

# Graduate Students Manual



**MARCH 2024**

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**OFFICE OF THE DEAN  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**



**LAU**  
School of Arts and Sciences



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## Message from the Interim Dean



**W**elcome to the School of Arts and Sciences, the home of LAU's oldest programs! Our school offers a diverse range of undergraduate majors rooted in an interdisciplinary liberal arts and sciences curriculum, leading to a wide array of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees.

**O**ur curricula are designed to celebrate the richness of cultures, the diversity of thought and the intersection of various disciplines. We take immense pride in our educational programs and are committed to keeping our facilities up-to-date with the latest developments. At the School of Arts and Sciences, we provide students with a state-of-the-art education, blending face-to-face and online modalities to enhance the learning experience.

**O**ur Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum explores the impact of modern advances on health, energy and the environment. We probe artificial intelligence and the ethics behind the inventions of the future. Our computer science program is the first in the region and one of the earliest American Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) accredited programs. Our programs in biological sciences, chemistry, nutrition and dietetics, communication, TV and film, performing arts, multimedia journalism, education, political science and psychology consistently rank among the top programs in Lebanon and in the region.

**I**n recent years, we have made significant strides in offering unique learning opportunities and have attracted top-quality faculty and staff to our institution. As staunch proponents of liberal arts education, we continuously evaluate and accredit our academic programs, modernize our laboratories and theaters, integrate cutting-edge technology, introduce innovative programs that align with market demands and promote research that enriches the intellectual environment within our school and the broader university community.

**O**nce again, welcome to the School of Arts and Sciences and welcome to LAU!

**Haidar Harmanani, PhD**  
**School of Arts and Sciences**

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This guide collates some of the key information that are relevant to graduate students in the *School of Arts and Sciences*. The guide will be updated periodically. The information herein are extracted from the University's [Graduate Rules and Procedures](#).

## **1. Registration**

Registration is required of all students in accordance with the university's procedures and regulations. Late registration requires the payment of an additional late registration fee. Students will not be permitted to register after the date for late registration has passed.

## **2. Course Regulations**

### **2.1 Course Load**

The normal course load for a full-time student is 9 credit hours per semester. The maximum is 12 during regular semesters and 6 during the summer term. Graduate students with full- or part-time employment are strongly advised to take a reduced load.

### **2.2 Attendance Regulations**

Regular attendance is required of all graduate students. A student who misses more than the equivalent of two weeks of instruction in a particular course in a regular semester, or one week in a summer session, excused and otherwise, for any reason, is advised to withdraw from the course within the official withdrawal deadline. Otherwise, a grade of F will be assigned.

### **2.3 Removal of an Incomplete Grade**

- 1) In order to have a grade of I changed to a regular grade, the student must complete all requirements within eight weeks of the following semester in which he/ she is enrolled. If the requirements are not duly completed by that deadline, the grade of I will turn into F. The student will also be placed on *Academic Dismissal* and will have to withdraw (WP) from registered courses without any refund.
- 2) In no case may incomplete work be made up after a lapse of one year from the end of the semester in which the grade of I was received, even if the student does not register in courses after getting an Incomplete grade.
- 3) This rule excludes Incomplete grades for Project/Thesis courses as well as graduate apprenticeships and internships required by specific programs.

### **2.4 Withdrawal from Courses**

If a student withdraws officially from a course before the withdrawal deadline set for the semester, a grade of WI, WP, or WF is assigned. The student must submit a withdrawal form to the Registrar's Office within the set deadline. Only one withdrawal is allowed from any given course. The second withdrawal from the same course will result in an F.

### **2.5 Repeating Courses**

- 1) Graduate courses with grades lower than C may not be used toward graduation. Any required course with a grade below C should be repeated.

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- 2) During their course of graduate study, students may repeat a maximum of three credits of graduate courses in which a grade of B or less has been earned. The latest grade will be counted in the determination of the grade point average.

## **2.6 Time Limit**

Students must complete all requirements for a master's degree within six years from their first registration in graduate courses. Students who exceed this time limit must submit a petition to request extension. In such a case, their program of study must be revalidated. Revalidating a program by the concerned department/school may involve taking additional courses and/or repeating outdated ones. Revalidation is granted for one time only and the new requirements must be completed according to a prorated time period. Under no circumstances may the extension time exceed one year. Once a student's program is revalidated, the student and the academic advisor must prepare a course completion plan that must be reviewed for approval by the department and the school. The Registrar must be notified about the revalidation and completion plan in writing.

## **2.7 Academic Standing**

### *2.7.1 Good Academic Standing*

Graduate students are considered to be in good academic standing if they maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 on all graduate coursework.

### *2.7.2 Probation*

Students whose GPA falls below 3.00 at any time after the first nine credits will be placed on probation. Only one probation (besides probation upon admission) is allowed during a graduate program.

### *2.7.3 Dismissal*

- 1) Students on probation must return to good academic standing (GPA  $\geq$  3.00) upon the completion of nine credits. Otherwise, they will be dismissed from the program in which they are enrolled.
- 2) Students who have incurred two repeats and more than two grades of C+ or lower will be dismissed from the program in which they are enrolled.
- 3) Any student who earns an 'F' on any 3-credit course will be dismissed from the program in which they are enrolled.

## **2.8 Thesis and Project**

### *2.8.1 Thesis*

The thesis shall be based on original research work carried out in a basic and/or applied field of study.

### *2.8.2 Project*

The project shall be based on substantial applied work, involving, for example, critical literature review, experimental or analytical studies, development of kits/systems, and/or empirical testing of theories.

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### 2.8.3 Thesis/MS Project Registration

Students may register for the thesis/project at any time after completion of 12 credits. Before registration, the student should have secured the consent of a faculty member to serve as thesis/project advisor. Once registered for the thesis/project, a student must complete a thesis within two calendar years, and a project within three regular semesters (not counting the summer).

Registration for thesis/project will allow students to retain their status with the university for two years/three semesters with no additional tuition fees provided that the student re-registers every term (for zero credit and no fees) if they are not taking other courses. Past that date, students are allowed to have a thesis or project extension by the School Graduate and Research Council (SGRC) will be required to register for a residence fee (0 quality points), and to pay for 50% of one graduate credit per semester.

### 2.8.4 Change of Registration (Thesis/Project)

A student may decide to change his/her registration from Thesis (6 credits) to a Project (3 credits) or vice versa. In this case, the student is required to submit a written petition to the *School Graduate and Research Council (SGRC)* for approval. Students changing from a Project to a Thesis will be required to pay for the extra 3 credits. The change must be made at least one full semester before graduation. Students changing from Thesis to Project (and a course) will not pay for the Project. Students will not be refunded for the difference in credits (3 credits).

## 2.9 Theses and Projects Guidelines

### 2.9.1 Preliminary Arrangements

- 1) A student must seek a faculty member's consent to serve as their thesis/project advisor. The advisor should be a full-time (or retired) faculty member at the professorial rank in the concerned department. The dean approves the selection of the advisor, based upon the recommendation of the department chair.
- 2) A thesis committee shall be made up of three members including the student's advisor, and a project committee of two members including the advisor as well.
- 3) The thesis/project advisor and student jointly form the thesis/project committee. At least one member of the thesis committee (besides the advisor) must be a full-time faculty in the concerned department. The advisor shall chair the committee.

### 2.9.2 Supervision

- 1) The role of the thesis/project advisor is to guide the student's work until the completion of thesis/project. The role of the other committee members is to review and assess the student's work. The committee members shall be kept informed of the progress of the thesis/project.
- 2) Students must successfully defend their thesis proposal before the members of their thesis committee within the first year in which they register for the thesis. Once the proposal is approved, the thesis advisor notifies the Dean using the proper Thesis Proposal Form.
- 3) There should be regular meetings between a student and their thesis/project advisor. The advisor must also be available to support the student when needed.

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### 2.9.3 *Format*

Thesis/Project shall be written and prepared as specified in the “Thesis Guidelines” available at [https://catalog.lau.edu.lb/2020-2021/documents/LAU\\_Theses\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://catalog.lau.edu.lb/2020-2021/documents/LAU_Theses_Guidelines.pdf). The student should submit the manuscript to the thesis/project committee members prior to the announcement of the defense.

### 2.9.4 *Academic Integrity*

The university fosters an atmosphere of high integrity by maintaining an ongoing dedication to honesty and responsibility. Any act of lying, cheating, plagiarism, deliberate misrepresentation, theft, scientific fraud, dishonesty or ill use of other human beings is a blatant violation of the *Student Code of Conduct* and will be treated as such.

### 2.9.5 *Plagiarism & Falsification of Research Material*

Plagiarism is using someone else’s ideas, words, or work as if it were one’s own without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Examples of plagiarism include:

- 1) Submitting research work (a report, project, thesis, etc.) written by someone else and claiming that it is one’s own work.
- 2) Paraphrasing another person’s words without citing the source.
- 3) Including material (e.g. written work, figures, tables, charts, graphs, computer programs, etc.) in one’s work without acknowledging its source.

Plagiarism and falsification or forging of research material or data are serious academic offenses subject to disciplinary action by the faculty and/or the department/school concerned. The severity of the disciplinary action is determined according to the extent of the act. The disciplinary action could range from a requirement that the student resubmit the work with penalty to dismissal from the program. At the request of the faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies/dean of the school shall issue a written warning. A copy of the warning will be kept in the student’s file and at the Registrar’s Office.

### 2.9.6 *Cheating*

Students caught cheating on an exam receive a score of zero on the exam in their first cheating attempt in the course and receive a warning from the department/school concerned at the request of the faculty. A copy of the warning will be kept in the student’s file and at the Registrar’s Office. A score of zero on an exam resulting from cheating must be counted in the student’s course grade. Students caught cheating for the second time in the same course will receive a grade of F in the course. The act of cheating will be recorded and included in the student’s file.

### 2.9.7 *Thesis Defense*

- 1) The Thesis advisor sets the date of the defense in consultation with the student and the committee members. The advisor then notifies the department chair and Dean, in writing, about the details (student’s name, title and abstract of the thesis, committee members, date and place of the defense) relevant to the announcement of the defense.
- 2) The thesis defense should be public, and the date shall be announced by the concerned school dean at least two weeks in advance.
- 3) The thesis defense session shall start by the candidate giving a public presentation. This will be followed by an open question/answer/debate session.

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- 4) The thesis committee will then deliberate in private in the absence of the candidate to reach a final decision.
  - 5) The result of the defense is reported on the Thesis Defense Result Form. If the committee recommends changes to the thesis, the student shall deliver the corrected/changed thesis manuscript to the advisor within a period that shall not exceed one month. The advisor must verify that the Thesis Approval Form is then signed (on 5 copies) by all committee members. The advisor submits the Thesis Approval Form and the Thesis Defense Result Form to the Dean of Graduate Studies/dean of school concerned.

#### **2.9.8 Project Presentation**

Each department/school will set its own guidelines for project presentations. Once the committee approves the project, members should sign the Project Approval Form, which should be included in the final approved project report.

#### **2.9.9 Submission of Thesis and Grading**

- 1) The Candidate must provide the Library Archives with one soft copy in PFD format of the final approved manuscript of the thesis for format verification and archiving. Each copy should include the three completed and signed forms: "Thesis Approval Form", "Plagiarism Policy Form" and "Thesis Copyright Form".
- 2) The Archives will issue a Library Clearance form upon receiving the soft copy of the thesis with the three signed forms.
- 3) Besides the student's copy, and the soft copy sent to the Library Archives, one copy should be sent to the thesis advisor.
- 1) The advisor sends the grade/Change-of-Grade form together with the duly filled and signed Thesis/Project Approval Form and Library Clearance Form to the Registrar's Office after securing the department chair's and the school dean's signature.

### **3. Application for Graduation**

Students must apply for graduation at the beginning of the semester in which they expect to graduate. They shall fill out the appropriate form at the Registrar's Office. Candidates for graduation will be officially notified of any requirements that they have not completed. The following should be noted:

- 1) No more than two course repeats and two grades of C or lower are allowed;
- 2) Graduate students cannot use courses with grades of C- or lower toward graduation;

### **4. Graduate Assistantship**

#### **4.1 Objectives**

The School of Arts and Sciences awards a limited number of graduate and research assistantships to facilitate students' professional and scholarly development while advancing the mission of the pertinent academic department. Students are expected to serve as teaching or research assistants. Research and teaching assistants are awarded a specific number of hours not to exceed 20 hours per week.

Teaching assistants are assigned teaching duties by the chairperson and supervised by the course coordinator, if applicable. Teaching assistants' duties include but not limited to:

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- 1) Instructor of record in introductory courses, computer labs, or wet lab;
  - 2) Providing tutorial or recitation sessions in large classrooms;
  - 3) Maintaining regular office hours to meet with students.

Research assistants (RAs) are predominantly involved in academic research that is supervised by faculty in the department. Research assistants may be involved in the following capacity:

- 1) Collecting, coding, or analyzing data;
- 2) Working on research grants and proposals;
- 3) Conducting research experiments;
- 4) Writing and developing conference and journal articles.

In addition to the above, the School offers a limited number of Graduate Research Fellowships (GRF). A GRF includes a 100% research assistantship and is funded by the School, above and beyond the departmental budget. Fellows are recommended by the department and selected by a committee chaired by the Dean. The GRF is reviewed and renewed yearly.

#### **4.2 Rights and Obligations**

- 1) To be eligible for graduate assistantship, a student shall take a minimum of 6 credits and a maximum of 9 credits (or 12 credits, including thesis/project) in the Fall and Spring semesters, a minimum of 3 credits and a maximum of 6 credits in Summer. Students who are left with one course to graduate and students registered for 12 credits in their last semester may be granted an assistantship.
- 2) Students with the status of “special undergraduate”, and students on probation are not eligible for graduate assistantship.
- 3) Graduate students granted full assistantship (100%) are entitled to 100% tuition waiver. In return, the student is required to provide 20 working hours per week.
- 4) For partial assistantship grants, the percentage of tuition waiver and the number of weekly work hours are prorated.
- 5) Normally, students who have full time external employment will not be awarded more than 50% assistantship.
- 6) Graduate assistants are not entitled to the benefits granted to University faculty and staff members according to the Personnel Policy.
- 7) The tuition waiver does not cover any repeated course, irrespective of the reason for repeating it, including withdrawal.
- 8) Only graduate courses are covered by the assistantship tuition waiver.
- 9) Undergraduate courses taken as prerequisite, remedial or complementary courses are not eligible for the assistantship tuition waiver, except in cases to be approved by the concerned department.

#### **4.3 Budget Limits**

The departmental budget for Graduate Assistantships should not exceed 30% of the program’s tuition . Tuition does not include students who are on LAU scholarships.

#### **4.4 Application Process and Timeline**

Graduate assistantships are awarded in two phases, an early notification phase, and a supplemental phase. The early phase aims to retain current students and to actively recruit highly

qualified students. Students must apply online based on the timeline shown in Table 1. New students who apply to the University after the deadline can apply to a graduate assistantship as soon as they are accepted and pay the necessary deposit.

Decisions at the early notification phase are by a departmental committee that is chaired by the department chairperson. The committee shall assign graduate assistantship while taking into consideration the allocated budget (**Section 4.3**, a maximum of 30% maybe awarded at this stage) based on the School’s selection and renewal criteria (**Section 4.7**).

Semester	Important Dates			
	Application Open	Application Deadline	Early Notification	Supplemental Support
Fall	March 31	June 1	April 30	July 25
Spring	November 1	November 30	December 15	January 15
Summer	March 1	April 1	May 1	June 15

**Table 1:** Graduate Assistantships Timeline

#### 4.5 Letter of Appointment

Graduate assistantship decisions are communicated to the Dean by the deadlines shown in Table 1. Students will receive a letter of appointment in a contract that details their tasks and duties.

#### 4.6 Responsibilities

Graduate assistants are assigned 6-20 hours a week. The exact expectation of the workload is detailed in the letter of appointment. The supervisor, in case of an RA, or the chairperson, in the case of a TA, shall meet with the graduate assistant at the start of the term and develop a work plan with clear expectations and timelines. Graduate assistants are responsible for understanding and fulfilling the weekly workload expectations. The supervisor should provide the student with all necessary help or training to complete his/her research and/or teaching tasks. A self-reflection report is required for renewal.

#### 4.7 Selection and Renewal Criteria

To be eligible for a graduate assistantship a student is required to register a minimum of 6 credits (unless the student has one course to graduate). Special undergraduate students, as well as students who are on probation, are not eligible. While a 100% graduate assistantship is equivalent to 20 working hours per week by the student, the number of weekly hours is prorated for partial assistantships. Normally, students who have full-time jobs cannot get more than 50% assistantship. The tuition waiver does not cover repeated or undergraduate courses. Graduate Assistantships are granted based on the following criteria:

- 1) A satisfactory academic record (at least a 3.00 or higher grade point average).  
Departments may establish additional or higher standards;
- 2) Positive students’ evaluations for teaching assistants;
- 3) A self-reflection report detailing progress made in fulfilling the student’s research agenda based on the departmental research KPIs. This should include measurables indicators such as published or submitted articles or proceedings;

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- 4) Financial need. The request, in this case, should be submitted directly to the Dean, requesting supplemental support;
  - 5) Teaching evaluations. The program must ensure that all teaching assistants undergo regular teaching evaluations for non-standard LAU courses (labs and recitation sessions, for example).

#### **4.8 Termination of Appointment**

The Graduate Assistant appointment cannot be terminated by the student or by the department without just cause and a written justification.

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## 5. Research KPIs

### 5.1 Multimedia Journalism

#### *Annual research management plan*

- 1) KPI1: Progress against research management plan
- 2) KPI2: Successfully complete research methods course by first-year (outcome: final project is a full research proposal for a thesis or project).
- 3) KPI3: Successfully complete research apprenticeship by end of the second year (outcome: co-author article with faculty member; work starts in first summer).
- 4) KPI4: Successfully defend thesis or project by end of second year.

#### *Scientific research output*

- 1) KPI5: Progress against research output
- 2) KPI6: Student contributed significantly to a research project, in design, data collection, data analysis, writing, grant application, presentation, and/or submission, and was recognized in the publication, although not listed as co-author.
- 3) KPI7: Submission of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, working papers, policy papers, and/or conference papers.
- 4) KPI8: Acceptance of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, working papers, policy papers, and/or conference papers.

#### *Effectiveness*

- 1) KPI9: Progress against graduation and post-graduation
- 2) KPI10: Graduation/attrition rates.
- 3) KPI11: Placement in prestigious Ph.D. programs

### 5.2 Applied and Computational Mathematics, and Computer Science

#### *Annual research management plan*

- KPI1: Progress against research management plan

#### *Research output*

- 1) KPI2: Submission of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference papers
- 2) KPI3: Acceptance of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference

#### *Effectiveness*

- 1) KPI5: Graduation/attrition rates
- 2) KPI6: Average time to degree
- 3) KPI7: Continuation of graduate studies or professional placement.

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### 5.3 Education

#### *Annual research management plan*

- 1) KPI1: Progress against research management plan

#### *Research output*

- 1) KPI2: Submission of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference papers
- 2) KPI3: Acceptance of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference

#### *Effectiveness*

- 1) KPI5: Graduation/attrition rates
- 2) KPI6: Average time to degree
- 3) KPI7: Continuation of graduate studies or professional placement

### 5.4 International Affairs, Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, and Migration Studies

#### *Annual research management plan*

- KPI1: Progress against research management plan

#### *Research output*

- 1) KPI2: Submission of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference papers
- 2) KPI3: Acceptance of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and/or conference
- 3) KPI4: Support in writing and submission of research grants.

#### *Effectiveness*

- 1) KPI5: Graduation/attrition rates
- 2) KPI6: Average time to degree
- 3) KPI7: Continuation of graduate studies or professional placement

### 5.5 Biological Sciences and Nutrition

A research assistant is a graduate student in good standing and registered for not less than six credit hours each term. The student will be involved in research activities related to his/her thesis under the supervision of a faculty member/PI. A student receiving RA should not commit to other duties inside or outside the Department and should report on their activities and effort to their supervisors/Pis. Pis who are not benefiting from postdoctoral researchers will be prioritized. First assessment will be after two terms towards the end of summer I conducted by an assessment committee. Committee shall be composed of two DGSRC representatives along with the Program Coordinator. Committee will send its recommendation to the Chair for RA renewal or termination.

#### *Annual research management plan*

- 1) KPI1: Progress against research proposal
- 2) KPI2: Makes independent contributions to projects, continuously demonstrates independence and decreasing need for supervision;

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- 3) KPI3: Contributes material for reports, publications, and grants;
  - 4) KPI4: Manages research teams;
  - 5) KPI5: Submits progress reports to the supervisor following the research proposal.

*Research output*

KPI6: Submission of peer-reviewed articles one to one and half year post-graduation.

*Effectiveness*

- 1) KPI7: Average time to degree (should not exceed two years)
- 2) KPI8: Continuation of graduate studies or professional placement (accepted in Ph.D. programs overseas).