



Overview of the Higher Education System

Palestine¹



¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

February 2017

This document has been produced by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) on the basis of contributions from Palestine Erasmus + Office and the authorities of the country concerned:

Nedal Jayousil, NEO Director

People Interviewed or provided information:

Dr. Mohammed M.Al Subu', Head of the Palestinian Accreditation & Quality Assurance. MOHE
Dr. Imad Ibrik, Head of Power Dept., An-Najah National university
Dr. Saeda Affouneh, Lecturer, An-Najah National university
Dr. Anwar Zakariya, Assistant Deputy Minister, MOEHE
Dr. Moammer Shtawe, DG of University Education, MOEHE
Mr. Raed Barakat, Head of the Accreditation Department, MOEHE
Dr. Jamal Hussein, EX- DG at the MOEHE
Dr. Ali Mansour, Vice Chairman - Board of Directors, Gaza University

World Bank

Dr. Falah Kittaneh, Director of Planning and Development, MOEHE
Mr. Jihad Daridi, Director of the TVET, MOEH
Murad Obaid, Head of the Students Loan Fund in Palestine
Ayman Hodali, Head of the Students Activities Dept., MOEHE
Henri Jacqman, Vice President for academic affairs, Birzeit University

The approach and data collection have been implemented in close cooperation with Eurydice, the Network Education Systems and Policies in Europe.

This document reflects the views of the Erasmus+ Office and the Authorities of the country concerned. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© European Union, 2017

For any use or reproduction of photos which are not under European Union copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s).

ISBN: 978-92-9492-391-2

doi: 10.2797/261542

For further information:

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Erasmus+: Higher Education – International Capacity Building

Postal address: Rue Joseph II, 59 B-1000 Brussels - Belgium

Contact: EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu

Web-site: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en

Palestine Erasmus+ Office

Postal address: Al-Shurafa, Sateh Marhaba Main Street Al-Bireh – Palestine

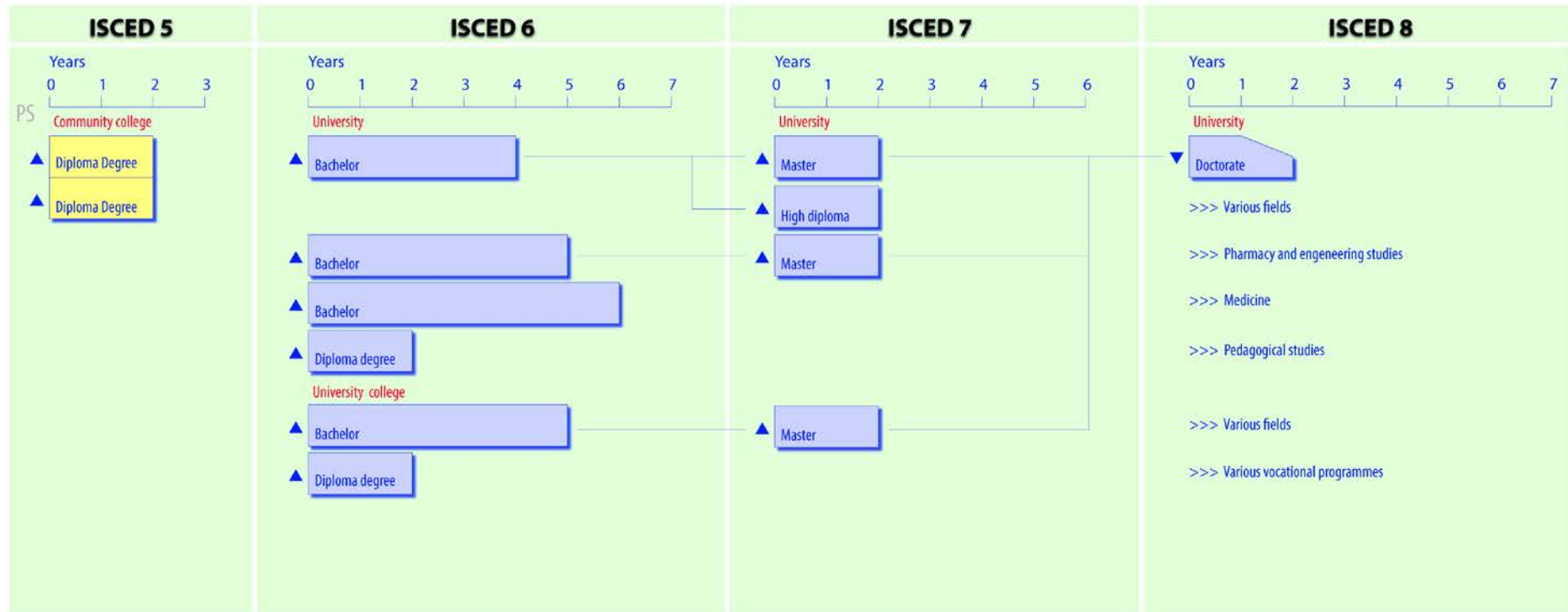
Contact: neopalestine2015@gmail.com

Web-site: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/>

Eurydice

Web-site: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

The higher education system in Palestine



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Professional programme

- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme non Bologna

ECTS:
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

		regulated at national level	decided at institutional level
All	programmes have admission requirements	▼	▲
SOME		▽	△

Table of Contents

1	Overview	1
1.1	Fundamental Principles and National Policies	1
1.2	Lifelong Learning Strategy	1
1.3	Organisation of Private Education.....	1
1.4	National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	1
1.5	Statistics on Organisation and Governance	2
1.6	Distribution of responsibilities	2
2	Higher Education Funding.....	3
2.1	Public Education	3
2.1.1	Financial Autonomy and Control.....	3
2.1.2	Fees within Public Higher Education	3
2.2	Private Education	4
2.2.1	Financial Autonomy and Control.....	4
2.2.2	Fees within Private Higher Education	4
2.3	Financial Support for Learners' Families	4
2.4	Financial Support for Learners	4
3	The structure of the Higher Education system	5
3.1	Types of Higher Education Institutions	6
3.2	First Cycle Programmes	7
3.2.1	Branches of Study.....	7
3.2.2	Admission Requirements.....	7
3.2.3	Curriculum	8
3.2.4	Teaching Methods.....	8
3.2.5	Progression of Students	8
3.2.6	Employability	9
3.2.7	Student Assessment	9
3.2.8	Certification	11
3.3	Short-Cycle Higher Education.....	11
3.4	Second Cycle Programmes	11
3.4.1	Branches of Study.....	11
3.4.2	Admission Requirements.....	12
3.4.3	Curriculum	12
3.4.4	Teaching Methods.....	13
3.4.5	Progression of Students	13
3.4.6	Employability	13
3.4.7	Student Assessment	13

3.4.8	Certification	14
3.5	Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure	14
3.6	Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes.....	14
3.6.1	Organisation of Doctoral Studies	14
3.6.2	Admission Requirements.....	14
3.6.3	Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates	15
3.6.4	Supervision Arrangements	15
3.6.5	Employability	15
3.6.6	Assessment.....	15
3.6.7	Certification	15
4	Teachers and Education Staff	15
4.1	Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education	15
4.2	Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education	16
4.2.1	Planning Policy.....	16
4.2.2	Entry to the Profession.....	16
4.2.3	Professional Status	17
4.2.4	Salaries.....	17
4.2.5	Working Time and Holidays.....	17
4.2.6	Promotion, Advancement	17
4.2.7	Retirement and Pensions	18
4.3	Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education.....	18
4.3.1	4.3.1 Organisational Aspects	18
4.3.2	4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities..	18
5	Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education	18
5.1	Requirements for Appointment	18
5.2	Conditions of Service.....	19
6	Quality Assurance in Higher Education.....	19
6.1	Responsible Bodies.....	19
6.2	Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance.....	20
7	Educational Support and Guidance	21
7.1	Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education	21
7.1.1	Definition of the Target Group(s).....	21
7.1.2	Specific Support Measures.....	21
7.2	Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education	21
7.2.1	Academic Guidance	21
7.2.2	Career Guidance	22
8	Mobility and Internalization in Higher Education.....	22
8.1	Student Mobility.....	22

8.2	Academic Staff Mobility	23
8.3	Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education	23
8.3.1	European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development	23
8.4	Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation	23
8.4.1	Bilateral Agreements	23
8.4.2	Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations	23
9	On-going reforms and Policy developments	23
9.1	Overall national education strategy and key objectives	23
9.2	Overview of the education reform process and drivers	24
9.3	National reforms in Higher Education	24
10	Legislation	25

1 Overview

Palestine is located in the Middle East, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the total population was 4.42 million on June 2015, the annual population growth was 3.7 %.

The official language is Arabic, the main religion is Islam, around 1.5% are Christians (Orthodox and Catholic).

Annual income per capita was 2,400 \$. According to the 2014 statistics, inflation is 1.7%; GDP was 12 billion and GDP growth was 1.5%.

7.1% of GDP is spent on education.

1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

Higher education is regulated by the **Law on Higher Education No 11 of 1998**¹. This law provides every citizen with the possibility to access to the higher education² and gives legal status to the HE institutions and provides the legal framework for their organization and management. The law recognizes three different types of institutions in Higher Education. These are governmental, public, established by non-governmental organizations and private institutions. The majority of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the State of Palestine (SoP) are public. The Council on the Higher Education is responsible for drafting and enacting the rules that all higher education institutions must adopt. The Ministry also provides partial support and funding to the non-governmental HEIs. The HEIs are mostly independent but they have to follow the abovementioned law, regulations of the ministry and the Council of Higher Education.

1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

Though there is an interest by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) in Lifelong Learning (LLL), there haven't been any significant changes towards its implementation. So far Tempus projects are the only substantial contribution to LLL in Palestine.

1.3 Organisation of Private Education

Establishment and operation of higher educational institutions (HEIs), governmental, public or private is monitored by the MOEHE. When the educational inspector finds compliance (agrees on compliance?) with conditions for the establishment of state of private institution, the MOEHE issues a decision on the verification, after which the institution is legally registered.

1.4 National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Palestine has been striving to have National Qualifications Framework (NQF) during the past 12 years. The main contribution to the NQF was the Tempus project called RecoNow which managed to get the process started, establishing various committees and starting discussions and consultations.

As a result of a national workshop led by the Palestinian Higher Education Reform Experts' team (HERE³), a National Qualification Framework draft was prepared and is ready to be adopted by the national authorities.

¹ <http://www.mohe.pna.ps/Resources/Docs/HELaw.pdf>

² Article 2

³ Higher Education Reform Experts are funded by the European Union under the Key Action 3 of the Erasmus+ Programme.

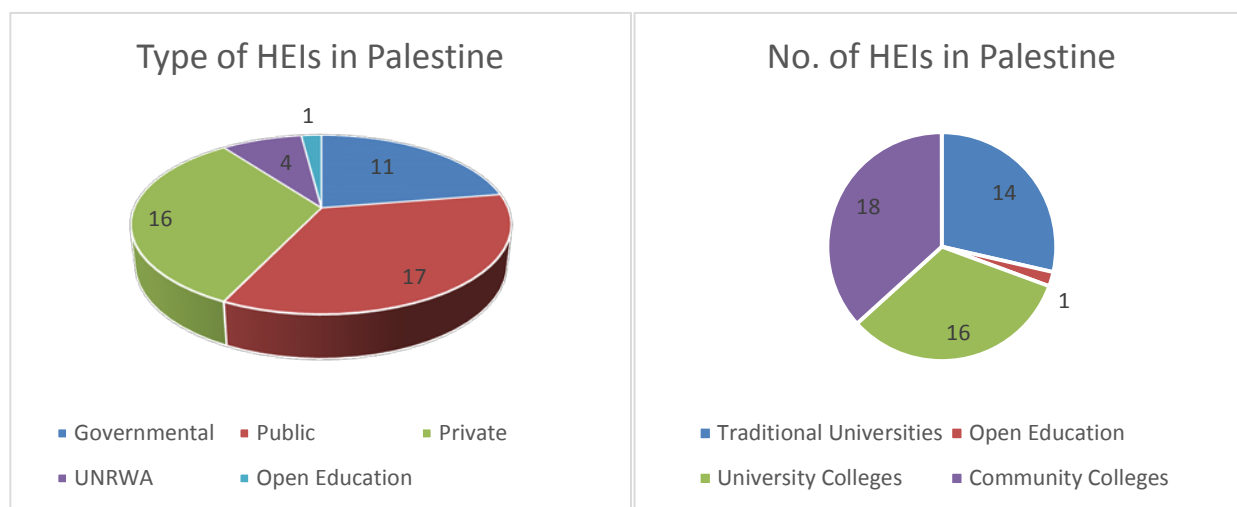
1.5 Statistics on Organisation and Governance

Students for the year 2015 – 2016

Female	Male	Total
130,843	85,185	216,028

Higher Education Institutions in 2016

		Governmental	Public	Private	UNRWA
Open Education	1 (22 branches)	-	-	-	-
Universities	14	3	8	3	
University Colleges	16	6	2	7	1
Community Colleges	18	2	7	6	3
Total	49				



1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

In Palestine, **Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE)** is the main body that is responsible for the governance of HEIs. **The universities** have an autonomous status in their mandate with a minimal intervention from the Ministry. Although **The Higher Education Council** should have the ultimate power according to the Higher Education Law no. 11 of 1998, its influence is limited and the Council members rarely meet.

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) is the only authorized agency responsible for the accreditation and quality assurance of higher education in Palestine.

2 Higher Education Funding

2.1 Public Education

Insufficient funding is an on-going major concern and it is having a serious negative impact on the quality and relevance of higher education in Palestine. Between 60-80% of the operating budget of universities is covered by tuition fees, and since there is no regularity and consistency in the payment of tuition fees, budgets of universities suffer yearly deficits. The MOEHE allocated government support to the public universities through the Ministry of Finance.

2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

Institutions of higher education are classified as government, public and private, where public universities established by a resolution of the Council of Ministers and are held to accountability administratively, financially and legally responsible before the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The public universities have a Board of Trustees, managed by the University Council, supervised by AQAC/ MOEHE and receive financial support under Article 15 of the Higher Education Act which is allocated to them in accordance with the regulation standards adopted by the Ministry. These institutions provide their final balance sheet accounts to the Ministry.

The MOEHE does not have financial autonomy. Therefore, its strategies and policies are determined by the funding available. Unfortunately, the government policies and strategies are donor driven, as Palestine is suffering from a serious skill-deterioration. Therefore, MOEHE's influence and control on HEIs is limited.

In spite of the critical financial situation, the MOEHE has an annual budget from the government which The MOEHE distributes to support the HEIs. The MOEHE funds universities in a way to compensate for the deficit in the university's budget after collecting the tuition fees. For example, if a university collected around 80% of its costs from the students' fees, the government is supposed to cover the remaining 20% to make up the deficit. In reality, a number of students of HEIs in Palestine do not pay their tuitions fees and the government does not give universities sufficient financial support. This led to a situation where all universities in Palestine are suffering from financial deficits. The tuitions represent about 80% of university revenue, and even higher in some universities

The MOEHE holds the administrative, financial and legal responsibility for governmental universities under the Higher Education Law No. 11 of 1998. According to Article 10 of this law, the government is committed to support the government funded universities in the annual general budget.

2.1.2 Fees within Public Higher Education

The fees vary depending on the university, the branch of study and on the number of the credit hours registered by the student per semester.

The table below shows the average cost of the fees in Euros:

College	Average Fees/ Credit hr	Average hrs/ semester	Fees/ Semester	Other costs	Total (JD)	Total (Euro)
Science, Business, Law & Economics	30	15	450	110	560	717
Art & Education	26	15	390	110	500	680

Engineering& IT	38	15	570	110	680	871
Medicine	100	20	2,000	110	2,100	2,692

Few Palestinian universities follow a different system where students have to pay a lump sum for each semester, irrespective of the number of credit hours.

Students' tuitions are directly paid to the HEIs.

It is worth noting that national and international students pay the same fees.

2.2 Private Education

2.2.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

Private universities are served by a Board of Directors (BoD), registered as profit-making companies, and subject to the control and supervision of the AQAC. The BoD is usually responsible for securing funding for the HEI.

2.2.2 Fees within Private Higher Education

The Ministry also provides partial support and funding to non-governmental HEIs. The HEIs are mostly independent, private universities which gather grants and support from different sources by fundraising. At the same time they have to follow the regulations of the Ministry and the CHE.

As fees for the students of the private universities are more or less the same as those in the public universities, the BoD is striving to keep their institutions running since they encounter the same financial difficulties of public universities since their students do not pay their tuitions.

It is important to stress that private HEIs in Palestine are following the same regulations as stipulated by the MOEHE and do not enjoy other privileges. Therefore, there is no special financial support for students in private universities and their families. Nevertheless the students' families enjoy having a minimal reduction in the income tax exactly as the families of students of the public institutions.

2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families

There is no direct financial support for learners' families. This is mainly due to the difficult financial situation. The government offers the families a slight deduction on the income tax, if the parents have a proof that they are members of the learners' families

2.4 Financial Support for Learners

Each HEI works on securing funds for their students. There are a number of donors who render a support to help to cover the tuition' fees of the students. Those donors are usually individuals from the Gulf countries or from different international bodies.

As for the learners' support, the government established the Student Loan Fund (SLF)⁴, which is a kind of loan provided to the students on the condition that they will pay it back upon a graduation, for HE in Palestine to cover up to 70% of the tuition fees per semester of the students in need.

Student Loan Fund is the sole official supporter for learners. It has a fund from 19 sources with a total budget of \$197,755,303 since its inception in 2001.

The mechanism of support is based on the following criteria:

⁴ www.iqrad.edu.ps

- to be a regular student at one of the Palestinian HEIs.
- a student must have completed one semester successfully to be eligible to get a loan from SLF.
- the total for students should not be less than 65% for BA and 60% for diploma students.
- a student should not be benefiting at the same time from any other kind of support.

3 The structure of the Higher Education system

The main features of Palestinian HE:

- Students can join HEIs after completing their General Secondary Certificate Exam GSCE (Tawjihi).
- Higher education is divided into two tracks:
 1. Education in Community and Technical Colleges: The students study for a period of two years. They get a diploma certificate after they pass the comprehensive examination.
 2. University education: The students study for 4 to 6 years to get a bachelor's degree in science, education or humanities, engineering or medicine. Universities also offer post-bachelor programmes where they award higher diploma for one year, master's programs for a period of two years, and doctoral programmes in some disciplines for 3 years.

Degree	Credits	Duration
Professional diploma	320 hours of training	Minimum 9 months, it is a professional degree without any academic rights.
Intermediate diploma	66-72 credit hours	2 years
Bachelor degree	4 years: 120-148 credit hours 5 years: minimum 152 credit hours 6 years: minimum 200 credit hours	4 years for most specializations; 5 years in Pharmacy, Stomatology, Engineering; 6 years in Medicine, (all are called Bachelor regardless of the number of years studied)
Teaching Diploma	30 credit hours	Applied after or during the bachelor degree, it is a professional degree without any academic rights.
Higher diploma	30 credit hours	Applied after the bachelor degree (have the right to continue Master studies).
Master degree	36 credit hours plus thesis or comprehensive exam	2 years (have the right to teach at the university in an academic career and continue PhD studies)
Doctorate⁵	Minimum 48 credit hours plus thesis	3 years (have the right to teach at the university pursuing an academic career)

The number of accredited institutions in the State of Palestine is 49, distributed as follows:

- 14 Traditional Universities:

⁵ Palestine has only 3 Ph.D. Programmes; for this reason most students at this level obtain their doctorate degree overseas.

(3) Governmental: Established under a decision from the Council of Ministers. Follow the financial, Administrative and Legal regulations of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

(8) Public: Established under the provisions of Law no. 11 of 1998. They have a Board of Trustees.

(3) Private

- 1 Open University
- 16 University Colleges
- 18 Community Colleges

In the **West Bank** there are 33 HE institutions:

- 9 traditional universities (2 governmental, 6 public, 1 private)
- 12 university colleges (4 governmental, 5 private, 2 public, 1 UNRWA)
- 12 community colleges (1 governmental, 6 public, 4 private, 1 UNRWA)

In the **Gaza Strip** there are 15 HE institutions:

- 5 traditional universities (1 governmental, 2 public, 2 private)
- 4 university colleges (2 governmental, 2 private)
- 6 community colleges (1 governmental, 1 public, 2 private, 2 UNRWA)

Open Education: there is 1 open education university (Al-Quds Open University) with 22 branches distributed all over the country (17 in the West Bank, 5 in the Gaza Strip).

The structure of the **academic year** is defined by the higher education institutions themselves. The most common structure is two semesters, with the summer semester (optional) beginning in June.

The duration of the academic semester is 16 weeks. Usually the first semester starts in mid-September and ends in January. The second semester starts in February and ends in June.

Bachelor and Master Programmes are offered at universities and polytechnics. They can be followed by **doctoral studies** at university level. According to the Palestinian Law on Higher Education, polytechnics also have the right to offer doctoral degrees.

The so-called **diploma degrees** (professional programmes) are offered by community colleges and university colleges.

Registered students for the academic year 2015/2016 were 216,028 (130,843 females and 85,185 males) distributed as follows:

- Traditional universities: 132,348 (45 PhD students, 6,896 Master, 242 High Diploma, 120,994 Bachelor, 3,538 Diploma, 506 Educational Qualification Certificate, 38 with no certificate, 89 Vocational Diploma)
- University Colleges: 15,422 (6,074 Bachelor, 9,208 Diploma, 140 vocational diploma)
- Community Colleges: 10,563 (10,379 Diploma, 9 Vocational Diploma, 175 Bachelor)
- Open Education: 57,695 (54,316 Bachelor, 2,672 Preparatory year, 707 Educational Qualification Certificate)

3.1 Types of Higher Education Institutions

There are 4 types of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Palestine: **Universities** (*Al-Jamiaah*), **University Colleges** (*Alkulliah Al-Jamiaaiah*), **Polytechnics** (*Al-Polytechnik*), **Community colleges** (*Kulliat Al-Mujtamaah*).

- Universities (Al-Jamiaah): consist of no less than three colleges or faculties which confer Bachelor degrees or higher;
- University colleges (Alkulliah Al-Jamiaaiah): offer academic, technical or professional programmes and confer two or three-year diplomas or ordinary and honours Bachelor degrees;

- Polytechnics (Al-Polytechnik): they confer diplomas or Bachelor and higher degrees in professional and technical fields;
- Community colleges (Kulliat Al-Mujtamaah): offer academic, professional or technical programmes of a minimum of one year's duration leading to diplomas in the respective field. They offer programmes aimed at preparing a middle-level labour force, which forms the link between specialised and skilled workers. The diploma programmes (equivalent to an associate degree) consist of approximately 72 credit hours distributed over four semesters. The programmes offered by colleges cover many different disciplines such as management and administration, secretarial, office automation, marketing, graphic design, industrial technology, electronics, computer maintenance, dental technology, air-conditioning and refrigeration, electronics, computer technology, fashion design, etc.

3.2 First Cycle Programmes

First cycle studies are offered at all types of higher education institutions in Palestine. A condition for entering a first-cycle study programme is completion of secondary education and passage of the Tawjihi exam and of an entry exam.

3.2.1 Branches of Study

Bachelor academic studies are organized at universities and colleges of academic studies, and can last four years (minimum 121 credit hours). Upon the completion of this level of studies, the student receives a Bachelor degree. A Bachelor study programme may include a final thesis that the student has to defend at the end of his/her studies, yet this depends on the specific curriculum.

The main branches of higher education studies in Palestine are: education, technical and technology sciences; humanities and social sciences; natural sciences and mathematics; medical and health sciences and services; arts; agricultural science; administration sciences and engineering.

3.2.2 Admission Requirements

The enrolment and admission to all Palestinian HEIs follows approximately the same procedures.

- The minimum requirements needed for the students to enrol at higher education institutions are a General Secondary Education Certificate (Tawjihi) or its equivalent (e.g. IB, SAT or GCE certificates that are awarded to high school students according to their educational system with equivalence requirements set by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education). Student placement in the faculties depends on the completed stream (science or arts or vocational stream) indicated in the certificate.
- The student certificate score should not be less than 65%, in order to be eligible to apply for admission to the universities.

Admission is competitive and is based on the composite score of the students, on condition that these scores are not lower than required for admission to a certain faculty. This threshold is determined by each university and differs from one year to another and from one university to another, depending on the competitive status of the number of applicants, available positions and minimum scores which should be not less than those demanded by the ministry decision. The composite score is the average percentage score of the General Secondary Education Certificate or its equivalent. Some universities require an English language proficiency exam and students are placed in English language courses according to their scores.

3.2.3 Curriculum

University curricula are usually set up by the faculty guidelines. Each faculty defines the course descriptions of each subject based on the accreditation requirements given by the AQAC. HEI professors have the freedom to build the curricula based on these guidelines.

The college curriculum of the new diploma programme (2 years) is developed by the college, and approved by the Ministry, if it meets the accreditation requirements. All diploma programmes that are offered by colleges are under the supervision and monitoring of the Ministry, which approves the curricula, and the organisation of the general comprehensive exams. The university curriculum is defined at institutional level in line with national standards set by the Ministry and according to the course's outline.

The most common requirements for all HEIs are as follows:

- University requirements: basic undergraduate courses, Arabic, English, and others.
- Faculty requirements: introductory courses in the respective disciplines.
- Department requirements: introductory, advanced and specialised courses.
- A certain number of passed elective courses.

3.2.4 Teaching Methods

There are no regulations set by MOEHE to define the teaching strategies. The HEIs refer to the teaching methods that the professors need to opt only in general terms. HEIs lecturers/ professors have the freedom to define and use their own pedagogies and strategies. It is noticeable that professors who haven't received a degree in teaching methods, particularly in scientific fields, do not use proper teaching techniques.

The most prominent technique in teaching that is widely implemented is still based on lecturing and frontal teaching. Less emphasis is given to cooperative styles of teaching where the focus of teaching-learning process is more on the student. It is worth stressing that the professor is also responsible for defining the curricula and the reference materials based on the course's outline.

Teaching materials such as books and audio-visual materials are commonly used in the teaching process but they are not provided to students free of charge. Nevertheless, students are expected to refer to those materials when preparing for exams.

3.2.5 Progression of Students

The common practice is that students receive from their professor the course instructions that include the course assessment comprising examinations (written or oral or practical), assignments, projects, tests, etc. Usually an undergraduate course requires students to take at least two or three semester exams and one final exam. Laboratory courses may require students to take written, oral or both forms of exams. The semester work has 60-65% weight, while the final exam is 35-40% of the final grade. For the graduate course, the students take at least one written exam during the semester and the other exam may be substituted by projects, studies or research. In order to pass a course and to graduate the requirement is a 70% pass-rate for undergraduates and 75% for graduates. The average grade for students should be satisfactory.

Departments usually develop study plans that guide students from the time they enter university to the completion of their studies and graduation. With the exception of the entry level courses (those taken by students in their first year at the university), each course usually has one or more prerequisites. A student may enrol in a course after successfully meeting the prerequisite(s). Hence, students follow the study

plan until completion. In some disciplines, namely medicine and dentistry, the student must pass one year in order to progress to the next. If students fail one or two subjects, they are allowed to re-sit the exams before the beginning of the following year. Only if they pass those subjects, can they continue to the next year. Otherwise the course has to be repeated.

For some academic programmes, the study plans include practical training and in this case the university makes the necessary arrangements to secure places for doing such training. Apart from these cases, universities do not accredit any prior experiential learning such as work, community or volunteering experience.

3.2.6 Employability

The unemployment rate amongst recently graduated students exceeds 75%. It is a very high rate and it is mainly due to the fact that universities teach and present courses without taking into consideration the real market needs. The graduates do not meet the labour-market requirements with their newly-acquired skills.

Though cooperation between the HEIs and the enterprises is limited, Tempus projects have contributed to the fostering of the public-private sector partnerships. The students are usually placed in enterprises to do their internship training. Some HEIs invite experts to teach a course or to give lectures, but still the involvement of enterprises in curricular development is very limited (or even non-existent). Recently, some universities have been trying to start joint projects with enterprises and this might improve their involvement in the development of curricula. Moreover, some HEIs have employment centres, which help students to find jobs in the Gulf countries or improve their qualifications in order to increase their employability.

3.2.7 Student Assessment

The common practice is that students receive from their professor the course instructions that include the course assessment comprising examinations (written, oral or practical), assignments, projects, tests, etc. Usually, the undergraduate course requires students to take at least two or three semester exams and one final exam. Laboratory courses may require students to take written, oral or both forms of exams. The semester work has 60-65% weight, while the final exam is 35-40% of the final grade. For the graduate course, the students take at least one written exam during the semester and the other exam may be substituted by projects, studies or research. In order to pass a course and to graduate the requirement is 70% pass-rate for undergraduates and 75% for graduates. The average grade for students should be satisfactory. Departments usually develop study plans that lead students from the time they enter university to the completion of their studies and graduation. Except for the entry level courses (those taken by students in their first year at the university), each course usually has one or more prerequisites. A student may enrol in a course after successfully meeting the prerequisite(s). Hence, students follow the study plan until completion. In some disciplines, namely medicine and dentistry, the student must pass one year in order to progress to the next. If students fail one or two subjects, they are allowed to re-sit the exams before the beginning of the following year. Only if they pass those subjects can they continue to the next year, otherwise the course has to be repeated.

For some academic programs, the study plans include practical training and in this case the university makes the necessary arrangements to secure places for doing such training. Aside from these cases, universities do not accredit any prior experiential learning such as work, community or volunteer experience.

Once a student has the requirements for a degree, the university confers the degree upon confirmation by the Council of Deans. No further approvals are needed from the Ministry or any other organization.

If students obtain a Bachelor degree (there is no difference where the degree is from: a University (Al-Jamiaah), a Polytechnic (Al-Polytechnik), or a University College (Alkulliah Al-Jamiaaiah)), all occupy the same academic degree and level and they can enter the labour market or continue for a Master degree, if they meet the admission requirements.

In the case of some professional disciplines such as engineering, pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, law, etc., the students must register in a professional association. Some associations have further requirements such as practical experience or internship. As an example, for both medicine and law the students are required to complete supervised practical training for one year before they are allowed to practice on their own.

Grading System

1. Secondary Education:

All school grading including the GCE (Tawjihi) are following the grading system as manifested in the table below:

Percentage	Rank
90-100	Excellent
80-89	Very Good
70-79	Good
60-69	Satisfactory
50-59	Poor
0-49	Fail

2. Higher Education

The HE system in most cases follows the same grading indicated in the above table.

Special Cases in the Grading System of the Higher Education:

At Bethlehem University and Birzeit University the minimum passing score is 60 for BA, while minimum passing score for Master is 70 at Birzeit University.

A grade of E is the minimum grade to achieve a pass for individual courses, but represents a fail on average.

In graduate programs at some universities like Birzeit University, the following grade scale is used:

Score	Remark	Letter Grade
90-100	High distinction	A
85-89.9	Distinction	B
78-84.9	Very Good	C
70-77.9	Good	D
68 – 69.9	Satisfactory	E
Below 68	Fail	F

In graduate programs at the Arab American University, the following grade scale is used:

Letter Grade	Remark	Points
A	Excellent	4.0
A-	Excellent	3.67
B+	Very good	3.33
B	Very good	3.0
B-	Good	2.67
C+	Good	2.33
C	Moderate	2.0
C-	Moderate	1.67
D+	Satisfactory	1.33
D	Satisfactory	1.00
F	Fail	0.00

3.2.8 Certification

Once a student has accomplished the requirements for a degree, the university confers the degree upon confirmation by the Council of Deans. No further approvals are needed from the Ministry or any other organization. If students obtain a Bachelor degree, they may enter the labour market or continue to a Master degree, if they meet the admission requirements. In the case of some professional specialties such as engineering, pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, law, etc., the students should register in a professional association. Some associations have further requirements such as practical experience or internships. As an example, for both medicine and law, students are required to complete supervised practical training for one year before they are allowed to practice on their own.

3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education

Diploma Degree is organized at colleges of academic studies, and can last two years (minimum 66 credit hours). Upon the completion of this level of studies, the student receives a Diploma degree. Minimum requirements: a General Secondary Education Certificate with pass result (Tawjihi), or its equivalent.

3.4 Second Cycle Programmes

In Palestine universities, faculties, colleges of academic studies and colleges of applied studies offer accredited post-bachelor's programmes awarding a Higher Diploma for one year of studies (30 credit hours without the requirement of a thesis) with the right to complete Master Studies. It acts as a bridge between the 1st and the 2nd degree. The continuing education departments at most universities are offering large number of short courses not only for their own graduates, but also for the private sector.

The traditional second cycle programme is the Master degree, an academic specialized study programme, offered at universities, faculties and colleges of academic studies. A specialized study programme has two options: either a completion with thesis or a comprehensive exam of all subjects taken during the study period.

3.4.1 Branches of Study

The duration of the short courses leading to the Higher Diploma varies from a few weeks to 12 months.

Some are degree-based and some are non-degree based. Studies can be either academic or applied. All kinds of vocational technical and academic courses are offered and they vary according to the university. Master studies and Higher Diploma studies can be organized by universities, faculties, colleges of academic studies and colleges of applied studies.

The length of Master studies is two years (generally 36 credit hours); the studies can be either academic or applied.

3.4.2 Admission Requirements

In order to be admitted in a post-bachelor programme awarding Higher Diploma, the applicant needs a Bachelor's degree from a recognized university with a minimum overall assessment of "Good. Graduates with a "Satisfactory" assessment may be admitted by the Academic Council upon the recommendation of the Department Council or of the Programme Committee of the Faculty.

Two confidential recommendation letters from faculty members and/or administrators familiar with the applicant's work are also requested.

Personal interviews and additional requirements such as proficiency in foreign languages and work experience may be requested according to the Programme.

In order to enrol in a Master programme, students must have completed a Bachelor programme with an average of not less than C. To complete a Master study programme, the student might write and defend a Master thesis at the end of his/her studies or pass the comprehensive exam. Admission to Master Programmes requires that the prospective applicants fulfil the following conditions:

- have a Bachelor degree from an accredited university;
- qualify for the type of graduate program s/he aspires to major in and be consistent with the Study Plan of that specific major submitting all the necessary faculty credentials with the admission application form;
- should sit for a Placement Test for the major he/she is applying to;
- should be willing to meet with the Supervising Committee for a personal interview if the Specialised Department Council recommends that.
- an undergraduate GPA should not be less than Good or its equivalent. Undergraduate students with a GPA of Satisfactory are eligible to apply to graduate programs.

For students applying for a Master in a different university than the one attended in first-cycle studies, the following conditions have to be considered:

1. The student should have a diploma with a GPA of Good or above in the same major he/she is interested in pursuing graduate studies; the courses which the student has taken to complete his/her diploma shall not be counted towards satisfying any graduate degree requirements.
2. The student should have attended a university accredited and recognized by the sought university and should have completed two academic semesters with a GPA of Good or its equivalent at the first institution. The transferring student would not be able to transfer any of the courses or credits taken from the former program in which he/she was enrolled.

Earning a competitive GPA is determined and computed by the Specialized Department usually according to the following formula: the applicant's Bachelor's GPA counts 70% and the applicant's results on the Skills / Placement Test and personal interview counts 30%.

3.4.3 Curriculum

The curriculum should respect the course outline that is ratified by the AQAQ and the university council.

Curricula are developed by the academic staff at the institutional level. The languages of instruction are Arabic and English. Professors have the freedom to develop their curricula and resources provided that they respect the course description. However, it is worth noting that the focus in the 2nd degree is on the students' competence to carry out research and studies.

3.4.4 Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are almost the same as for the Bachelor studies. The only difference is that there is more focus on research and more assignments are given to the students. Students in the second cycle need to have high competence in research design and in statistical analysis. More student-oriented methodologies are used at MA level. Collaborative techniques of teaching are very common as the number of students in the second cycle is minimal compared to the first cycle.

3.4.5 Progression of Students

The requirements for obtaining Master degrees are at least 33 credit hours. These requirements are usually distributed in accordance with the following two programs/tracks:

- Thesis Track: (33 Credit Hours), consists of:
 1. Completing at least 27 Credit Hours
 2. Submitting and successfully defending a six-credit-hour thesis
- Comprehensive Examination Track (36 Credit Hours) consists of:
 1. Finishing 36 credit hours at least.
 2. Successfully passing the qualifying exam.

After finishing 12 credit hours, a graduate student must submit a written request to the Specialized Department stating the academic graduate track (Comprehensive Exam or Thesis) he/she is planning to pursue in order to complete the graduate work. The Deanship of the Faculty of Graduate Studies shall then inform the student about the final decision after consideration of the recommendation of the department Chair. The Deanship of Admission and Registration shall be apprised of the final decision.

In the event a student receives an 'incomplete' on a particular course, the grade on that very course shall be calculated once he/she completes it and the student's GPA will be retroactive until the completion and removal of the 'incomplete' mark.

If a student repeats a particular course, the grade which will be counted or entered in the student's accumulative average for that course is the higher grade. All grades shall be entered into the student's academic transcript.

A student can repeat any course in which he/she got a (C, C-, D+, D, D- or F) in order to raise his/her average. In this case, the new grade should be reported on the transcript.

3.4.6 Employability

This part is also similar to the Bachelor studies with one difference i.e. opportunities of employment is higher amongst holders of second cycle degrees as the number of the graduates is almost 1/10^t of first degree graduates.

3.4.7 Student Assessment

For the Higher Diploma Graduation requirements are the following:

- Completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours in the program, including a minimum of nine credit hours of required courses (600-700 level) and a minimum of six credit hours of elective courses

specified by the program.

- Completion of remedial courses, if any, required by the program (these courses must be completed before the end of the student's third semester in the program)
- Passing the general examination; students who fail are allowed to repeat the examination once. Approval for taking the examination for a third time is given by the Academic Council and failure in the examination results in dismissal from the program.
- A minimum cumulative average of 75% in graduate courses.

A student is granted a Master degree after the successful completion of the following requirements:

- Finishing pre-requisite courses determined by the Department.
- Completing at least 36 credit hours with grade point average not less than 2.5 (75%).

3.4.8 Certification

Once a student accomplishes the requirements for an MA degree, the university confers the degree upon confirmation by the Council of Deans. No further approvals are needed from the Ministry or any other organization.

3.5 Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure

Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master structure are enlisted below:

- 5 years Programmes: Pharmacy, Stomatology, Engineering;
- 6 years programme: Medicine, (all are called Bachelor regardless the number of years studied).

3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

3.6.1 Organisation of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral studies (Ph.D.) in Palestine are still in their earlier stages, as there are not many programmes. Only two universities offer Ph.D. studies covering one or two disciplines only.

Six academic semesters is the minimum time length during which Ph.D. students have to complete the requirements of their degree. The maximum length is 12 academic semesters from the time of the initial enrolment in the program.

3.6.2 Admission Requirements

Applicants should fulfil the following requirements to gain admission to Ph.D. programs:

- having a Master Degree from an accredited HEI;
- having a GPA for the Master Degree not less than 'Very Good' or its equivalent.

A prospective applicant should prove that he/she had been a regular and attentive student during his/her post graduate and undergraduate study and that his/her attendance of classes had exceeded 75% of the total number of required attendance for graduation.

The employed students with relevant experience to the discipline of the study have a slight advantage compared to the unemployed one, but employment is not a determining factor; the main element determining admission is meeting the above mentioned criteria

A Ph.D. students' Study Plan may include some prerequisite courses which students have to take in compliance with the request of the Deans Council:

70% is the passing grade for any graduate course and 60% for any prerequisite courses.

75% is the minimum GPA (Grade Point Average) for graduate courses which all students have to maintain throughout their enrolment in graduate school.

3.6.3 Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates

Ph.D. students pay high tuition fees and they are not entitled to any benefits.

3.6.4 Supervision Arrangements

Based on the recommendation of the Department Chair and with the consent of the supervisor, the Faculty Council has the authority to appoint a supervisor of the student's thesis taking into consideration the interest of the student where it is possible.

A Ph.D. dissertation has to be supervised by a full professor whose major pertains directly to the topic of the dissertation, and having relevant publications in the area of study

In the case of Ph.D. programmes, students should inform the Department Chair of his/her selection of a supervisor for his/her thesis and should define the title of the thesis during the sixth semester from the time of their initial enrolment. All this has to be done on a special form given by the Deanship of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, accompanied with a thesis proposal including the purpose of the research proposal, background about the research proposal and suggested methodology for the entire research, and the necessary budget for the completion of the project.

A student's Ph.D. dissertation should consist of 24 credit hours workload

Upon submitting his/her thesis proposal, a Ph.D. student's cumulative average should not be less than 3.2 or 'very good'.

3.6.5 Employability

The rate of graduate unemployment is high and in this regard the same aspects already described in section 3.2.6 apply with the only difference that opportunities for employment are higher amongst holders of Ph.D. degrees.

3.6.6 Assessment

A student is granted his Ph.D. degree when s/he:

- Completes prerequisite courses successfully;
- Completes 48 credits with a grade point average (GPA) not less than 2.5 (75%): compulsory courses (12 credits); elective courses (12 credits); and dissertation (24 credits);
- Passes the comprehensive examination successfully.

3.6.7 Certification

Once a student has accomplished the requirements for a Ph.D. degree, the university confers the degree upon confirmation by the Council of Deans. No further approvals are needed from the Ministry or any other organization.

4 Teachers and Education Staff

4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education

University academic staff must have Master degree or a Ph.D. degree.

Staff with a Ph.D. is appointed or contracted by the university as assistant professors. They can be promoted after five years to be associate professors if they meet the promotion requirements set by the university.

An associate professor can also be promoted to a full professor after spending another five years at associate level.

Staff with Master degrees is categorized as university teachers and can be promoted to be lecturers after five to seven years according to the university rules.

For the academic year 2015/2016 the total number of workers in the Palestinian Higher Education Institutions is 15,843; however, teaching academic staff are 9,598 including:

7,011 Academic Instructors, 697 Administrative Academicians, 28 Academic Researchers, 501 Teaching and Research Assistants, 1,361 Specialized Professionals.

Universities are taking many steps towards achieving improvement in educational opportunities in the Palestinian tertiary education. For example, An-Najah University has established the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching which represents a major step forward towards improving the quality of higher education in Palestine. The Centre seeks to achieve excellence in the education processes. The Centre provides a rich environment for academics from different disciplines to exchange innovative experiences and ideas and to collaborate with researchers and trainers from internationally renowned centres of excellence.

Most Universities seek to design and develop high-quality, combined courses, to improve the outcomes of education, by developing the teachers 'and the students 'competency, providing supporting and funding projects for it, and conducting supporting experimental, evaluation, processional and survey research, to develop to people who are capable of producing knowledge and applying it to obtain a better life.

4.2 Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

The following manifests some feature for academic staff in H 36 credit hours + a thesis. It has to be noted that the credit hours are not like the ECTS. There are unified cadre's system, internal system of human resources for promotions and bonuses including overtime and human resource management services and the retirement system and the employees' union system.

4.2.1 Planning Policy

Universities try to link with the market and bring financial resources when they encounter deficits. Thus, they are currently engaged in employment programmes and committed to develop them further in the universities. Based on the statistical analysis of the faculties and in light of the needs assessment, the universities plan to change areas of specializations that do not match the market needs. Subsequently this entails an on-going analysis of the needs and ensures the adequacy of the academic programmes to prepare students with the skills that the labour market demands. Moreover, the scholarship system aims to prepare graduates for career development.

4.2.2 Entry to the Profession

The requirements are published at the universities' website, the applications are evaluated and applicants interviewed. People who are selected by an academic committee are asked to present a lecture.

The universities contract the new employees on an annual basis for three years until they prove their qualifications and competence.

4.2.3 Professional Status

Staff of the public universities is considered as government employee. Therefore, they are subject to the laws of a government, while staff in the private universities is considered as private sector employee. There is a federation that represents all the unions existing at each university. Each university union voices the staff's needs at the university. The federal union represents the universities staff needs at the national level. The Council of Federation Unions for professors and university staff has organisations in the different universities.

4.2.4 Salaries

Most universities have a unified framework that can be amended in a few cases in accordance with all staff unions, the universities and the Ministry of Higher Education System.

Salaries are paid based on the level of the academic degree. The Assistant professor starts with around 2,000 Euros and the full professor ends with up to 4,000 Euros.

4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays

According to the employment contract, the Academic workload is 12 teaching hours per week in addition to the office hours to provide a support for the students. The university can add no more than three hours per week to the workload. There is no regulation for the scientific research, but the researchers are encouraged to work and their findings are publishing in international journals.

There is an annual evaluation of the academic work of teachers focusing 60% on the academic performance, 20% on research and 20% on university community service (guiding students into the right study field, participating in university social events, etc.).

The teachers at HEIs are entitled to have 40 days of holidays per year. There are also additional leaves:

- Maternity leave: three month leave which may start before the birth if necessary;
- Pilgrimage vacation: one month once.

Newly contracted staffs having annual contracts for the first three years are considered Unclassified Employees. For this period, at the moment of retirement they are not entitled to get a pension, which is only due from the moment employees become classified. However, unclassified employees enjoy all public holidays.

The regular employees enjoy all public holidays in addition to holidays whose number of days depend on their positions:

- Labourers are entitled to 14 days as annual leave.
- University administrative officers are entitled to 30 days as annual leave.
- Faculty teaching staff is entitled to two-months as annual leave.
- Faculty administrative staff is entitled to 7 weeks as annual leave.

Sick leaves and Sabbatical leaves are managed according to the system in place at the university.

Leaves for emergency cases are deducted from the annual vacations.

4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement

Members of the academic staff are promoted by the Council of the University after receiving recommendations from the Promotions Board as laid down in the University regulations. The selection criteria for promotion include demonstrated quality teaching, research output and commitment to the University and society. The normal route for promotion is as follows:

Lecturer: this title is awarded on obtaining a research-based doctorate (PhD or equivalent) that is relevant to the applicant's work duties.

Senior Lecturer: Normally awarded after five years' satisfactory academic experience at Lecturer level.

Associate Professor: Awarded following a continuous record of excellent academic work at Senior Lecturer level, including significant contributions.

Professor: Awarded for distinction and excellent professional and academic achievements that are recognized at the international level.

4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions

Employment in most universities ends with the following:

- there is an agreement to finish the labour contract with the university;
- the death of an employee;
- the end of the contract period;
- if the employee submitted his resignation and it is accepted by the Board of Trustees;
- due to the disability or injury of an employee who cannot perform his duties;
- when the employer committed a felony or misdemeanour
- if the Board of Trustees decided to dispense of his services

The retirement age for employees is 60 but can be extended.

There are no retirement systems at the university, but at the end of service payments of benefits are made for employees and therefore are offered to those who resign or retire at any time.

4.3 Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

4.3.1 4.3.1 Organisational Aspects

Some universities organise additional training for their staff in the area of teaching competences, delivery and creation of e-learning content, entrepreneurship and project management etc. Capacity-building training as well as professional development training for academic staff are often organised as project-based activities (i.e. Tempus projects, Erasmus +, etc.).

4.3.2 4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities

Participation in on-going training activities is voluntary. However, the systems provided are designed to encourage those teachers/researchers who so desire to take advantage of them.

5 Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education

5.1 Requirements for Appointment

Together with the University's Board of Trustees and other Councils, the University President has the responsibility for directing and managing the university's various affairs. The President is selected for four years and can take the position for no more than two terms. The President works in cooperation with an assistant and Vice Presidents. The University President also maintains a supervisory role in the activities of the faculties and departments, to ensure that the vision and the objectives of the university are being met and continuously improved.

5.2 Conditions of Service

In order to maintain a dynamic and balanced education for students, the University established multiple Councils and governing bodies consisting of university staff. These Councils develop new policies, standards, and expectations for both the faculty and students that are then recommended to the Board of Trustees, the University President and the other administrative leaders.

6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education

6.1 Responsible Bodies

The Palestinian quality assurance policy was upgraded in 2002 simultaneously with the establishment of the **Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC)** as the only authorized agency responsible for the accreditation and quality assurance of Higher Education in Palestine.

The AQAC is a governmental semi-autonomous body under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

Its mission is to reinforce the quality of the education system based on accountability, control, guidance and improvement.

AQAC Structure:

- Accreditation Council: chaired by the head of AQAC and 12 commissioners: six representatives from HEIs (professors) and six from various fields of professional practice
- Advisory Council: comprises seven committees (one committee for one or more major HE discipline).

Advisory Council Committee:

- Chaired by a commissioner and includes not less than five members of academics well-known in their discipline and who have made a sound contribution to the quality of higher education in Palestine.
- Gives advices on the submission of the HEIs' applications for accreditation, selection of peer reviewers and participates in HEI site visits.
- Helps in developing, reviewing, and improving the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for disciplines.

AQAC Affiliation:

- International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
- Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE).
- Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World. (Recently established and declared in Kuala Lumpur, Roundtable meeting of QAA of the OIC, Nov. 13-15, 2009).

In this context, AQAC negotiates cooperation agreements with regional and international quality agencies for mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and degrees.

Overall Objectives of the Palestinian QA System:

- Quality control
- Accountability / guidance
- Improvement purpose

QA system in Palestine relates to:

- Institutions: (state, public and private)
- Programs: (Undergraduate & graduate).

6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

The Palestinian QA system is based on the belief that internal QA is the basis for the external QA evaluation. External QA evaluation is compulsory and applies both to public and private institutions, university and non-university sectors and to all types of academic and vocational programs.

Accreditation comprises three elements and generally involves three steps with specific activities:

- **Self-assessment:** a self-evaluation process conducted by the faculty, the administrators and the staff of the higher education institution or academic programs, resulting in a report that takes as its reference the set of standards of AQAC.
- **Peer review:** a study-visit conducted by a team of peers selected by the AQAC, which reviews the documentation, reviews the premises, and interviews the academic and administrative staff, resulting in an assessment report, including a recommendation to the AQAC.
- **Decision-making:** examination by the AQAC board on the basis of a given set of criteria concerning quality and resulting in a final judgment and the communication of the formal decision to the institution and other concerned parties.

AQAC Standards for Accreditation:

1. At the level of Institutions, the following quality criteria are used: Mission, Goals, Objectives, Governance, Administration, Planning & Communication.
2. Institutional Scope (Educational programs, Research, Internationalization & Community service).
3. Institutional Resources & Services (Human Educational, Physical and Financial resources, Information, Institutional development & Student services).

Program:

At the level of Programs, the following quality criteria are used

1. Mission and General Objectives.
2. Program structure and content.
3. Teaching- Learning Educational Environment.
4. Students.
5. Curriculum and Teaching Plan.
6. Success Rates.
7. Graduates.
8. Program Faculty.
9. Teaching – Learning Facilities.
10. External Contacts and Knowledge Exchange.
11. Internal Quality Evaluation.

Accreditation Process:

Self-Assessment: Evaluation process conducted by faculty, administrators, HEI program staff, students and adhering to AQAC standards.

Peer review (Site Visit): Conducted by team of experts selected by AQAC

Decision making: AQAC board, based on evidence and recommendations on the bases of AQAC criteria concerning quality.

Quality Audit System

- Institution's internal reporting mechanism
- Data collection mechanism on teaching standards
- Data on Student performance and satisfaction

Limitations

- Many programs started without proper accreditation long before the establishment of MOEHE and AQAC
- The system faces difficulty in attracting sufficient number of respected peer reviewers
- Program accreditation is a relatively expensive procedure and the expenses have to be covered by the institutions.

Future Direction and Plans

- Secure financial resources to strongly implement international standards of excellence in our HEIs.
- Recruit immigrant Palestinian scholars to participate in this mission.
- Collaborate with various international organizations to learn from their knowledge and experience in the field.

7 Educational Support and Guidance

7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

7.1.1 Definition of the Target Group(s)

Law No. 4 of 1999, Article 10 on the rights of the disabled in the field of education provides for the following measures:

- A. Insure that the disabled benefit from equal opportunities for enrolment in pedagogic and education institutions and in the universities within the framework of the curricula applicable in these institutions.
- B. Provide necessary pedagogic diagnosis to define the nature and degree of the disability.
- C. Provide adequate curricula, educational and pedagogic means and proper facilities.
- D. Provide education of all types and levels to the disabled according to their needs.
- E. Train professionals in rehabilitation of the disabled based on the nature of disability.

7.1.2 Specific Support Measures

There are a number of disadvantaged learners in Palestinian universities, distributed across many disciplines. These students have academic support to help them to communicate with their professors. They also have financial support in the form of scholarships and financial support for living and transportation, as well as psychological follow-up. In some institutions there is a Committee that takes care of disadvantaged learners and facilitates their studies.

7.2 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

7.2.1 Academic Guidance

In some HEIs there is an Academic Support Unit that helped students with the improvement of academic performance and provides counselling for the future professional activities. The support is usually focussed on three basic programs: Academic Support Program, courses design and events. The unit also works to promote knowledge and cultural communication between the graduate community and the Palestinian society and its institutions and centres of research through communicative activities and conferences.

The Dean of student affairs deals with the university students' social, cultural and technical issues and helps to develop skills and increase capabilities for their future professional life. The Dean of Student

Affairs helps students in solving the academic, financial and psychological problems that might hinder their educational career. It is the work to provide opportunities for students to enrich and expand their educational and extracurricular experience, and to promote the personal and psychological development of their students through social, cultural, professional, intellectual, voluntary and democratic activities (Students' Council Elections: Every year, the Palestinian universities conduct elections for the Student Councils. Almost 70% of the students participate in these elections in a democratic atmosphere).

Psychological Counselling

In most universities there is a Department of Guidance which includes a number of specialists in the field of psychological, social and academic guidance that contribute to the creation of a campus where students feel safe and secure and provides personal and social support. Moreover, they work in creating a friendly environment that would enable the students to express their perspectives from a personal, social, professional and psychological point of view; in order to develop their personalities.

7.2.2 Career Guidance

In order to allow academically-qualified students to gain practical experience and enhance their job-hunting skills, some Palestinian universities initiated the Cooperative Education Program (CO-OP). It is an educational program that aims to combine work and study, thus improving students' academic knowledge, and develop their professional skills like Al-Quds and An-Najah universities. CO-OP provides job opportunities for students and engages the private sector and thus creates collaboration between universities and the labour market. This helps students in acquiring work experience related to their field of specialization. Moreover, most universities organize a placement day for their senior students a placement day where the private sector can meet potential alumni and recruit them.

8 Mobility and Internalization in Higher Education

The theme of internationalization has been first introduced and consolidated into the Palestinian Higher Education system through Tempus Programme and currently through Erasmus+. Though the ministry does not have a national strategy on internationalization they have introduced a new law of mobility. The AQAQ head is a member of the HERE team has drafted a law that for the first time accredits joint master programs and accredits student mobility studies in Europe and elsewhere. This new law significantly contributed to the increase of the mobility of students, staff, researchers and experts in addition to signing a number of joint agreements with other universities in the world.

8.1 Student Mobility

Mobility in Palestine is an issue as Palestinians in general and students, in particular, are experiencing serious obstacles that hinder there to study abroad, like the long process of getting visas for Palestinians. In spite of these hindrances, there is a high interest in mobility amongst students who spend a long time - that exceeds in some cases one year - of waiting to get the access to travel.

Palestinian students in West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem have been benefitting from two main mobility programmes: One offered by the Amid East, a USAID - funded programme, where it mainly focusses on exchange for high school students; and the second programme, which is the biggest and the most influential that offers mobility and exchange for university students, staff, research, etc. This is done through the EU funded programmes, previously known Erasmus Mundus and TEMPUS and now through Erasmus+. This mechanism (E+) opened new horizons for mobility that are direly needed not only for students but also for Palestinian HEIs. A number of universities like An-Najah and Birzeit universities and many others have established strong partnerships with European HEIs where a number of students

benefitted from this tool. A number of the graduates who finished their PhDs and 2nd degrees from Europe are now teaching at various HEIs.

It is worth noting that international students encounter a number of challenges to come and study at Palestinian universities due to the delicate political situation and to the impediments that are imposed on foreign students as they are not easily granted visas.

Another progress is at the level of accreditation of the ECTS system. The Ministry of Education and HE in Palestine has recently joined a TEMPUS- funded project called RecoNow and its staff actively took part in a number of trainings in Europe. Those staff managed not only to learn more about the ECTS system but also implement its regulations for graduates from European HEIs. It is worth noting that graduates from European universities used to wait a long time to get their credentials accredited but now accreditation is done almost on-the-spot as the ECTS system and tools are approved by the Ministry and it is already implemented.

8.2 Academic Staff Mobility

The Tempus Programme has been the major provider of staff mobility. Though not all universities used this tool effectively, it is renowned in Palestine.

8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education

8.3.1 European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

A number of Tempus programmes have focused on curriculum development and 5 new and unique master degrees programmes have been founded through Tempus and now through Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects. Joint Palestinian, Arab and European research efforts have been tailoring together to develop curricula for these new programmes.

8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation

8.4.1 Bilateral Agreements

16 universities in Palestine currently have the joint agreements for partnerships and cooperation with universities in the Arab world, Europe, USA, Australia, China, Japan, Canada and other countries in the region. Large numbers of students are benefitting from this cooperation. In fact most of the university staff have benefitted from this cooperation. This has a positive impact on the level of education and increased the number of PhD holders in Palestine. It is worth noting that the number of agreements between HEIs in Palestine and European countries exceeds 63% of the total percentage of world-wide cooperation

8.4.2 Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations

There are a number of joint agreements between each HEI in Palestine and a number of countries in the world, particularly, at Bachelor and Master Level. However, it is worth noting that cooperation is one-sided as Palestinians usually go abroad, thus international students cannot come and study in Palestine due to access problems.

9 On-going reforms and Policy developments

9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives

The mid-term HE strategy covers the period 2014-2016. It follows the same objectives of the previous strategy for the period 2011-2013. The strategy has eight strategic objectives. Each of them has different

policies that need to be translated into action.

The strategic objectives are:

- To meet the increasing demand on higher education at all levels and raise the rate of enrolment from the lower socioeconomic sectors and those with special needs.
- The higher education outputs must be relevant to the needs of the Palestinian society and the local and regional labour market.
- To guarantee sustainability of funding which is necessary to cover the deficit in the operational, developmental and capital expenditure of higher education institutions.
- To upgrade the level of scientific research so that it can become effective in the process of economic and social development.
- To reform and develop the administration and governance of higher education at the level of the Ministry and institutions.
- To upgrade the level of vocational and technical education qualitatively and quantitatively.
- To enhance the standard of internationalisation in the Palestinian HE System.
- To promote quality assurance and e-Learning.

9.2 Overview of the education reform process and drivers

The “Higher Committee to Review the Educational Process” in Palestine was formed in Dec 2013. This committee was headed by the Education Minister. Its main task was to prepare a report on the status of Basic, Secondary and High education in Palestine and the mechanism of developing it. On Feb. 2014 the report was ready and approved by the Prime Minister. Following this, another committee “Education Reform Committee” was formed and headed by the Prime Minister, This committee is working on implementing what was approved in the report. Work is still underway.

9.3 National reforms in Higher Education

The final draft of the new Palestinian HE Law was finalized and it is about to be signed by the President. The main changes enlisted in the final draft of the proposed new Palestinian HE Law concern the following topics and articles:

- **Article 4:** Autonomy of the Higher Education Institutions

According to the new formulation, HE institutions and scientific research centres enjoy autonomous status; wherein the state provides support and development.

Freedom of scientific research and innovation are guaranteed

- **Article 6:** Constitution of the Higher Education Council

The Board of the Higher Education Council in Palestine would enjoy an independent legal personality, its membership would be ratified by a decision of the President upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers; it would be chaired by the Minister

The council would create some specific units:

Scientific research and studies Unit: in charge of preparing research, studies, need analysis, development procedures and reports related to the HE status.

Performance Unit: in charge of following up the academic, administrative and financial performance of the HE institutions and the implementation of the Council resolutions by the HEIs.

Graduate Unit: in charge of coordinating with the graduate units in the HEIs to provide job opportunities nationally, regionally and globally and of collecting information and issue reports on this matter.

Budget and Planning Unit: whose mission would be to prepare short and long-term strategic plans and develop mechanisms to increase budgetary incomes.

- **Article 31**: Endowment Fund for higher education:

The draft establishes Endowment fund to enhance the performance of HE institutions and develop quality in education and scientific research in order to achieve sustainable development and community development. The Fund would be under the supervision of the Higher Education Council, providing financial resources managed through a special system.

- **Article 33**: Recognition and Diploma Equivalency

A special regulation is established for the recognition of the non-Palestinian institutions and the equivalence of certificates and degrees issued by these institutions.

- **Article 34**: Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission

The draft of the new Law establishes a National Commission for Accreditation and Quality in Higher Education.

In addition, the following changes on the current HE Law were already approved:

1. A Higher Council for Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) was established. It is the only body representing TVET institutions in public and private sectors. In the Council both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour are represented. This constitutes a real breakthrough as the body will unify the efforts of all TVET stakeholders. The Council is now in the process of establishing the National Training Centre for TVET.
2. Digital Education: a text was finalized wherein ICT courses are recognized, if the offering HEI is accredited. Thanks to this, in some disciplines a certain percentage of courses will be taught electronically.
3. Integrative Education: a final draft for integrated education was prepared which aims to integrate the academic courses with practical training to equip the student with the needed skills for the labour market. To achieve this, the Ministry will enhance its partnerships with public and private sectors to provide the students with training opportunities that will enhance their chances of finding appropriate jobs after graduation.
4. Diploma Supplement: as a result of a national workshop led by the Higher Education Reform Experts' team (HERE), a Diploma Supplement template was approved and already adopted by many Palestinian HEIs.

10 Legislation

- Council of Ministers Resolution No. 145 for the year 2004 concerning the application of the education, vocational and technical training Palestine. (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
http://www.dft.gov.ps/index.php?option=com_dataentry&pid=8&Itemid=27&des_id=555
- A Proposed Model for Financing Higher Education in Palestine From the Point of View of P.L. Representatives
<http://scholar.najah.edu/content/proposed-model-financing-higher-education-palestine-point-view-pl-representatives>
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education: Mid-Term Strategy for Higher Education Sector (2010, 2011-2013)
<http://www.mohe.pna.ps/Resources/Docs/StrategyEn.pdf>
- Higher Education Act No. 11 of 1998 (Articles 1 to 30).
<http://www.mohe.pna.ps/Resources/Docs/HELaw.pdf>

- Bridging and networking instruction in HEI.
- Instructions No. 4 for the year 2000 on the Sports Federation in HIE.
- Grants and scholarships in HEI.
- Cabinet decision of 2014 concerning the accreditation of non-Palestinian certificates.
<http://www.mohe.pna.ps/mohe/regulationsandlegislation>

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union (http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm).

Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+ : Higher Education - International Capacity Building (CBHE)

Write to us:

Erasmus +
Rue Joseph II, 59 (J-59 04/33)
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium

Visit us:

Rue Joseph II, 59
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium

Fax: +(32 2) 299 4530**Website:**http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library_en**General questions about CBHE:**EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu