



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

**YEAR FOUR  
QUARTER THREE  
NARRATIVE REPORT  
3**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT:  
No. 72026818CA00002**

**REPORTING PERIOD:  
April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 – June 30<sup>th</sup> 2022**

**Date Report Submitted: July 2022**

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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 full educational costs, including a housing/transportation allowance and stipends, to attend high quality universities that promote critical thinking, freedom, diversity, and respect. The HES consists of two components:

### Component 1: The University Scholarship Program (USPVIII Cycle IV)

The University Scholarship Program – HES USPVIII Cycle IV, which aims at enabling 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- Cycle IV)

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

## **B. Executive Summary**

This report summarizes all the activities that took place during the period extending from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, till June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The narrative provides information on the data entry verification, financial aid validation, HES Cycle IV (USP VIII Cycle IV, RSS Cycle IV) Open Days that were held as scheduled. The shortlisting of HES Cycle IV scholars was done by the admissions office team based on the USAID-AOR approved scoring matrix. Then, the list of shortlisted candidates was presented to the HES Steering Committee and USAID-AOR for approval. The deadline for the AUB USAID FAID application was extended till April the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Consequently, the application management process went smoothly, whereby, AUB’s Office of Admissions followed-up on incomplete applications, performed data verification, data cleansing, and financial aid verification as well as prepared USP VIII and RSS Cycle IV eligibility lists to be presented to the HES Steering Committee for shortlisting purposes.

Up to this date, the Minister of Education and Higher Education's (MEHE) went through with the Lebanese Baccalaureate II exams that are scheduled for the beginning of July 2022. Therefore, the final selection process will take place after the Lebanese Baccalaureate II exams results come out.

### **C. Pre-Shortlisting Activities**

#### **Submission of Applications and Supporting Documents**

The deadline for the USAID admission application was extended till March 21, 2022, and the extension was approved by LAU, AUB and USAID AOR. The deadline for the AUB USAID FAID application was extended till April 13, 2022. Multiple email reminders were sent to applicants with incomplete applications and all applicants were contacted over the phone by the usaid recruiters. Applicants who weren't able to upload or provide the required supporting documents were allowed to email these documents to the hes email ([hes@aub.edu.lb](mailto:hes@aub.edu.lb)).

#### **Financial Aid Webinars**

Six webinars were conducted between April 1, 2022-April 14, 2022, which took place at 6:00 p.m. The webinar schedule was promoted on a daily basis on Instagram stories.

#### **Data Entry and Verification**

AUB's Office of Admissions started receiving HES-Cycle IV online admission applications in January 2022.

The recruitment and admission officers were trained by AUB's Office of Admissions team to fulfill the below mentioned tasks:

- Verifying submitted applications to ensure that all required fields are properly filled.
- Data entry for complete admission applications.
- Verifying uploaded documents with each application to ensure that all supporting documents were submitted, applicants with missing documents were sent an email to secure them.

Moreover, applicants who still had some missing documents were advised to secure and submit these documents by a set deadline.

*Data Entry, Data Entry Verification and Admissions Validation*

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). The data entry of all information related to applicants' academics, biography, and validation of these data against uploaded documents were completed by end of April 2022.

### *Financial aid Validation*

After the completion of admission validation of all completed applications, the Financial Aid Office took over the financial verification as per the instructions manual that was prepared. All relevant financial information were verified for accuracy against the uploaded supporting documents provided by the applicant. Applicants were emailed and contacted regarding missing financial documents. 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 stated in the online application and the income listed in the 'Income statement' were equally verified for accuracy and applications were updated on banner accordingly. The missing documents were verified and processed by the AUB's Office of Financial Aid team on an ongoing basis. The financial aid validation was completed in Mid-June 2022.

### *Internal Control Procedures*

#### *i- Eligibility Criteria*

Internal control procedures ensured that eligibility criteria were met for both components of the HES award. Eligibility criteria consist of the below:

For USP VIII-Cycle IV:

- 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 2022.
- 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 2022.

ii- *Number of Applications Received*

The total number of USP VIII-Cycle IV admission applications that were submitted online was equal to 1408, and the total number of RSS-Cycle IV admission applications submitted online was equal to 324. While the total number of USP VIII-Cycle IV financial aid applications that were submitted online was equal to 919, and the total number of RSS-Cycle IV financial aid submitted online was equal to 222.

Submitted admission and financial aid applications were distributed as per the table below:

USAID Type	Admission Application Started	Admission Application Submitted	Financial Application Started	financial application Submitted
USAID-RSS: Refugee students	694	324	278	222
USAID-USP8: Lebanese students	2927	1408	1195	919

## D. Shortlisting Applicants for HES Cycle IV Open Days

### D.1 Shortlisting Applicants

As per HES Award guidelines, 40% of USP VIII applicants were shortlisted, while 50% of RSS applicants were shortlisted based on the low number of completed RSS applications. Consequently a meeting for the shortlisting of HES Cycle IV applicants was held on June 14, 2022. The criteria used for shortlisting included 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).

It’s important to mention that the applicants’ records were assessed based on the following two types of evaluation:

1. Average academic within each of the designated geographic regions (districts) in compliance with the specific award standards.
2. Average need based on a multitude of financial information points aggregated by geographic region (district).

A final score of 50% of each of the above averages specified in numbers 1 and 2 (Need50Grade50) was computed helping in shortlisting the most eligible applicants.

After reviewing data on HES applicants, out of the 1379 USP candidates who applied for the USP scholarship 646 were eligible according to the below eligibility criteria:

- Lebanese nationals holding Lebanese nationality
- Not holding US green cards or an American passport and excluding asylum seekers
- Currently attending G12 in public and private schools inside Lebanon and including those who did one year in the USA under the YES/ACCESS programs
- Having an average GPA for G10 and G11 of 13.5/20 and above
- Having a total family income of \$30,000 and less

According to the award, 40% out of the eligible applicants should be shortlisted respecting the below distribution restriction percentages:

50/50 gender distribution

30% from Beirut and surroundings and 70% from rural areas

Below is a summary table of the USP figures and percentages whereby 258 were shortlisted during the meeting:

APPLIED	ELIGIBLE	% ELIGIBLE	SHL	% SHL
1379	646	47%	258	40%

As for the RSS applicants and exceptionally for this year, 50% of the eligible RSS applicants were considered for the shortlisting and not the usual 40%. Out of the 334 RSS candidates who applied for the RSS scholarship 145 were eligible according to the below eligibility criteria:

- Non-Lebanese refugees. Refugees other than Palestinians should be holding valid residency papers. Expired ones were accepted if they are renewed upon short selection.
- Not holding US green cards or an American passport and excluding asylum seekers
- Currently attending G12 in public or private schools inside Lebanon
- Having an average GPA for G10 and G11 of 13.5/20 and above
- Having a total family income of \$30,000 and less

Since there are no distribution restrictions to be followed in the RSS shortlisting process, 72 were shortlisted during the meeting and below is a summary table of the USP figures and percentages:

APPLIED	ELIGIBLE	% ELIGIBLE	SHL	% SHL
334	145	43%	72	50%

In summary, a total number of 258 USP VIII Cycle IV applicants and a total number of 72 RSS Cycle IV applicants were shortlisted to participate in the HES Open Days that took place from Monday June 20 to Friday June 24, 2022.

## **D.2 HES Selection Steering Committee Meeting**

**Date and Time:** Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 at 3:00 pm

**Location:** Reynold’s Hall

**Purpose of Meeting:** Committee meeting on the process by which the HES cycle IV students were shortlisted.

- HES Provost Designee began the meeting with a brief summary of the recruitment process for HES cycle IV that took place between the months of January and April.
- Admission’s Associate Director began her presentation on the shortlisting process. Out of the 646 USP eligible applicants, 258 were shortlisted (eligibility criteria: (1) Being a Lebanese national holding Lebanese nationality, (2) Not holding US green cards or American passport and not an asylum seeker, (3) Currently attending G12 in private or public school in Lebanon, (4) have an average GPA for G10 and G11 of 13.5/20 or above).
- For the RSS program, out of the 146 eligible applicants, 72 were shortlisted (Eligibility criteria: (1) Having a Lebanese residency, (2) Not holding US green cards or American passport and not an asylum seeker, (3) Currently attending G12 in private or public school in Lebanon, (4) have an average GPA for G10 and G11 of 13.5/20 or above).



- For the shortlisting, 40% of the USP applicants were chosen for shortlisting, based on academic merit, financial need, a 50-50 gender distribution, as well as the requirement that 30% of the applicants must be from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, and the remaining 70% from the other areas of Lebanon. The final number of shortlisted students was 258.
- As for the RSS, 50% of eligible applicants were shortlisted, the gender and geographic distribution are not factored in, and they were chosen solely on the composite score of their financial need and academic merit. The final number of shortlisted students was 72.
- For the USP, Admission's Associate Director showed statistics tables for the shortlisted students: that 50% were female and 50% were male. That 30% of the students were from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, while 70% were from the rest of the districts. That 44% of the students were from private schools and 56% were from public schools.
- HES Director stated that the Open days will be take place between June 20th and June 24th, 2022.
- It was generally agreed that the number of students to be accepted into the program will depend on the pool of applicants.
- Director of the Admissions' Office then lists the next steps: the financial aid interviews, the leadership interviews, and the EEE exam. Then we have to wait if the official exams will take place.

**There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.**

### **E. Open Days Preparations**

After completing all the required screening, the list of all HES Cycle IV shortlisted candidates was then posted on the AUB-USP website.

During the last week of May and first week of June 2022, HES team and AUB Office of Admissions team started planning for the Open Days. A number of meetings were held between HES management team, the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), and the Financial Aid department to discuss and agree on the logistics of both the leadership and financial interviews of the shortlisted USP VIII and RSS Cycle IV candidates and their breadwinners scheduled between Monday June 20, and June 24, 2022. Since the current COVID-19 situation was under control, it was agreed that both the financial and leadership interviews would be conducted onsite; the breadwinner financial aid interviews to take place in West Hall and the leadership and financial aid interviews for shortlisted candidates in Reynolds Hall.

Shortlisted candidates were then called by the AUB Office of Admissions team and informed that they were shortlisted for the first round of HES Cycle IV selection. Candidates received one phone call from the American University of Beirut - AUB to inform them about their shortlisting, the financial and leadership interviews dates and time, which documents they need to bring with them as well as other important instructions. Candidates who were unreachable the 1<sup>st</sup> time around were contacted several times until they answered, except for some of the RSS candidates were unreachable despite numerous trials probably due to lack of network coverage in their camps.

The below script was followed when contacting the shortlisted candidates over the phone:

- *You have been shortlisted (and not finally selected) for the HES cycle IV scholarship for the Academic Year 2022-2023.*
- *You are invited along with your breadwinner “mo3eel” (parents) to an open day, at the American University of Beirut on this date \_\_\_\_\_ . You need to be at AUB main gate at 8:00 am.*
- *You have to bring with you the AUB ID number (the ID number that appeared on your online application). Please write down this AUB ID number on a piece of paper.*
- *You also need to bring with you a valid national ID (passport, national ID “hawye”, or civil record “Ikhraj Kayd”). This national ID needs to have a recent photo (not a photo for you as a child).*
- *You need to bring with you a pencil and a face mask.*
- *You will sit for an English placement exam and you will complete a leadership interview and another financial interview.*
- *Your breadwinner (parent) will complete a financial interview*
- *Breakfast and lunch will be served*
- *You need to attend the open day fully from 8:00 am till 4:00 pm*
- *You will receive a transportation allowance of 6 USD fresh if you reside in Beirut or Mount Lebanon, and 10 USD fresh if you reside in other regions in Lebanon*

## **F. Open Days**

HES Cycle IV Open Days then took place smoothly as scheduled from June 20 to June 24, 2022.

Seven USP VIII and Eleven RSS shortlisted candidates did not attend the open days.

*Tentative Calendar of shortlisting and selection activities:*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
August 2022	Selection Committee / Final Selection of shortlisted candidates
August 2022	USAID approval
August 2022	Welcoming and meeting with all HES-Cycle IV accepted candidates
August 2022	HES-Cycle IV accepted candidates to confirm acceptance of Scholarship by written and signed documents

August 2022	Selection of HES-Cycle IV candidates from waiting list
TBD pending AUB Fall semester start	HES-Cycle IV USAID orientation

**G. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this quarter started with receiving HES-Cycle IV applications and ended with the completion of data management process, shortlisting, open days and preparation for the final selection process.

Moreover, AUB’s Office of Admissions had to contact HES-Cycle IV applicants several times by email, and over the phone to follow up on incomplete USAID financial aid applications as well as on missing supporting documents.

The HES team and AUB’s office of Admissions were able to achieve the set objective for this period in the most effective and efficient manner.