



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

**YEAR ONE
QUARTER THREE
NARRATIVE REPORT**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT:
No. 72026818CA00002**

**REPORTING PERIOD:
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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 April 1st, 2019 till June 30th, 2019. The report provides information on the selection process of HES Cycle I students. During this reporting period, AUB Office of Admission followed-up on incomplete applications, verified applicants’ data, conducted due diligence, and presented eligible USP VIII and RSS lists to HES Steering Committee for shortlisting purposes. Eligible USP VIII and RSS applicants (40% in total) were then shortlisted and invited to AUB campus to attend HES Open Days. Shortlisted applicants sat for EEE Exam and were invited for two interviews: leadership interview and financial interview. Their parents, on the other hand, were invited during the open days for a financial interview. Results of EEE Exam and results of leadership and financial interviews were then compiled awaiting for the Lebanese Official Exam results to be out in July, 2019.

C. Pre-Shortlisting Activities

Data Entry and Verification

The period extending from April 1st till April 12th, 2019 was dedicated to following-up on incomplete USP VIII and RSS applications and finalizing data entry. AUB recruitment officers were trained on the below by AUB Office of Admissions as soon as the school visits ended:

- Receiving applications to ensure that all applications are received by the deadline
- Verifying filled applications to ensure that all required fields are filled properly in ink not in pencil
- Verifying attached documents in each application to ensure that all supporting documents (original and copies) were submitted by the deadline – April 12, 2019
- Providing applicants with an “Application Acknowledgment Receipt Form” to acknowledge complete or incomplete applications
- Conducting due diligence review through publically available databases
- Data entry of information related to applicants and their parents/guardian on the Partner Vetting System Application (PVS)

Applications reached AUB Admissions Office either by hand or via postmail. Below is a description on each process:

- By hand: Applicants submitted their applications to AUB recruitment officer who immediately verified if the application was complete and checked if all the required documents were available. The recruitment officer issued then the “Application Acknowledgment Receipt Form.” On the receipt form, the recruitment officer indicated if all application documents were complete or incomplete. If “incomplete,” the applicant was asked to bring the missing document(s) while reiterating on the deadline of submission of the missing documents.
- By mail: Applications that were received by postmail were verified by the recruitment officers for completeness of information and required documents. If the application was incomplete, the applicant was informed on phone about the missing document(s) and reminded of the deadline for submission.

The “Application Acknowledgement Receipt Form” was regularly updated by the recruiters upon receipt of needed documents. Applicants who did not submit the missing documents before the indicated deadline for submission of incomplete applications or who had unclear information presented in their applications had their applications considered as incomplete. All complete applications that were received beyond the deadline for submission were also not processed. Afterwards, recruitment officers completed data entry and file verification.

Data Entry

Complete applications were processed for data entry by recruitment officers and supporting staff members from AUB Office of Admissions while ensuring that the biographical data and chronological sequence of school years were clearly and accurately reflected on AUB Banner. Newly added public schools' and private schools' names were also coded on the Banner as per respective district(s). Information related to applicants' academics and biography was completed by mid-April. Afterwards, entry of financial data was launched and completed by end of April 2019.

Data Entry Verification

After completion of data entry, a verification sheet was prepared per application. This sheet included a summary of the applicant's biographical data and academic background inclusive of: date, place of birth, nationality, school(s) attended, mother's full maiden name, grades, home address, and many other biographical information. This sheet was verified for accuracy against the original application. Financial information that was provided by the applicant and/or his/her parents was also entered on the Banner. Financial information was then verified to make sure that all needed information was documented properly. Inconsistencies, such as a difference between the documented parent's job and the job statement provided by the employer or a discrepancy between the income documented in the application and the income listed in the 'Income statement', were equally verified for accuracy. An excel file was then generated inclusive of all data.

Internal Control Procedures

i- Eligibility Criteria

Internal control procedures were installed to ensure that eligibility criteria were met, for both components of the HES award, through file verification once all data entry was completed. As per HES Award, eligibility criteria consist of the below:

For USP VIII:

- Applicants must be Lebanese citizens
- Applicants must be attending a public high school or a private high school for the last three years
- Applicants must earn at least a cumulative combined average of 13.5/20 in their first two years of secondary schooling (Grades 10 and 11)
- Applicants must graduate from their respective schools in the summer of 2019
- Applicants coming from grade 12 private high schools must pay a tuition fee less than L.L. 5,000,000

- Applicant parents must not receive an educational subsidy of \$5,000 or more

For RSS:

- Applicant must be residing in Lebanon and holding a valid and legal Lebanese residency permit issued by the Lebanese authorities
- Applicant must be attending a public high school or a private high school for the last three years
- Applicants must earn at least a cumulative combined average of 13.5/20 in their first two years of secondary schooling (Grades 10 and 11)
- Applicant must not be an asylum seeker
- Applicants must graduate from their respective schools in the summer of 2019
- Applicants coming from grade 12 private high schools must pay a tuition fee less than L.L. 5,000,000

ii- *Number of Applications Received*

The total number of USP VIII applications that were received by AUB Office of Admissions was equal to 703, and the total number of RSS applications received was equal to 164. Received applications were distributed as per the table below:

USP VIII				RSS				
Applications from Private High Schools		Applications from Public High Schools		Applications from Palestinian Refugees		Applications from Syrian Refugees		Applications from Other Nationalities
58 Females	35 Males	426 Females	184 Males	75 Females	37 Males	33 Females	17 Males	2 (Egyptian and Pakistani)
93		610		112		50		2

Applications that were received after the deadline with incomplete documents and applications that did not meet the eligibility criteria were rejected. The total number of eligible USP VIII applications thus ended up to be 676, and the total number of eligible RSS applications ended up to be 160 as shown in the tables below:

Total Number of Eligible Applications			
USP VIII		RSS	
Males	Females	Males	Females
213	463	53	107

Total Number of Eligible Applications per Private or Public High School							
Public High Schools				Private High Schools			
USP VIII		RSS		USP VIII		RSS	
Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
180	406	47	100	33	57	6	7

iii- Scores

Another internal control system was performed regarding the calculation of the financial need score of each applicant. A need score was computed using the data that was submitted by the applicant in his/her application form. The Need Score was calculated based on the following:

- Need amount of the applicant (Total Expenses - Net Income),
- Need average per district, and
- Standard Deviation (SD) per district,

Whereby:

- Need average per district is the average of the need amounts of all applicants within a District
- SD per district is the SD of all need amounts within a District
- Total Expenses include: expenses of the household, sibling high school education, sibling university education, and total loans
- Total Income includes: father’s income, mother’s income, business income, farm, real estate holdings, and securities
- Net Income: total income + a ratio of the total sibling income and total property (home, asset, land, cars)

In addition to the need score, a grade point average (AVG GRADE 10/11) was also computed for every applicant, whereby: AVG GRADE 10/11 was computed based on G10 and G11 grades as submitted by the school. As such, a composite score was computed for every applicant as per the formula: Composite score = 50% Need Score + 50% AVG GRADE 10/11. For further verification, AUB Office of Admissions screened through the records of applicants especially flagged ones to ensure consistency and reviewed the lists per district making sure that applicant averages and district averages were calculated accurately. Likewise, a verification was done concerning the calculated need score and the district average need score. In case of inconsistencies, the application

was reviewed again for clarification. Following that, a final clean excel file was generated and presented to the USP Committee for the first round of shortlisting.

D. Shortlisting Applicants for HES Open Days

Shortlisting Applicants

As per HES Award guidelines, a total of 40% of applicants were shortlisted on May 13, 2019 to participate in HES Open Days. Criteria that were studied for shortlisting consisted of the below:

- School grades (Averages of grades 10 and 11 were compared to the averages generated for every district; hence, each applicant's grades were compared to the district grade average)
- Total Family Income (each applicant's family income was compared to the generated district income average)
- Gender balance per district (if gender balance was not met within a district, then applicants were selected from adjacent districts making sure to maintain gender balance)
- Meeting due diligence requirements (vetting will be completed at a later stage for the final list of selected HES applicants as per USAID-AOR's approval)

After reviewing data on HES applicants, a total of 272 USP VIII applicants were shortlisted and a total of 64 RSS applicants were shortlisted to participate in HES Open Days between May 27 and May 31, 2019. Details related to gender, high school, and nationality of shortlisted applicants are mentioned in the section below.

HES Selection Steering Committee Meeting

HES Selection Committee met on May 20, 2019 at Reynolds Hall-3rd floor. Committee members were: Associate Provost, Provost Designee and Program Director, USP (7) Director, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, Associate Directors of Admissions, OIRA Director, Associate Vice President for Communication, Executive Director, Undergraduate Program at Suliman Olayan School of Business, HES Assistant Director, and RSS Coordinator.

HES Director and Provost Designee first introduced himself and asked the attending members to introduce themselves. Attendees were then asked to sign a non-disclosure conflict of interest form as per the new terms of the agreement before starting the meeting. He then explained the purpose of the meeting and introduced committee members to the HES Award while discussing both USP VIII and RSS components in general. HES Director then explained that once committee members approve on shortlisted applicants, these applicants shall be contacted by AUB Admissions Office to attend AUB - HES Open Days which will take place from May 27 till May 31. He added that shortlisted applicants will sit for the EEE Exam and will undergo their leadership and

financial interviews (along with their parents). They will also receive a career orientation session and will have a campus tour. The sections mentioned below provide a detailed description on the matters that were discussed during the committee meeting.

Associate Director of Admissions then took the lead and explained the selection process that took place on May 13, 2019 which was carried out according to the guidelines of selection stated in HES Award. A total of 40 USP VIII applicants and a total of 9 RSS applicants will be finally selected to join AUB by the end of July, 2019 after the EEE Exam results and Lebanese BACC II results are out. The Admissions Associate Director explained that a USP VIII application, RSS application, and HES brochure were all developed in November, 2018 with the help of AUB Office of Communications and in coordination with LAU. Schools were then visited by recruiters starting February 4, 2019 till March 22, 2019. A total of 263 public high schools were visited, a total of 47 public technical schools were visited, and a total of 170 private high schools received the documents on HES via email. HES brochures were also distributed during AUB fairs. Applicants then started applying to HES scholarship; the deadline to submit complete applications was April 12, 2019. The total number of HES received applications was 838 as per below:

- Lebanese Private School Applicants = 93
- Lebanese Public School Applicants = 610
- Palestinian Applicants = 113
- Syrian Applicants = 50
- Egyptian Applicants = 1

AUB Admissions Associate Director then shared the number of shortlisted candidates as per below:

- USP VIII: - Private School Shortlisted Candidates = 48 (44%)
- o Public School Shortlisted Candidates = 224 (39%)
 - o Female Shortlisted Candidates = 177 (39%)
 - o Male Shortlisted Candidates = 95 (43%)

Total USP VIII Shortlisted Candidates = 272

- RSS: - Private School Shortlisted Candidates = 39 (43%)
- Public School Shortlisted Candidates = 24 (35%)
 - Female Shortlisted Candidates = 43 (37%)
 - Male Shortlisted Candidates = 21 (44%)

Total RSS Shortlisted Candidates = 64

Director of Admissions and Financial Aid Office then explained how the need score is calculated, and AUB Admissions Associate Director then shared the weights for final selection as per below:

USP VIII: - Grades 10 & 11 School Grades = 35%

- BACC II Results = 30%
- Leadership and Financial Interview = 25%
- EEE Results = 10%

RSS: - Grades 10 & 11 School Grades = 35%

- BACC II Results = 35%
- Leadership and Financial Interview = 25%
- EEE Results = 5%

Committee members then approved on the shortlisted candidates. HES Director and Provost Designee concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for his or her attendance and active participation.

E. Open Days

USP Team Preparing for Open Days

Early during the month of May 2019, HES team started planning for the Open Days. The Science Lecture Hall (SLH) was reserved for the career orientation session that was scheduled after lunchtime to capture the attention of shortlisted students and their parents/guardians before starting the interviewing sessions that were scheduled from 2:00 pm till 5:00 pm on each day. Classes and office rooms in Reynolds’ Hall were reserved for conducting the students’ leadership and financial need interviews. As for the morning breakfasts and lunch breaks, catering was selected as per AUB bidding requirements to supply the food during the five open days. Furthermore, the HES team distributed the shortlisted candidates over the five open days. Wednesday May 29, 2019 was dedicated solely for RSS shortlisted applicants. Open Days activities with their respective times and venues are listed in the table below:

Time	Activity	Venue
7:30 a.m.	Receiving the shortlisted applicants and their parents by the HES team and student volunteers	AUB Main Gate (Upper Campus)
8:15 a.m.	Welcoming speech by HES Team and inviting the	Area Outside West Hall

	shortlisted applicants and their parents to breakfast	
9:00-11:00 a.m.	Parents sit for the financial interview	Financial Aid Office at West Hall Basement
9:00 -12:00 p.m.	Shortlisted applicants sit for EEE administered by OIRA	500 Nicely
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Shortlisted applicants and their parents have lunch	Reynolds Hall Front Entrance
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Career Orientation session	Science Lecture Hall (SLH)
2:00-5:00 p.m.	Shortlisted applicants sit for the financial interview and leadership interview	Reynolds Hall (Third Floor)

Office of Admissions Preparing for HES Open Days

Once shortlisted candidates were distributed over the five open days' schedule by the HES team, AUB Office of Admissions called the candidates and informed them that they were shortlisted for the University Scholarship Program or the Refugee Scholarship Support. Applicants were informed that they had to come to AUB on the assigned date to take the EEE Exam, sit for the leadership and financial interviews, tour the campus, and attend the career orientation session. HES shortlisted applicants were notified of the below:

- Candidates are only shortlisted not finally selected
- Open days start at 7:30 am and end at 5:00 pm
- Entrance is only through AUB main gate at 7:30 am sharp
- Candidate must be accompanied by his/her official breadwinner to the open day
- Breadwinner will sit for the financial interview
- Candidate will sit for EEE Exam and two interviews (Leadership and Financial)
- Candidate must bring with him/her an application receipt
- USP VIII candidate must bring with him/her an original ID (هوية او اخراج قيد)
- Non-Lebanese candidate must bring with him/her an original ID and the legal residency permit (هوية او اخراج قيد والإقامة)

- Candidate will receive a transportation fee
- Parents and candidates will be served breakfast and lunch

All candidates were encouraged to visit AUB-USP webpage to check the Open Days schedule and guidelines. Moreover, shortlisted candidate lists (with only ID numbers being revealed) were posted on AUB-USP website directly after due diligence and USAID-AOR approval of lists.

Finalization of Lists

Two out of the 336 HES shortlisted candidates informed AUB Office of Admissions that they will not attend the Open Days; one USP VIII candidate accepted another scholarship while the second candidate stated that he is no more interested in the RSS scholarship. A number of candidates asked for rescheduling the date assigned to them since they had school exams. Final lists were then shared with the Admission Office team, who in return shared the financial information of the candidates with the financial aid interviewers. Financial aid interviewers then reviewed the information provided and prepared their questions for both breadwinners and students prior to the interviews.

Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) Preparing for Open Days

Invitation of Faculty Members

USP Management invited faculty members by email to take part in the leadership assessment interviews. A total of 9 faculty members and 6 staff members expressed their interest to participate in the leadership assessment interviews.

Training Sessions for Panelists

One-on-one meetings were conducted with the faculty members to guide them through the leadership assessment process and the required forms and matrix that need to be filled based on pre-set criteria (Self-Knowledge and “Fit”, Planning Organization and Motivation, Leadership Skills, Civic Commitment, Communication and Conflict Resolution, Maturity and Problem Solving). The panelists were introduced to the questions that need to be raised during the interview which include: validation questions, leadership assessment questions, and additional due diligence questions.

Preparation for the Open Days

After receiving a PDF copy of the application forms from the Admissions office, a daily schedule of individual interviews was prepared by CCECS for the applicants and allocated to two panelists each (one faculty member and one CCECS/USP staff member).

Applications were also shared via email with the assigned panelists in order to review applicants' essays and prepare relevant questions to be addressed during the leadership interviews. In coordination with USP management, the files of matrix sheets and schedules were photocopied and prepared in files in order to be handed to the panelists on the interview day.

Signature of Confidentiality forms

All faculty members and CCECS team members participating in the leadership assessment interviews signed a confidentiality form which was shared with HES management.

USP Students Volunteering during Open Days

To ensure USP students' engagement during the open days, the event was announced to USP students as a volunteering activity and students were highly encouraged to take part in this stage. Prior to the open days, an orientation session was delivered to interested volunteers by HES management. Eventually, seventy-seven USP students from USP VII-Cycles 1, 2 and 3 actively participated during the open days to provide relevant guidance to applicants in the different stages starting from welcoming them at the main gate, escorting them to the EEE Exams and financial and leadership interviews, followed by a campus tour reaching to Reynolds Hall.

Open Days

The HES team prepared five lists of shortlisted candidates. Each list was assigned to one of the open days scheduled from Monday May 27th to Friday May 31st. On each day, candidates were distributed into two identical lists: one for the financial interview and the other one for the leadership interview. Moreover, shortlisted candidate lists were shared with AUB Protection Office to facilitate students' entrance during the Open Days.

Shortlisted candidates arrived to AUB Main Gate where USP volunteers met them and escorted them to West Hall. Candidates and their parents then started their day at AUB with the morning breakfast. Immediately after that, shortlisted candidates were guided to Nicely 500 to sit for the EEE Exam. Before taking the exam, HES team verified the identification card of each candidate or his/her legal residency permit as well as checked his/her name on the prepared attendance sheet. A total of 7 USP VIII and 2 RSS candidates did not show up for their scheduled open day. While HES candidates were sitting for the EEE Exam, their parents/guardians sat for the financial interviews with the Financial Aid officers. Towards noon, shortlisted candidates gathered at the second floor terrace in Reynolds Hall to take their lunch break while chitchatting with the USP volunteering students who shared with them their AUB and USP experience. After the lunch break, volunteers guided the candidates to SLH where the common keynote address on Career Orientation was given. Candidates were informed about the wide choice of majors available at AUB (as per HES Award enlisted majors) and the importance of considering

the demand of the job market and giving themselves career options that complement their career goals. Candidates were also encouraged to apply to gender-stereotyped majors such as Nursing as this will endorse diversity when applying to future career opportunities. At the end of the career orientation session, shortlisted candidates who didn't fill the Partner Information Form (PIF) properly were asked to fill the form again and were guided thoroughly during that process. At 2:00 pm, the interviewing sessions started. USP volunteers escorted the candidates back to Reynolds Hall where they sat for the financial and leadership interviews. Each candidate had to sit for two separate interviews:

- Financial Interview: performed by representatives from the Financial Aid Office
- Leadership Interview (performed by two panelists): CCECS representative and an AUB Faculty member.
(Copy of Leadership Interview Questionnaire and rubric is attached in Annex G)

Leadership Panelists referred to the five Leadership Assessment Questions, provided by CCECS, in order to evaluate applicants' leadership potentials. The interview was based on the following criteria: Self-knowledge and Fit; Planning, Organization and Motivation; Leadership Skills; Civic Commitment; Communication and Conflict Resolution; Maturity and Problem Solving, whereby each is scored on a 1 to 5 scale (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). Grades may be made in 0.25 points increments. Accordingly, the score of the 6 questions was over 30 points for every student per each panelist. The total score for each applicant would be equal to an average over 30 based on the scoring matrix of the two interviewing panelists. Upon completion of the leadership interview, each candidate received the transportation allowance (30,000 L.L. for applicants coming from Beirut and Baabda districts and 50,000 L.L. for applicants coming from other districts) and was asked to sign next to his/her name for confirmation.

Results

After the Open Days, CCECS updated the leadership interview results based on the matrix sheets that were filled by the panelists. A result for each applicant was calculated based on the average of the two panelists' scores. After being checked, the results were then shared with HES management. Then, these results were shared with the Office of Admissions to be added to the candidates' data sheet. Leadership and financial interview results constitute 25% of the total scoring matrix for both USP VIII and RSS applicants. By mid-June, The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) shared with HES management the EEE results of all HES shortlisted candidates. Results were then shared with the Office of Admissions to be part of the candidates' data sheet. EEE Exam results account for 10% of the total score of USP VIII candidates, while it accounts for 5% of the total score of RSS candidates.

F. Conclusion and Challenges

In conclusion, this quarter started with receiving HES applications and ended with the completion of HES Open Days and release of EEE Exam results as well as leadership and financial interview results. The quarter began with receiving applications, verifying applications' completeness and related documents, sorting applications for data entry, data entry verification, and listing applicants according to need. Shortlisting of HES candidates to participate in Open Days was then completed which was followed by HES Open Days that took place between May 27 and May 31 and ran very smoothly. It is worth noting that this year was the first time ever whereby Refugee Candidates are selected as HES potential beneficiaries. EEE Exam results as well as leadership and financial interview results were then released and compiled while awaiting for Lebanese Official Exam Results. Open Days ran very smoothly but it is worth sharing that a few challenges were faced such as distributing candidates among the five scheduled days, monitoring candidates' absenteeism, and ensuring that all candidates completed all activities during their scheduled Open Day. One mild wise change worth sharing was increasing the number of dedicated Leadership interview panels from five panels to six. When day one of Open Days was over, HES management noticed that candidates waited quite some time for their interview turns. HES management thus decided to increase the number of panels to six in the subsequent Open Days, and as a lesson learned the same procedure will be followed in the upcoming Open Days.

G. Upcoming Activities

Activity	Date (2019)
Expecting Lebanese Official Exams Results	Week of July 22
Official Exam Results Data Entry	July 22 - July 26
Preparation of new tables including EEE and Bacc Results of the shortlisted candidates	July 29-July 30
Final selection of students	July 31
Committee Meeting	August 2
USAID approval on final selection	August 5
Phone Calls to inform students of their final selection	August 6, 7
Major Confirmation and Meeting with HES Management	August 8 - August 9
Submission of Official Exam results to admission's Office	up to August 9
USP and RSS Student Orientation	August 16
USP Parents' Orientation	August 19
RSS Parents' Orientation	August 20
UPP Orientation	August 26
AUB Orientation	August 26 - August 27

PP and MBTI Exams	August 31
Settling in the dorms (scholars receive book allowances and monthly stipends)	August 26 - August 29
First Day of classes for Fall 2019-2020	August 29