

# PRESIDENT'S NEWS DIGEST

25 MARCH 2018 – VOLUME 3 - ISSUE 21



**ASU**  
جامعة العلوم التطبيقية  
APPLIED SCIENCE UNIVERSITY



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the 21st issue of the 3rd year of the President's News Digest.

As noted in previous issues, during the next few weeks my Message in the News Digest will focus on the content of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) which is part of our Institutional Accreditation by the HEC, in order to keep our staff and students informed.



This week, we are 13 weeks away from the Inspection Visit, which will take place over four days, 24 to 27 June 2018.

Having already covered Area 1 and half of Area 2, this week's News Digest looks the second half of Area 2 which relates also to Academic Management and Administration. As noted last week, Area 2 is divided into four standards and forty-three key indicators. In the SER, we respond to each of the Key Indicators of Area 2 in turn, with clear descriptions of our arrangements for organising and managing our academic operations through our academic and administrative staff and structures, to show how we meet the requirements.

This week, the SER summaries cover our responses to Area 2, Standards 6 and 7, which discuss the administration of the University.

### AREA 2: ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

#### Standard 6: The institution must be effectively administered

- 6.1. Administrators must be suitably qualified and experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties.
  - Our response confirms that ASU recognises the importance of having a comprehensive administrative structure with well qualified and experienced administrative staff to help achieve the strategic objectives of the University. It covers our recruitment processes, our clear job descriptions, our induction and training activities and our appraisal system. It also notes the recent successful achievement (in March 2018) of the ISO 9001:2015 Certification for our administration, which demonstrates that ASU's administrative infrastructure is suitably robust and fit-for-purpose.
- 6.2. The size of the administrative team must be sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the institution.

## INTERVIEW OF THE WEEK

We would like to feature the interview this week with:



**Name:** Dr. Assem Al-Hajj

**Position:** VP for Academic Affairs and Development  
Academic Staff, College of Engineering

### 1. Tell us about yourself: (Your childhood, academic background)

I was born in 1963 in Anout, a beautiful village in the mountains of Lebanon. I am amongst 6 brothers and 3 sisters. In my early childhood I witnessed the Lebanese civil war which started in 1975. Despite that, I did my Bachelor degree in the Beirut Arab University, a branch of Alexandria University of Egypt, in Civil Engineering and graduated in 1985. I then moved to the UK to complete my Master studies in Construction Management at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh in 1987, followed by my PhD studies in Construction Management and Building Economics at the University of Dundee in 1991. I started my career in academia at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, UK in 1992 until 2005. I worked for Shell Petroleum and Petroleum Training Development Fund in Nigeria for 5 years between the year 2000 and 2005. In 2006, I moved to Dubai with Heriot-Watt University, in the Dubai Campus, and stayed there for 9 years before moving to ASU in Bahrain in September 2015.

I am married with two children Sarah and Mohammed.

- Our response notes that we base the size of our administrative team on our business requirements allocated according to the ASU organisation chart. We also note that our administrative is sufficient to ensure ASU's effective day-to-day operation and that we ensure this by channelling requests admin staff appointments through the Vice President of Administration, Finance and Community Engagement and the ASU Administrative HR Committee so that requests are considered in the context of the requirements of the University as a whole. The response includes a table showing numbers and location of administrative staff.
- 6.3. The administrative support available to the management must be clearly defined, documented and understood and appropriately focused to support its activities.
- Our response confirms that all administrative staff have job descriptions to clarify their roles; supported by comprehensive induction and guidance from line managers. It also mentions that issuing Administrative Decrees ensures that appointment of key administrative personnel is publicised and information on roles and responsibilities is disseminated across the University.
- 6.4. Policies, procedures and systems must be well documented and disseminated effectively across the institution.
- Our response covers ASU's comprehensive set of twenty-seven academic and seventeen administration policies, together with associated procedures, all of which are available on Sharepoint to ensure that staff are fully aware of them. It also mentions ASU's use of workshops to brief staff on important new policies and/or procedures; and the awareness-raising tools such as the News Digest and staff meetings
- 6.5. Data collection and collation systems must be effective and accurate.
- Our response gives brief descriptions of each of ASU's data systems, including the related security and access arrangements:
    - Student Information System (SIS) for student data, accessible by personal passwords to students (their own data), Admissions & Registration staff (all data), academic staff (data for courses they teach and students they advise/supervise)
    - Financial Affairs Department Database for financial matters, accessible only by the Vice President of Administration, Finance and Community Engagement, the Director of Administration and Finance, and staff of the Financial Affairs Department and the HR Department

- Human Resources Database for staff data, accessible only by staff of the HR Department
- Marketing and Public Relations Directorate records for marketing data and ASU's publicity materials
- ICT and Knowledge Management Directorate data collection and collation for management information purposes including the ASU dashboard and other reports. ICT&KM is also responsible for development of ASU's systems, their security and the regular back up processes
- Measurement & Evaluation Unit for careful analysis of data related to ASU's surveys

6.6. Classes must be timetabled and rooms allocated appropriately for the courses offered.

- Our response covers how classes are scheduled and allocated to rooms in a process involving college administrative staff, college deans, heads of department, and the Deanship of Admission and Registration; noting that any changes to the approved and published schedule must also be appropriately approved. It also notes that ASU has a range of teaching accommodation including standard classrooms, a mock trial room, engineering labs and design workshops

6.7. Comprehensive administrative records must be organized and stored efficiently, easily accessed and used effectively.

- Our response covers a brief reference to ASU's computerised and paper-based files and the related security, maintenance and reporting responsibilities of the Directorate of Information and Communication Technology and Knowledge Management (ICT & KM). It also notes that for additional security the offices of both the Deanship of Admissions and Registration and the Department of HR are accessible only to authorised staff and that access to these areas is controlled by fingerprint signatures.

**Standard 7: The institution must employ appropriately qualified and experienced managerial, administrative and technical staff**

7.1. There must be appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff and evidence that they are implemented.

- Our response notes the importance of fair and transparent recruitment systems, recruitment process, documented in ASU's Recruitment and Settlement Policy. It notes the respective roles played by the HR Department and the colleges/departments in recruiting academic and administrative staff; and the phases of forward planning, recruitment and induction/training.

**2. Tell us about your job at ASU**

I am the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Development.

I am responsible for ensuring academic quality and leadership in the University and that it attains its strategic goals.

**3. Tell us about your aspirations for the University**

ASU will become one of the top leading universities in Bahrain and the region.

**4. What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I love my job and enjoy every aspect of it. I enjoy working with others and working through challenges.

**5. Tell us about your hobbies**

I enjoy walking, playing table tennis, pool table, volleyball, football, chess, travel and above all I love DIY (Do it Yourself) jobs.

**6. Tell us about your favourite food**

Village fresh food; Zeit and Zaatar and all types of vegetables and fruit. I also enjoy hot spicy food.

**7. Tell us about the book you are reading now**

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradburry and Jean Greaves, 2009.

**8. Final words**

I would like to end this interview with a quotation from Oprah Winfrey:

*"You know you are on the road to success if you would do your job, and not be paid for it."*

It also notes ASU's Staff Retention Policy, aimed at providing a suitable and empowering environment so that staff can pursue personal and career development within the University

- 7.2. Technical staff, including those working in laboratories, must be qualified, experienced and trained in their area of expertise.
- Our response covers how ASU ensures that technical staff are recruited in line with specific job descriptions which state the qualifications and experience required, to ensure that they have the necessary technical expertise (as shown by their qualifications) and have (or can quickly develop) the skills necessary to deploy their expertise in an academic environment and communicate their expertise clearly when interacting with academic staff and/or students
- 7.3. The Human Resources team must be suitably qualified, experienced and have the necessary skills.
- Our response covers the responsibility of the Vice President for Administration, Finance and Community Engagement and the Director of Administration and Finance for the HR function and that HR staff are recruited in line with specific job descriptions which state the qualifications and experience required. It also notes that HR staff have all undertaken appropriate training in relevant areas; and that ASU keeps up-to-date regarding changes in HR-related regulations, especially the labour law, which may impact upon ASU so that these can be embedded in relevant policies and procedures, the Staff Handbook and disseminated to staff
- 7.4. There must be effective procedures for the induction of all staff.
- Our response starts by referring to ASU's HR policies which require that all new staff must receive a comprehensive induction, to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities as described in their job description. It describes the two stages of induction: the general programme organised by the HR Department (including a session involving senior ASU staff and briefings from key staff); and the department-based induction organised by the line manager and involving local introductions and on-the-job training
- 7.5. There must be a transparent and well-documented appraisal system for all staff.
- Our response covers ASU's Employee Evaluation Policy which aims to ensure a standardised evaluation process for all employees and set firm guidelines and accountability for the process so that it is clear, fair and transparent. It also notes that there are two appraisal processes (for academic and for administrative staff) and that the purpose of both is the same: to enable employee evaluation so that exceptional performers can be rewarded and support and/or development can be given to those who need it. Further detail on the steps in the processes is also included
- 7.6. There must be clear and appropriate job specifications for all new staff.
- Our response confirms that all staff have clearly defined job descriptions that are carefully and comprehensively explained during appointment and induction processes. It also notes that ASU regularly reviews all job descriptions
- 7.7. All staff must be treated fairly and according to a published equality and diversity policy.
- Our response refers to ASU's Equality and Diversity Policy, which requires that all staff, students and anyone associated with the University must adhere to the principle that there is equality of opportunity and fairness for all staff and students in all aspects of University life. It also notes that ASU's Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy gives further guidance about issues which are deemed to be unacceptable and in breach of principles of equality and fairness
- 7.8. The institution must have a clear policy regarding the handling of legal issues relating to the employment of staff.

- Our response states clearly that employment of staff is handled as per the Bahrain Labour Law for the Private Sector and that the “Recruitment and Settlement Policy”<sup>97</sup> covers the legal issues associated with the employment of staff. It also notes that ASU has a dedicated Legal Affairs Department to deal with legal matters related to staff employment in coordination with the HR Department

7.9. Staff must have access to a published complaints and appeals procedure.

- Our response notes that ASU’s complaints and appeals procedures are made known to staff by inclusion in the Staff Handbook, with detailed information on steps to be undertaken for investigation and resolution of staff grievances. It also refers to the role of the HR Department and the Legal Affairs Department in administering and resolving grievance cases. It concludes by noting that ASU strives to ensure fair and equal treatment of employee complaints, starting with communicating with the line manager, and that ASU seeks to resolve grievances through informal means before using formal procedures if possible. It also notes that appeals procedures are also detailed in the Staff Handbook

## MEETING OF THE ASU SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH GROUP



On Thursday 22 March 2018, the Sustainability Research Group chaired by Dr. Assem Al-Hajj, VP for Academic Affairs and Development, had its first meeting with the 6 newly joined members. The Group was formed in the beginning of this academic year by Dr. Ashraf Hendy, Dr. Islam Abo-Hela, Dr. Mohamed Mahgoub, Dr. Raad Kadhum from the College of Engineering and Dr. Mohammed Masfaka from the College of Arts and Science. The Group was extended following a recent call for membership to include Dr. Hussein Bani Issa from the College of Law, Prof. Saad Darwash, Dr. Mohammed Obeidat, Dr. Nympha Joseph, Dr. Ahlam Al-Ethawi from the College of Administrative Sciences, and Dr. Ahmed Azzam from the College of Arts and Science. The Group will focus on the three main pillars of sustainability: Environment, Economy and Society. Every member of the group shared his/her ideas about his/her contribution, e.g. Social responsibility of cities, Family business sustainability, Paperless ASU, Sustainability awareness, etc. The group will meet again in a few weeks to discuss progress.

## NEW WORLD INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL VISIT

On 20 March 2018, the Directorate of Marketing & Public Affairs team headed by Ms Ruqaya Mohsin, the Director of Marketing of Public Affairs, Mr Ali Mohamed, Assistant Director, and Mr Abdulhameed Baqi, the Acting Head of Marketing & Student Recruiting Office held a workshop at the New World International School at Al Khobar Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia.



During the visit, the team delivered informative presentations to students (males & females) which emphasized on the University’s existing and hosted programmes, in addition to a brief about the campus facilities, financial flexibilities and enrollment requirements.



More than 200 students from the 11th & 12th grade attended the workshop, were impressed with the campus, and expressed their interest in the programmes mostly those hosted by British Universities.

Ms Ruqaya Mohsin thanked Mrs Azra Nayeem, the school Academic Director for the school’s cooperation and the quick response in hosting the workshop, hoping to maintain a long term relation with the school with more visits to be arranged in the near future.

## ASU AS A GOLDEN SPONSOR IN EDUTEX

On 21st, 22nd & 23rd March 2018, the University has participated as a golden sponsor in the 6th Bahrain Exhibition for Training and Education 2018 (EDUTEX). The exhibition was held under the patronage of HE Jameel bin Mohammed Humaidan, the Minister of Labour and Social Development.



It is the annual largest educational event providing a necessary platform, which will comprehensively showcase Higher Education, Digital Education, Vocational & Occupational Training and other Development courses to over 5000 prospective students and affluent visitors spanning over 30 nationalities from Bahrain and the eastern province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (EDUTEX) attracts most of the Government & Private secondary schools students, post-graduates, parents and other interested potentials. The official opening was inaugurated by HE Jameel bin Mohammed Humaidan, the Minister of Labour and Social Development, in the presence of Professor Waheeb Alkhaja, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Professor Ghassan Aouad, the University President; Dr Mohammed Yousif, the Vice President for Administration, Finance and Community Engagement, Mr.



Abdulla Al-Khaja, Director of Administration and Finance; Ms. Ruqaya Mohsin, Director of Marketing and Public Affairs, Ms. Tania Kashou, Director of the President's Office, in addition to other ASU members & students.

The Minister and other VIPs visited ASU stand and expressed their admiration for the level of the offered programmes both existing and hosted. The University presented its new programmes in Architectured Design Engineering, Civil and Construction Engineering



in cooperation with the University of London South Bank in addition to the programmes offered by Cardiff Metropolitan University in Accounting and Finance and Management and Business Studies, along with its existing academic programmes in the College of Administrative Sciences, Arts and Science and Law.

The Directorate of Marketing & Public Affairs team, the Deanship of Admissions and Registration, the Deanship of Student Affairs as well as the students played a major role during the 3 days of exhibition and were great ambassadors of the University.

More than 100 inquiries were received from students from both Government and Private schools. As a result, data was gathered on the students's preference for universities in Bahrain. Such valuable data will help the University enhances its marketing activities and plans for the future.



## WORKSHOP ON BENCHMARKING

On Thursday, 22 March 2018, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre had a workshop on “Benchmarking”. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Nympha Rita Joseph, Head of QAA administrative Affairs and covered all the aspects of Benchmarking.



## BAHRAIN TV INTERVIEWS ASU STUDENT

On Tuesday 20 March 2018, Bahrain TV interviewed one of Applied Science University students, Noor Al Huda, who “won the best goal keeper in Sheikh Nasser Universities Sports Tournament”. This award reflects Noor’s sheer determination to succeed despite her hearing impairments that did definitely not stop her from being a distinguished achiever, and indeed Noor inspires all of us. “Well done Noor Al Huda, all ASU is very proud of you!”



## TEACHING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE - DR ASSEM AL-HAJJ

Happy, Sad, Angry, Afraid, Ashamed; are emotions we are all subject to constantly. It is important to realise that we have emotional reactions to almost everything that happens in our lives. As an educator, teacher, and/or a facilitator of learning I would like to think of myself as someone who is able to help my students capture certain moments of imagination for life.

Emotional intelligence is essential for teaching and learning as it hosts many critical skills such as time management, stress management, decision making, social skills, empathy, assertiveness, change skills, trust and others. It is about four main skills in personal and social competence namely: i) Self-Awareness; ii) Self-Management; iii) Social Awareness; iv) Relationship Management. Therefore, for successful outcomes we ought to understand our emotions and those of others and manage the relationships properly.

I would like to remind all that effective teaching is associated with passion about the subject, joyfulness in the classroom and a special approach toward students’ needs. As a teaching academic staff, I offer expertise in a particular subject, and impart knowledge into learners by recognising and responding to my own feelings and those of the learners in the classroom. This usually results in learners gaining positive energy, becoming more productive, increasing satisfaction and continuously searching for opportunities for enhancing the teaching session.

I work on developing a good relationship with my students. This helps me as they become more engaged in the process of learning, motivated, collaborative, positive and having the drive to take risks. I believe in removing all walls between myself and my students and build a relationship based on trust, dignity and respect. I enjoy telling my students life stories and share with them experiences that help them relate and connect what they learn to reality.

I know and understand how my students develop and learn. I believe it is my responsibility to plan learning experiences that will both challenge and allow every student to think and grow. I understand what motivates them and therefore structure learning so that students productively collaborate and work together. I also, use my knowledge of the discipline to expose my students to modes of critical thinking, encouraging them to analyze, apply, synthesize, and evaluate all they read and hear.

A good teacher is a good learner too. That is why I constantly learn what is new in the discipline and develop new knowledge. I listen to my students and learn from them as they learn from me. The greatest gift I can give to my students is helping them to be motivated, to think not to memorize, and to want to learn more.

I always look forward and aspire to seeing the successes of my students and feel so proud. They are the future with all that it represents.

*Bradberry, Travis and Greaves, Jean (2009). Emotional Intelligence 2.0, ISBN: 978-0-9743206-2-5.*

## **REMINDER OF THE WEEK**

Institutional Accreditation Inspection Visit: 24 to 27 June 2018 (13 weeks from now)

## **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

*"My parents taught me about the importance of qualities like kindness, respect, and honesty, and I realize how central values like these have been to me throughout my life."*

**Kate Middleton**

 *Happy Reading!* 