Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS)
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Historical Background

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences was established in 1866, the same year in which the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut, was established. On December 13, 1866, the first class was held, attended by sixteen students, and in 1870 the first five students graduated. Arabic, which was the language of instruction since the inception of the college, was replaced by English in 1882. In 1900 the School of Commerce was established and was later incorporated into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

AUB, in general, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in particular, have survived many crises since 1866, including two world wars, regional and local wars, student strikes, and economic crises. In spite of all these hardships the faculty has continued to develop and to maintain its high academic standards.
In the mid-1970s the University undertook a major planning exercise, which was known as the Horizon 2000 Plan, aimed at reorganizing the University as a whole. Several changes were introduced in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences as a result: a number of departments and programs (Fine and Performing Arts, Religious Studies, European Language and Literature) were cancelled, and a few others were either merged (e.g., Psychology and Sociology/Anthropology) or became independent from the faculty (e.g., Education and the University Orientation Program). In the past few years the faculty has attempted a major self-review, particularly in its academic programs, faculty composition, and graduation requirements. Several master's degree programs were introduced (e.g., Computer Science and Financial Economics) or re-introduced (e.g., Middle Eastern Studies) and a separate Department of Computer Sciences was created. Furthermore, the faculty is the major contributor to the Center for Advanced Mathematical Studies, a research center of the University, established in 1997. In 2000 the School of Business, which was part of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, became an independent school, and Education became once more a department in Arts and Sciences. In fall 2001 the Central Research Science Laboratory was established to promote scientific research in the faculty and at the University at large. In 2004–05 the Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) was introduced as well as a new undergraduate program in Fine Arts and Art History. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences, in the Fall of 2007, reactivated some of the PhD programs that it previously had in the 1960s and 1970s, including Arabic, Islamic and Modern Middle East History, and Theoretical Physics, and launched a PhD program in Cell and Molecular Biology at the Department of Biology.

Mission

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences represents the core of the University and is its main gateway for higher studies and professional education. It follows a liberal arts program that stresses freedom of academic choice, integrity, ethical conduct, equal opportunity and respect for diversity. The faculty offers undergraduate and graduate programs committed to excellence in research and teaching in the most fundamental disciplines of the arts, humanities, and social, natural and mathematical sciences.

Vision

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences strives to have a governance system that is transparent and based on peer participation and review. The faculty encourages and supports high quality research and teaching. The curriculum is built on a pivotal and formative freshman year. Excellence is achieved at the undergraduate and graduate levels through a continuous revision of curricula, assessment of needs for equipment and facilities, and recruitment and development of faculty profiles. The faculty is committed to academic growth through the establishment of successful and sustainable Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral degrees.

Graduate Study

All applicants to graduate study need the recommendation of the academic unit concerned. Admission to the graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is competitive, based on the applicants academic record, achievements and research interests of the applicant. Academic units may add additional requirements that would assist in their admission recommendations such as a writing sample, GRE subject test scores, and/or interview.
Graduate

• Normally, a cumulative average of at least 80%, or standardized equivalent from other institutions of higher learning, in the major field of study
• Normally, a cumulative average of at least 75%, or standardized equivalent from other institutions of higher learning, in all work done in the sophomore, junior, and senior years
• A minimum grade of 70% in ENGL 203 or exemption from the course, and a minimum grade of 70 in ENGL 204
• Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score

Graduate on Probation

• Normally, a cumulative average of at least 77%, or standardized equivalent from other institutions of higher learning, in the major field of study
• Normally, a cumulative average of at least 75%, or standardized equivalent from other institutions of higher learning, in all work done in the sophomore, junior, and senior years
• A minimum grade of 70% in ENGL 203 or exemption from the course, and a minimum grade of 70% in ENGL 204
• Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score

Prospective Graduate

• A cumulative average of at least 75%, or standardized equivalent from other institutions of higher learning, in all work done in the sophomore, junior, and senior years
• Up to 15 credits of supplementary undergraduate courses in the intended field of study, to be specified by the academic unit
• A minimum grade of 70 in ENGL 203 or exemption from the course, and a minimum grade of 70 in ENGL 204
• In order to be admitted to the graduate program the applicant should take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and should have completed the supplementary courses with an average of at least 80, based on a minimum of 15 credits in the intended field of study or related areas as judged by the department or program. Prospective graduate students who have completed all undergraduate prerequisite courses except one, may begin taking 1 graduate course along with the last undergraduate course requirement, upon the approval of their department or program and the graduate committee.
Comprehensive Exam Courses

Master’s students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences should register for a zero credit required course entitled “Comprehensive Exam” that carries the course number 395 or preceded by the department or program prefix. The student should register for the course the first time as 395A. A student who does not pass the comprehensive examination may take it a second time in the following semester as 395B. The grading of these courses (395A and 395B) is pass or fail.

Full information and general requirements for graduate work are found in the General University Academic Information section in this catalogue.