



**American University of Beirut
University Scholarship Program
HES Award**

**YEAR ONE QUARTER TWO
NARRATIVE REPORT**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT:
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A. Program Summary

The overarching goal of AUB, through the USAID Higher Education Scholarships (HES) is to increase the private sector competitiveness through increased workforce readiness linked to job opportunities. The project aims specifically at increasing access to quality education, and equipping the beneficiary scholars with the necessary technical, soft, and leadership skills needed to excel in the labor market. Higher Education Scholarships (HES) at AUB will provide undergraduate scholarships, covering educational costs including a housing/transportation allowance and stipends to attend high quality universities that promote critical thinking, freedom, diversity, and respect. HES consists of two components:

Component 1: The University Scholarship Program (USP VIII)

The University Scholarship Program – Phase Eight (USP VIII) which aims at enabling 40 meritorious and financially disadvantaged Lebanese public and private school graduates to access quality higher education to increase their job readiness and maximize their potential in supporting Lebanon’s democratic and economic development.

Component 2: Refugee Scholarship Support (RSS)

HES will offer scholarships to non-Lebanese, having refugee status and are legally residing in Lebanon, to complete undergraduate studies. RSS allows the recruitment, selection, and enrollment of one cohort of 9 non-Lebanese refugee students for up to four academic years.

B. Executive Summary

This report summarizes all the activities and events that took place during the period extending from January 1st, 2019 till March 31st, 2019. The report provides information related to the recruitment period of HES Cycle I. During this reporting period, HES dissemination and outreach material were printed out. Public high schools and public technical school visits were conducted. Private high schools were also reached out via email. Moreover, the report displays how HES has been publically announced online on the AUB-USAID webpage and on various social media platforms. The report also sheds light on the broadcast appearances that were made on several TV/Radio stations.

C. Pre-Recruitment Activities

Upon finalizing the last draft of the HES applications and brochure, a pre-recruitment meeting took place at LAU-Beirut Campus on January 15, 2019. The meeting was attended by: Director of Grants and Contracts at LAU, Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships at LAU, Student Recruitment Officer at LAU, Senior Executive Assistant at the Office of Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Management at LAU, Associate Director of Admissions at AUB; HES Assistant Director at AUB, and RSS Coordinator at AUB. Attendees agreed on the below:

- Student recruitment will start during the first week of February. Both universities are making all efforts to ensure that the applications are ready by then. If applications are not ready, the universities may start visits (in adjacent schools to the campuses) and share the applications at a later stage though this is the least favored option and will only be adopted if serious delays occur in the final printing. This is only as a last resort option.
- Universities will not approach nor email the schools that are affiliated with FTOs. If individual students submit applications, then the students will go through the regular vetting and due diligence process.
- Parents' tuition contribution: If a student spent any year in a private school during G10, G11, or G12, then he/she must contribute towards the university tuition (Except YES exchange program students who may have been in a public school in G10 and G12 but were sponsored by the US Embassy to attend a school in USA in G11). So, even if a student is coming from a public school but has spent G10 in a private one, then he/she must pay a tuition contribution accordingly. Only students who spent three years in a public school are spared from paying a contribution and refugees as well.
- No exceptions will be applicable for students coming from private schools that have tuitions exceeding 5,000,000 LBP.
- The tuition cap of 5,000,000 LBP will be applicable to private schools under the RSS component as well.
- When applying the tuition cut-off amount (5,000,000LBP), both universities recommend to look at the G12 tuition only. Accordingly, if a student was paying an 8,000,000 LBP tuition in G10 or G11 and transferred to a cheaper school, then the universities will only check whether the G12 tuition is lower or higher than 5,000,000LBP irrespective of the tuition amount that was paid in G10 or G11.
- The deadline to receive applications may be postponed until mid-April. This will not be made public to keep the program running steadily, but if delays occur (strikes, winter, exams in schools, or finalization of the application), then both universities will solicit such extension under the work-plan.
- Additional edits will be done to the application based on the discussions in the meeting between AUB and LAU. The application will be sent to USAID for final record keeping.

- Both AUB and LAU are working towards a potential list of eligible schools under 5,000,000LBP. Different options are being explored including potential joint messaging, sending emails to school unions, securing lists if available from MEHE, or other sources.

An email detailing the above was shared with USAID-AOR who approved the edits that were made to the application. In addition to that, USAID-AOR reiterated the same message that was shared earlier pertaining to students coming from schools affiliated or owned by FTOs stating: *“USAID doesn’t preclude students for that cause but all students need to be vetted on a case by case basis”*. The applications and brochures were revised and final proofs were sent to the printers. AUB and LAU then received the printed material on February 1, 2019.

D. HES Recruitment

Recruitment Team

Alongside the preparation of the outreach material, the Office of Admissions contacted USP management early January, 2019 for a list of USP VI Fall 2018 graduates whom they can employ as HES recruiters especially that they are knowledgeable on the subject matter and can share their experience during the assigned school visits. As such, six recruitment officers (three out of which were USP VI Fall 2018 graduates) were appointed as of January 28, 2019 till April 27, 2019. Contracts were made for a three months duration. The criteria for selecting these recruiters are listed below:

Having a Lebanese Nationality, having proper educational background and relevant experience, having good English and Arabic Language Proficiency skills, and having good soft skills (such as presentation skills, communication skills, and time management skills). These recruiters were appointed for the purpose of helping the Director of Recruitment (DOR) in visiting all of the scheduled public regular secondary schools and public technical schools in all districts of Lebanon. The recruiters were divided into three teams of two persons each (1 USP Graduate and 1 non-USP graduate) to visit the schools alongside with the DOR.

HES recruiters underwent a training that was divided into two stages. The first stage of training took place one week before the scheduled school visits and in the office of the DOR. During that stage, the DOR along with the recruiters planned the school visit schedule. Recruiters were then introduced to the HES Award in general. The DOR explained to the recruiters the mission of the program. She then shared with them the “Recruiters Guidelines Document”. She also provided the recruiters with a list of FAQ. Recruiters were also trained on how to approach school directors on phone. They were advised to ask for important details (such as school address, number of G 12 students, number of G 12 sections, etc.) prior to the school visits. During the second stage of training, the DOR accompanied the recruiters and trained them on ground at the school premises (in both regular and technical schools) during the first two days of the actual school visits: February 4,

2019 (technical schools in Dekwaneh were visited) and February 5, 2019 (regular schools in Achrafieh were visited). The training tackled the below mentioned tasks:

- 1) Calling the school directors and taking appointments: As every year, appointments with high schools were taken, at least, two weeks ahead of the scheduled date of the visits.
- 2) Estimating the number of applications and collecting them from the Office of Admissions routinely.
- 3) Rescheduling some school visits due to arising conflicts: The teams had to take decisions regarding rescheduling schools, because of arising conflicts such as examination periods, weather conditions, or strikes.
- 4) Planning and organizing school visits accompanied with USP scholars: USP scholars volunteered to accompany the recruiters to some schools. The teams coordinated with the USP scholars early, picked some of them up from certain locations, and explained to them what to say about their experiences in the during the presentations.
- 5) Performing weekly meetings: Weekly meetings were conducted to plan for the upcoming school visits, distribute tasks among the recruiters, solve any arising conflicts, and take necessary decisions.
- 6) Visiting the schools on the appointed dates, meeting the directors in person, and presenting the scholarship program to the students.

School Visits

A total of 310 public schools, divided between 263 high schools (with around 18,000 G12 students) and 47 technical schools (with around 2,800 BT3 students) were visited by the recruitment team between February 4, 2019 and March 20, 2019. Recruiters arrived to all schools at least thirty minutes ahead of the specified time to meet the directors and give them an overview of the scholarship program. Almost all directors were welcoming and considered the scholarship as a great opportunity for their students. The sections below provide comprehensive details on the schools that were visited.

Prior to the school visits, the Director of Recruitment (DOR) prepared a tentative schedule of schools to be visited (based on previous years' experience) and distributed it to the three recruitment teams, on a weekly basis. Several factors were taken into consideration while preparing the schedule, mainly: location of the schools, proximity of the schools to one another, size of the schools (number of sections and students), weather conditions, etc.). In general, school visits went smooth. Commuting to schools was almost easy especially with the help of google maps, as every year. This year the Lebanese Army also helped the recruiters commute to some of the "remote" and "unsafe" areas (such as Fekha, Ras Baalbak, Ersel, Kaa, Hermel, Akkar, Wadi Khaled, Kleile, Marwahin, North Western Bekaa, etc...).

In Beirut district, a total of 23 schools (18 regular and 5 technical) were visited in the areas demonstrated in Appendix 5, Figure 1. In general, LS and GS students were the most interested. In this district, most of the directors were very friendly and welcoming. Moreover, most of the students knew most of the needed information about this scholarship before the presentation, since LAU recruiters had already visited these schools. In Baabda-Aley district, a total of 23 schools (19 regular schools and 4 technical) were visited. The regular schools, most students showed interest and asked several questions regarding the scholarship. In Metn-Kesrwan-Jbeil district, 35 schools (33 regular and 2 technical) were visited. Most of the students and directors were interested and the recruiters had a meaningful conversation with school directors about the importance of these scholarship opportunities. Many directors praised this scholarship and the USAID organization. In particular, Dhour Shweir public school director indicated that 5 of the G12 students have received the USAID scholarship last year. In Chouf-Aley District, a total of 25 schools (23 high schools and 2 technical) were visited. The schools varied significantly in terms of size. Most school directors were welcoming and most students had interest in applying. Moreover, many students asked questions about the available majors. In South district (Saida, Jezzine, Tyre), a total of 34 schools were visited. The students of all the regular schools were interested and many refugees in G12 were interested in this scholarship especially refugees in Sarafand public school. In Nabatiyeh District, a total of 32 schools (27 regular and 5 technical) were visited. There were some huge schools in the district such as Hasan Kamel El Sabbah High School which had over 1,200 students. These schools were very welcoming and helped the recruiters efficiently present to each section in a timely manner. In Menye-Donniyeh-Zgharta-Koura District, 31 schools (24 regular and 7 technical) were visited in different regions. Almost all directors and students in regular schools were interested in the program. However, there was a decreased interest in the scholarship among students since this year a higher ceiling was placed by USAID on the G10 and G11 averages (a minimum of 13.5/20 cumulative high school average is required for eligibility instead of 12/20 average of previous years). In addition, most of the directors of the technical schools didn't show any interest concerning the scholarship. They stated that most BT students continue their studies at their schools (TS) and that there is no need for them to go to a university where the atmosphere will differ and it would be hard for them to adapt. In Batroun-Tripoli district, 17 schools (15 regular and 2 technical) were visited. Students in these areas were interested in the scholarship program and asked various questions during the presentation. Moreover, the directors were welcoming and highly appreciative of the scholarship opportunity. In addition, there was a huge interest from the student refugees to whom many RSS applications were distributed. In the Beqaa district, a total of 27 schools (23 regular and 4 technical) were visited in various locations. The schools had a low number of students in general but were very friendly and welcoming. School visits went smoothly in those areas and most students seemed interested and asked important questions. Some students were not interested though and explained that their parents would not allow them to go and study in Beirut and live on their own in a dorm. It is worth noting as well that four schools

in this district were not visited, because the weather conditions were very tough. Roads were blocked due to snow and heavy rains, and it was impossible for recruiters to reach those schools. In Baalbek-Hermel district, 28 schools (21 regular and 7 technical) were visited in different areas. In this governorate, there were many schools located in rural areas, in which girls were hesitant to apply. In Akkar district, 35 schools (30 regular and 5 technical) were visited. A remarkable difference in enthusiasm was noticed compared to students in other districts. In general, classes consisted of girls more than boys and students showed no interest in the scholarship. However, most of the directors believed that this scholarship has helped many students from Akkar achieve their dreams. For instance, the Director of Akkar el Atika public school said that three brilliant students from the school had received the USAID scholarship in the past four years and that USAID is really helping the Lebanese community and students who can't afford going to private universities. Furthermore, the Director of Cheikh Ayyach public school mentioned that when USAID started visiting schools in Akkar back in 2012 students didn't really give it a thought since no organization was really striving for a better education in Akkar. However, now all students and families are waiting for the USAID recruitment visit each year since it became a glimmer of hope for many students who are clever and skillful yet can't afford studying in private universities and even in the Lebanese university.

Schools where only Directors were met

A total of 33 schools were visited in which the students were not available mainly due to mid-term exams, weather conditions, and strikes. Therefore, presentations were given to the directors of the schools with whom the details of the HES scholarship were discussed. These directors were also asked to disseminate the scholarship detailed information to their students along with the application forms.

Rescheduled School Visits

In total, 7 school visits were rescheduled due to two main reasons: mid-term exams period (6 schools), and strikes (1 school). Recruiters were able to manage and visit these schools on the rescheduled days especially that most of them are located in Beirut area.

Schools Visits Accompanied by USP Scholars

A total of 10 USP scholars accompanied the recruiters to some school visits, especially to the schools that those scholars graduated from. This helped USP scholars in relaying their experience at AUB to their fellow friends. USP scholars also shared during the presentations how the scholarship has opened many opportunities to them and their families. They also encouraged all eligible students to apply to the scholarship. The USP scholars did an excellent job in relaying their AUB-USP experience, in addition to encouraging the students to apply to the scholarship program.

Private Schools Common Email

AUB Office of Admissions received from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) an approval letter to visit public high schools and technical public schools as of February 4, 2019. In addition to that, AUB Office of Admissions managed to receive from the MEHE the list of private high schools with G12 tuition fees less than 5 million LBP for the purpose of sending them an email to publically announce and disseminate HES recruitment. LAU then vetted this list and sent an email on behalf of both universities to a total of 170 eligible private high schools with yearly tuition fees less than 5 million LBP. The common email that was sent is as per below:

“The American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU) are pleased to introduce and launch the:

- a. The University Scholarship Program (USP VIII) that provides undergraduate scholarships to promising Lebanese, public and private high school students from all governorates of Lebanon.*
- b. The Refugee/Displaced Scholarship Support (RSS) that provides undergraduate scholarships to promising non-Lebanese refugees/displaced, public and private high school students legally residing in all governorates of Lebanon.*

In addition to the above, the Lebanese American University (LAU) is pleased to offer a unique opportunity to pursue a one-year certificate program for non-Lebanese refugees/displaced, public and private high school students legally residing in all governorates of Lebanon.

Note that the certificate program is only offered at LAU.

For more information on all three programs, please refer to the attached documents:

- 1. Brochures regarding the three programs, in Arabic and English, with the link to the website*
- 2. Applications:*
 - a. The USAID regular application, specific to the USP VIII program for Lebanese students*
 - b. The RSS application, specific to non-Lebanese; the RSS application is for both RSS applicants and for applicants for the certificate program*

What to do:

- 1. Interested students may print the application and follow the necessary procedures and requirements as indicated.*
- 2. In order to speed up the application process for your students, we ask that you email us a copy of your recent tuition fees schedule.*

Deadline to receive complete applications for all of the above is March 29, 2019.

In case of any inquiry, you may contact:

For AUB: usp@aub.edu.lb

For LAU: admissions.beirut@lau.edu.lb ; admissions.byblos@lau.edu.lb”

Fairs

In addition to school visits, AUB Admissions Office participated in a number of regional fairs that were organized by the Association of Universities Admission Officers in Lebanon. During those fairs, around 150 high schools have participated. AUB Admission Office representatives provided information about the HES scholarship and distributed application forms to interested students. Approximately, 240 USP applications and 550 RSS applications were distributed in those fairs.

E. HES Dissemination Material

HES dissemination material consisted of: USP VIII application, RSS application, and a brochure. Printed quantities of these documents are highlighted in the table below.

Table 1

HES dissemination material

Description	Quantity
USP VIII Application	6000 copies
RSS Application	3000 copies
Brochures	3000 copies

The Admissions Office received the first batch of the printed applications (around one thousand applications) on February 1, 2019 (500 USP and 500 RSS applications). The remaining applications were received gradually throughout February. A total of 6,000 USP applications, 3,000 RSS applications, and 3,000 brochures were printed for dissemination. Moreover, around 5,000 USP applications and 1,200 RSS applications were distributed during school visits (inclusive of regular and technical schools), during regular fairs, and to individuals who showed up at the AUB Admissions Office. The quantities of HES publications that were distributed in schools were based on the number of sections and students in each school. The total number of application forms distributed in all public high schools (both regular and technical) in all districts of Lebanon is around 4,400 applications (around 3,800 USP and 600 RSS). The number of applications distributed during school visits in each geographical region is shown in the table below:

Table 2

Number of USP and RSS applications distributed in different Lebanese districts

	Districts	Schools	USP Applications	RSS Applications	Total Applications	Total students
Regular schools	Beirut	18	185	45	230	1135
	Baabda-Aley	19	336	47	383	1966
	Shouf-Aley	23	273	57	330	1438

	Metn- Kesserwan- Jbeil	33	227	19	246	1662
	Menye-Koura- Bcharreh- Doniye	24	279	40	319	1456
	Nabatiyeh	27	500	43	543	2085
	Jnoub	30	408	95	503	2418
	Tripoli- Batroun	15	215	18	233	1394
	Baalback- Hermel	21	260	38	298	1364
	Bekaa	27	317	55	372	1609
	Akkar	30	363	47	410	1815
Total Regular		267	3363	504	3867	18342
Technical schools	Beirut	5	51	12	63	423
	Baabda-Aley	4	28	5	33	154
	Shouf-Aley	2	17	6	23	120
	Metn- Kesserwan- Jbeil	2	15	1	16	90
	Menye-Koura- Bcharreh- Doniye	6	38	7	45	375
	Nabatiyeh	5	40	7	47	265
	Jnoub	4	65	18	83	174
	Tripoli- Batroun	3	40	6	46	158

	Baalback-Hermel	7	55	15	70	378
	Bekaa	4	82	8	90	402
	Akkar	5	24	2	26	240
Total Technical		47	455	87	542	2779
Total		314	3818	591	4409	21121

It can be noted that the greatest number of USP application forms were distributed in Nabatieh, South, Bekaa, and Akkar districts mainly due to the fact that these districts have the largest number of students (more than 2,000 students in each one of them). The remaining districts including Baabda-Aley, Shouf-Aley, Metn-Jbeil-Kesserwan, Menye-Donye-Zgharta-Koura, and Baalback-Hermel exhibited a range of 300 to 400 distributed applications. The lowest number of distributed USP applications were in Beirut, Tripoli, and Batroun districts. In regards to the RSS applications, the greatest number of applications were distributed in South, Bekaa, Baalbeck/Hermel districts. It was also noted that the lowest number of RSS applications were distributed in Metn/Chouf and Aley districts. Moreover, the number of applications that were distributed during the regional fairs was 240 USP applications and 550 RSS applications. In addition, applications that were distributed to individuals who showed up at the AUB Office of Admissions consisted of around 1,700 applications (1,100 USP and 600 RSS applications). Hence, the total number of HES applications that were distributed was 6,300 (5,100 USP applications and 1,200 RSS applications).

F. Media Outreach

Both AUB and LAU planned to put an ad in Al Waseet newspaper but found out that the paper was no longer in production. Hence, LAU and AUB recommended to USAID- AOR not to use print media as it did not generate any leads in previous years. Instead, social media platforms was the recommended media strategy for outreach. As such, on February 6 the AUB – USAID University Scholarship Program webpage was revised to include all applicable information pertaining to HES (USP VIII and RSS) scholarship requirements and educational benefits. Sample documents and soft copies of both applications were also made available on the webpage for interested applicants to check and fill.

Social Media Platforms

HES Award and recruitment period were publically announced on: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. USP Instagram platform was recently created for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of USP-USAID scholarship programs.

Facebook Posts

The table below indicates the dates of HES-related Facebook posts along with the reach of each post, engagement, interactions, comments, and shares.

Table 3
HES-related Facebook posts

Date	People Reached	Engagements	Interactions	Comments	Shares
February 5, 2019	8,553	1,305	32	10	29
February 19, 2019	24,020	2,667	47	31	45
March 7, 2019	9,680	605	16	3	10
March 14, 2019	503	71	4	3	0
March 28, 2019	515	73	9	0	2

As a result of the Facebook posts, the total number of likes and followers on AUB-USP Facebook Page increased from 2,205 to 2,423 during the months of February and March. The total reach also jumped from 81 to 841.

Twitter Posts

The table below indicates the dates of HES-related Twitter posts along with the impression of each post, video views (if applicable), total engagements, link clicks, likes, and retweets. In addition to the below twitter posts, two extra posts were retweeted on AUB – USP twitter account from AUB twitter account on March 7 and March 14, 2019.

Table 4
HES-related Twitter posts

Date	Impressions	Video Views	Total Engagements	Link Clicks (Link to application)	Likes	Retweets
February 5, 2019	481	NA	44	28	8	1

March 7, 2019	3,572	584	105	19	10	5
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Instagram Video Post

The table below presents an HES-related Instagram post that was posted on March 8, 2019 along with the number of likes, comments, shares, and saves.

Table 5

HES-related Instagram post

Date	Likes	Comments	Shares	Saved Posts
March 8, 2019	13	0	2	1

TV and Radio Broadcasts

Subsequent to the school visits, TV and radio station broadcasts were scheduled to disseminate information related to USP VIII and RSS. The national TV appearances were organized and completed by HES Director of Recruitment who was accompanied during three of these appearances by USP VI graduates. The broadcasts started by a TV appearance on March 9, 2019 and ended by a radio interview on March 28, 2019.

G. Challenges

Quarter two marks the recruitment phase of HES cycle I which is a very busy and significant period. There were no major challenges faced during this quarter, however, if we may say it was somehow challenging to finalize edits (in coordination with LAU) related to HES applications and brochure and secure that the documents were printed out in due time and before the agreed school visits start date (i.e. February 4, 2019). Once dissemination material was ready, public school visits and technical school visits were conducted; School visits took place between February 4, 2019 and March 22, 2019. These two months were quite busy with scheduling the school visits and disseminating HES material. Major challenges that were faced during the school visits included unfavorable weather conditions, time conflict of school visits with mid-term examinations at some schools, and strikes. To overcome these challenges, recruiters had to reschedule the school visits several times to make sure to disseminate HES scholarship across all Lebanese districts. It is worth noting that, in general, there was a decreased interest in the scholarship among students because of the increased threshold for G10 and G11 averages; Eligible candidates this year must attain a minimum of 13.5/20 in their high school years as well as having at least an average of 13.5/20 on the national BACC-II exams. Moreover, technical school students didn't manifest as much interest for the program as regular school students who were too optimistic about this opportunity. These

students' interest varied knowing also that engineering majors are not offered to students with technical backgrounds, in addition to the fact that most technical school students lack English Language proficiency skills.

H. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities

This progress report described major activities related to HES Year 1 recruitment stage. Academic year 2018-2019 is the launching year of the HES award and is marked by the recruitment and selection of Lebanese and non-Lebanese students (having refugee status) from public and private schools in Lebanon. The report provided a comprehensive feedback about public school visits and technical school visits. Based on that, the below main conclusions could be made:

- Official schools with the largest number of students were the most competitive and enthusiastic about the scholarship
- Students of technical schools didn't show much interest
- Students of most remote regions are not encouraged to apply to the scholarship because they are unfamiliar to the environment that they may be exposed to in Beirut

The next three months will be busy with data verification, vetting and shortlisting applicants, as well as HES Open Days. The table below indicates the activities for the upcoming quarter:

Activity	Date
File Verification	April 16- April 30
Clean-up file, adjustments (finalized tables)	May 2- May 6
Shortlisting Candidates	May 7 - May 10
Data Verification of the shortlisted candidates by the Admissions' Office	May 13 - May 14
USAID Verification	May 15 - May 16
Vetting of shortlisted candidates and their parents on PVS	May 17- May 31 (weekends upon need)
Committee Meeting	May 20
USAID Approval	May 21- 22
Phone calls to inform shortlisted candidates	May 23 - May 24
Planning and Preparation for Open Days	as of May 23
Workshop Conducted to train interviewers on the Leadership's Interview Rubric	May 23- May 24

Open Days	May 27- May 31
Fitr Holiday	June 5- June 7
First Day for Official Exams	June 18
Last Day for Official Exams	June 25