Conceptualization Phase and Planning Steps for a New Graduate Program – Appendix II

A new degree program either within an existing academic unit or in an interdisciplinary area must be designed to ensure that the new academic program fits AUB mission, has a potential for academic excellence, a strong intellectual leadership support and adequate resources. Key criteria include

- Cadre of strong faculty advocates, senior leadership and administrative support within the department(s)/academic unit(s), Faculty(ies) to deliver the new academic program
- Fitness of the academic program to the University and Faculty mission or fulfillment of unmet strategic or market need
- Ability of the academic unit(s) to leverage strengths and delivery capabilities at AUB
- A comprehensive financial plan that addresses the viability and sustainability of the program.

Below are helpful hints and typical questions that the academic unit(s) may need to consider before embarking on its chores.

Steps

1- Conceptualization of the program

The key faculty members should discuss the program concept with the appropriate department chair/convener(s) and the dean(s) of the Faculty(s) that will award the degree and/or that will provide core program components. While in many cases, only one Faculty will award the degree, multiple Faculties may be critical in the content delivery and program implementation. Once the dean(s) affirms his/her support of the concept, the program concept leaders (or planning committee) should work on the following

   a) Establish a preliminary version of program goals and objectives, develop a timeline, approximate program costs, and administrative structure
   b) Address how the above key criteria stated in the preamble of this part are to be addressed
   c) Discuss the degree proposal with the chair(s) of the department(s) that will play a central role in the content development and delivery
   d) Identify members for a planning committee to consult with the academic and Faculty Dean throughout the planning and submission processes

2- Developing a Formal Proposal

The planning committee should also consult key administrative units (e.g. Provost Office, Registrar’s Office, Student Affairs Office, Financial Aid Office, Office of Institutional Research...
and Evaluation, etc.) about specific issues as they develop the plan. The Planning Committee should:

a) Decide on a formal program and degree title (it is advisable to discuss the proposed title with your Registrar’s Office to avoid title duplication or confusion with existing degree programs).

b) Prepare a concise “mission statement” to guide the planning process. What are the “program learning goals” of the program? What societal needs does it meet? Why does it make sense for AUB to deliver it at this time?

c) Gather information to support the rationale for the program. Here are some typical questions that should be anticipated:
   ✓ How does the program advance the university’s mission, goals of academic excellence and leadership?
   ✓ How does the program relate to the Faculty strategic directions?
   ✓ Is the proposed degree based on a coherent body of knowledge and scholarly literature with depth and breadth sufficient to justify concentrated/advanced study?
   ✓ What professional societies and accrediting groups are allied with the degree specialty?
   ✓ What special career qualifications will the program confer on its graduates? Is there a job market for graduates?
   ✓ Does AUB have enough faculties with appropriate expertise and sufficient interest to support the curriculum? Is the quality and amount of AUB’ faculty research on relevant topics sufficient to support the projected number of student thesis projects?
   ✓ Does AUB have sufficient academic resources, including but not limited to laboratory facilities, space, and library and information technology, to support the degree program?
   ✓ What evidence is there for a market need for the program? What kind of students and how many are likely to apply?
   ✓ Are there similar (competing) programs at other local/regional institutions, and if so, why should AUB offer the degree? How might AUB program be different? Will the AUB program provide a distinctive quality or unique program in some way?
   ✓ How does the program differ from and fit in with other degree programs at AUB? (Identify connections and overlaps to existing programs at AUB).

d) **Decide on the basic structure and implementation of the program.** Typical questions might include:
   ✓ Provide evidence of student interest in the program. What student audience will be targeted and how will they be recruited to apply? How many students are expected to apply, and how many will you admit each year (full-time, par time)?
   ✓ What are the formal admission requirements: GPA? Work experience? Test scores? Prerequisite languages, courses or degrees? Reference Letters, Interviews?
   ✓ What is the delivery mode – full-time with thesis, no-thesis, or any options for part-time, evening, and summer study?
   ✓ What are the satisfactory student’s progress requirements?
✓ How will tuition be set? Financial aid available?
✓ Will applicants likely be competitive for external scholarships that can be brought to AUB?
✓ Program content? (core courses and elective options with objectives/contribution to degree learning goals; degree requirements and student schedule for completion)
✓ Identify participating faculty (with their consent)? What are their qualifications?
✓ Any impact on existing courses and programs, negative or positive? Are any new courses required?
✓ What are the special resources required - start-up costs, space, IT, library collections
✓ Is there a sound business plan? Will the program be self-supporting?
✓ Have program’s accreditation aspects been considered and issues identified and resolved?

e) **Determine how the program will be administered**: will it have a unique director--who and what percent of release time? Staff assistance? Steering Committee? Student admissions, advising, and records? Financial management? Cost and revenue sharing across units?

f) **Determine how the achievement of the program goals will be assessed**. Plan a timetable and process for evaluation, and for accreditation if applicable. Implementation of the assessment and evaluation plan must be scheduled *before the end of the fifth year of program operation*. However, the description of tracking of outcomes and external evaluation process must be included.