ownership of their own learning (when they are accountable for their own learning)

What We Believe in Terms of How Teaching and Learning Activities Should Be

At AUBH, we believe that T&L activities should:

- Be aligned with the relevant instructional goals and learning outcomes
- Ensure that what students are expected to learn is at or above their current level of competence
- Present content that covers all aspects of the relevant subject matter
- Give access to meaningful input/content coming from multiple sources and through multiple media, including digital technology
- Be student-centered
- Involve varied tasks and foci
- Be well-paced based on students' levels, needs, and learning styles
- Provide ample opportunities to practice (applying knowledge and skills)
- Lead to active and deep learning
- Involve workplace learning and training (where applicable)
- Be innovative and flexible
- Involve interdisciplinary approaches and cater to sustainable development matters
- Integrate new technologies in a variety of ways
- Promote higher order thinking skills such as critical and analytical thinking and creativity
- Promote 21st Century skills/soft skills (e.g., Leadership, Teamwork, Communication, Digital Literacy, Problem-Solving)
- Emphasize entrepreneurship
- Involve research and be enriched by it

Policies and Procedures

- Include activities that contribute to, and prepare students for, the fulfillment of professional certification requirements
- Involve, in part, community-based learning (*via* for example guest speakers) and service-learning (learning by providing a service to others), and be geared toward the development of student commitment to community service
- Be compatible with and promote cultural customs and values
- Be supported by relevant extracurricular activities

What We Believe in Terms of How Assessment of Students Performance Should Be

- Inspired by the AUBH existing Assessment Policy, which stipulates an outcomes-based curriculum design approach, according to which assessments should ensure that students can develop the aptitudes for all the intended Course Learning Outcomes and associated Program Learning Outcomes. The policy also emphasizes, among other things, a continuous assessment strategy, comprising varied formative and summative assessments, with constructive and timely feedback being provided to students (*For more details, kindly refer to the AUBH Assessment Policy*).

III. References

- Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualization of the research into university academics conceptions of teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, 7(3), 255–27.
- Rowan, E., Angerer, L., and Wiegant, F. (2022). *Interdisciplinary orientation: A teachers' guide*. Utrecht University, Netherlands. [https://teaching-and-learning-collection.sites.uu.nl/wpcontent/uploads/sites/982/2022/06/UU Interdisciplinary-Orientation a-teachers-guide .pdf](https://teaching-and-learning-collection.sites.uu.nl/wpcontent/uploads/sites/982/2022/06/UU_Interdisciplinary-Orientation_a-teachers-guide_.pdf)
- Sammons, P., Hillman, J., and Mortimore, P. (1995). *Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness research*. London: Office for Standards in Education.
- Spady, W.D. (1994). *Outcome-based education: Critical issues and answers*. American Association of School Administrators, Arlington.