

The Bachelor's Degree Award Examination and Assessment Bylaws

**Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Scientific
Research**

Approved by Academic Committee No. 86

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Article 1: Title

The present bylaws shall be named: “The Bachelor’s Degree Award Examination and Assessment Bylaws at the Arab Open University.”

Article 2: Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following words and expressions shall have the meanings specified hereunder:

University / AOU	The Arab Open University
President	The University President
VPAA&SR	The vice President of academic affairs and scientific research
Dean	The Dean of an academic programme
Deanship	The Deanship of an academic program that offers a Bachelor's degree
Director	The Director of an Arab Open University branch or campus
Branch	An Arab Open University branch or campus
Headquarters / HQ	The Arab Open University headquarters
Programme	An academic major accredited for a Bachelor's award
Faculty Member	A professor, associate or assistant professor, or lecturer appointed at an AOU branch or HQ
General Course Coordinator	A faculty member responsible for coordinating course requirements across all branches
Branch Programme Coordinator	A faculty member responsible for administering the implementation of a programme at a branch

Branch Course Coordinator	A faculty member responsible for coordinating course requirements at a branch
Academic Committee	A permanent committee formed by the University Council
CEC	The Central Examination Committee at the University's headquarters
FEC	The Faculty Examination Committee in a Deanship
BEC	The Branch Examination Committee
CAC	Course Assessment Committee

Article 3: Examinations and Assessment

- A) The total marks for a course is 100. It is evenly distributed between results of continuous assessment and final examination.
- The 50 marks allotted to continuous assessment shall be distributed as follows:
 - Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs) constitute a minimum of 20 marks.
 - Midterm Assessments (MTAs) constitute a maximum of 30 marks.
 - Depending on the nature of the course, the respective Deanship may exclude it from Clause B's stipulated marks distribution, provided that the Academic Committee approves this exclusion.
 - The minimum number of TMAs is one per course per semester. The Deanship may determine the upper limit.
 - The maximum number of MTAs is two per course per semester.
 - Each Deanship shall prepare TMAs, MTAs, and final exams for each course.
 - TMAs, MTAs and final exams shall be unified in all branches and endorsed by the respective Dean.
 - A Deanship may hold more than one MTA in a single semester.

- The MTA and final exam for each course are held simultaneously in all branches according to special instructions issued by the University Council. However, exceptions are allowed in special cases.
- All final exams, MTAs and TMAs are subject to Group Marking and Cross-Branch Marking (CBM).

Article 4: Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs)

- A) Each Deanship shall prepare TMAs pertaining to the unified courses. In addition to preparing marking guidelines for said TMAs and student assessment criteria pursuant to the standards and procedures enforced by the University Council.
- B) As for local programmes, the respective branch Deanship shall create and prepare the TMAs alongside their marking guidelines and student assessment criteria.
- C) Each Deanship shall supply their respective branch with all the required TMAs for every offered course in that semester. This is conducted at the beginning of that semester, but also before the start of the second week of the semester.
- D) Students shall comply with the approved course calendar's deadlines for submitting each TMA.
- E) If a student chooses to defer the timely submission of the TMA, he/she will be subject to ***AOU TMA late submission policy***
- F) Students with disabilities or special requirements whose condition impedes writing their own TMAs and/or other required assignments must submit their case to the branch programme coordinator whom then shall refer it to the branch Rector. The branch Rector then proposes the case to the Branch Examination Committee (BEC) and they decide on the appropriate course of action.
- G) For each TMA not submitted on its due date, the student shall receive a zero (0) mark unless he/she presents a valid excuse to the bodies assigned by the University. If the excuse is accepted, the student may be given a grace

period of **seven** calendar days, i.e. this period includes the immediate weekend following the TMA submission deadline.

- H) Each Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) shall be marked and returned to the student after the tutor's marking and feedback/feedforward have taken place. The student's mark shall be entered in the Student Information System (SIS) within a period not exceeding two weeks from the TMA due date.
- I) The Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) shall review random samples of the marked TMAs and students' remarks for each study group to verify compliance of the marking process with the Deanship guidelines. Whenever this review process takes place, the respective Branch shall document it.
- J) Students may apply for reconsideration of TMA marks in accordance with Article 10 herein or according to the student appeal procedures adopted by the University. The student is informed of the appeal's results within two weeks (14 calendar days) of their application.
- K) According to Deanship requests and directions, the Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) shall samples of the Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) and examinations to the General Course Coordinator (GCC) for review and follow-up.
- L) A student's TMA mark may not be modified unless the Branch Programme Coordinator (BPC) submits a written application specifying reasons of mediation. This application should be approved by the Branch Rector and submitted within maximum period of one week (seven calendar days) following the date when the TMA was returned to the student.

Article 5: Midterm Assessments (MTAs)

- A) Each course's MTA shall be held concurrently for all study groups each semester. The respective Deanship may unify the content and timing of examinations across all branches.
 - MTAs shall be held under the supervision of the BCC.

- The duration of an MTA is determined based on the course's credit hours as follows:

Number of Credit Hours	MTA Duration
3-4 credit hours	A maximum of 90 minutes
5-8 credit hours	A maximum of 120 minutes

- Should a student fail to attend the MTA, he/she will be given a **zero (0)** mark unless a force majeure excuse is submitted within seven calendar days of the MTA date.
- If the excuse is found valid, the student may attend an alternative MTA at the date assigned in the academic calendar.
- The MTA is marked by the course tutor. The BCC reviews samples of students answer booklets from each study group to verify the marking process as well as the distribution and compilation of marks.
- The course tutor enters the MTA mark into the SIS under the supervision of the BCC.
- MTA results should be announced no later than ten (10) days following the MTA date.
- A student may appeal his/her MTA mark in accordance with Article 10 herein, or according to the appeals procedures determined by the University. He/she will be notified of the appeal's result within 1 week from the appeal submission date.
- A student's MTA mark shall not be modified except following a written request by the programme coordinator and the approval of the branch Rector.
- The student's marks in continuous assessment (MTAs and TMAs) for each course are entered onto the Student Information System prior to final exams by at least 1 week.

- Students MTA papers are stored for one (1) semester as reference, if necessary.

Article 6: Final Examinations

- A) Each Deanship shall prepare two (or more if necessary) different versions of the final exam for each course. In addition, an answer booklet and student assessment guidelines for each version must be prepared pursuant to the standards and procedures adopted by the University Council.
- Each Deanship shall provide the Head of Examinations in each branch (or any other staff member the branch Rector delegated the task to) with the final exam questions for each course. This needs to be carried out in a timely manner to allow for copies preparation for each student enrolled in a study group or section in all branches.
 - Final exams for all courses shall be held at the end of the semester within the specified period stated in the approved University calendar.
 - Final exams for the same course across all branches shall be identical for all the study groups, and shall take place at the same time during the same day.
 - The students answers in the answer booklet are considered approved and sealed by the University. However, in cases where the answers are written on the original exam script, all student scripts ought to be sealed.
 - The final exam question sheet must state the time allotted for the exam and the marks allocated for each question. Time allocation is determined as following:

Number of Credit Hours	Final Exam Duration
2-3 credit hours (10-15 credit points)	A maximum of 120 minutes
4-5 credit hours (16-20 credit points)	A maximum of 150 minutes

6-8 credit hours (22 – 30 credit points)	A maximum of 180 minutes
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- Students with disabilities/special requirements must inform the BEC through the body assigned by the University's administration about their requirements. For chronic illness cases, such requests must be submitted at least 1 week (7 calendar days) prior to the date of the mid-term assessment or final examination. However, emergency cases may be accepted up to 3 days before an exam or before the submission of an assignment/project. This advance notification allows the responsible officers to deal with the situation either by providing special equipment or by extending the time allotted to the exam.

Article 7: Receipt of Final Examinations, Marking and Grade Entry

- A) Final exams shall be marked at the branches, according to the following standards and procedures:
- The student's name and registration number should be concealed on the exam script in the exam hall before the marker receives the scripts.
 - The exam scripts are received from the Exam Steering and Control Committee (ESCC) by the BCC. This is done by filling out a form that contains the number of sections, answer booklets/scripts received, and the date of receipt.
 - The University is keen on marking final exams within the campus. No exam scripts are allowed to be moved outside the campus, even in the case of individual marking or CBM.
 - Marking shall be conducted pursuant to CBM and Group Marking rules by all course tutors at the branch. Each tutor shall sign his/her name against the question marked by him/her according to the established regulations¹.
 - Examination booklets are also distributed randomly among course tutors for double marking. Each tutor shall write his/her signature next to

¹ Refer to the Appendix for further information.
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the question marked by him/her according to the established regulations.

- The BCC shall review random samples of the marked answer booklets. The sample size should constitute at least 10% of the total marked booklets.
 - Specific procedures are in place for handing out and receiving answer booklets between the marker and the BCC throughout the marking stages. The course title and code number (if possible) should be stated alongside the number of pages and the date of receiving this script. The recipient's name and signature should also be included.
- B) The BCC shall also monitor the marks that the students had obtained, and which had been entered by the tutor into the SIS. These marks cannot be changed after this stage.
- C) The final exam scripts are stored at each branch for 2 semesters for review, if necessary.
- D) A student who fails to attend a final exam shall be given a zero (0) mark, unless a force majeure excuse is submitted within 1 week following the exam date.
- E) If the excuse was deemed valid, the letter 'I' shall be entered onto the student's academic record. An 'I' student shall be permitted to re-attend an exam on the first subsequent exam session.
- F) If the student fails to attend the same exam on its first subsequent session, "I" shall be converted to "F" in the academic record.
- G) If the student fails to pass the last course in his/her study plan before graduation, he/she may re-attend the next final exam only if the following conditions are met:
- 1) Having passed the continuous assessment.
 - 2) The course is registered in the graduation semester.
 - 3) The new grade for this course should be capped at Grade C.

Article 8: Samples

Each branch shall supply the Deanships at HQ with samples of TMAs, MTAs and final exams to be reviewed by external examiners. The samples should represent variations of students performance levels.

Article 9: Results

- A) A student's final mark in any course shall comprise the total marks earned in the continuous assessment and the final exam.
- Following Branch Examination Committee (BEC) approval, the final marks shall be dispatched by the branches to the Admission, Registration and Examination Departments at HQ, pursuant to the University Council procedures.
 - The respected Deanships at HQ, or whoever is assigned by the VPAA&SR, shall process the final marks as received from the branches for each course in accordance with the following University Council approved grading system:

Letter Grade	F	D	C	C+	B	B+	A
Grade Range	< 50%	50-57%	58-65%	66-73%	74-81%	82-89%	≥ 90%

- The respective Deanships may amend the figures presented above should they find it necessary and in line with the course's nature and expected outcome.
- The points which correspond to the above values are determined as follows:

Letter Grade	F	D	C	C+	B	B+	A
Points	0.00	1.50	2.00	2.50	3.00	3.50	4.00

- Grade D shall be the minimum pass rate.
- A student is considered failed in a course in any of the following cases:

- 1) If a student's mark in continuous assessment was less than 30% of the marks assigned to it, the grade FC shall be entered into his/her record.
 - 2) If a student was absent from the final exam without an acceptable excuse, the grade FA shall be entered into his/her record.
 - 3) If the student's mark in the final exam was less than 40% of the overall mark, the grade FF shall be entered into his/her record.
 - 4) If the student's final mark—the total marks obtained in the continuous assessment and the final examination—was less than 50%, the letter F shall be entered into his/her record.
- The results of any course shall be approved by the Central Examination Committee (CEC), following a recommendation by both the Course Assessment Committee (CAC) and the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) of the respective Deanship.

Article 10: Objection to Results

This article should be read in conjunction with Article 23 of ***The Bachelor's Degree Award Requirements Bylaws at the Arab Open University***.

A) Formation of Appeals and Re-Appeals Committees:

- Branch Appeals Committee (BAC): For each academic programme, a respective BAC shall be formed comprising:
 - 1) Respective Branch Programme Coordinator / Committee Chairperson.
 - 2) Two members of the academic staff including the BCC or GCC, if possible.
- Branch Re-Appeal Committee (BRC): For each academic programme, a specialized BRC shall be formed comprising:
 - 1) Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as Chairperson.
 - 2) Two members of the teaching staff of the respective course. They also should not be members of the respective appeal committee.

A) Duties and Procedures of the Branch Appeal Committee and Branch Re – appeal Committee:

- 1) A student may request a final grade review in any course within seven (7) calendar days from the date of posting the approved course results through the online appeals system, and upon completing the relevant procedures as set by the University.
- 2) The BAC shall consider the student's appeal and verify the absence of any error in computation or in entering the student's marks in the course, as well as the absence of unmarked questions. The student should be informed of the committee's recommendation(s), that will then be forwarded to the CEC to be approved within two weeks (14 calendar days) of the appeal submission.
- 3) The student may object to the committee's recommendation/decision and re-appeal through the branch Rector to the competent BRC within one week (7 calendar days) of being notified with the appeal outcome.
- 4) The BRC shall study the student's appeal to make sure that there is no material error. The student shall be informed of the committee's recommendation(s) within two weeks of submitting the re-appeal. The ruling is then submitted to the CEC for approval.
- 5) The BAC may consult with the respective GCC or academic programme Deanship, if necessary.
- 6) The Branch Re-appeal Committee must consult with the respective General Course Coordinator (GCC) or academic programme Deanship before submitting its recommendation to the Branch Rector for endorsement.
- 7) If either of the committees rules that the student's mark ought to be changed, the Rector shall convey the recommendation(s) to the Vice President Academic Affairs & Scientific Research (VPAA&SR) within the seventh week after the declaration of results, to be submitted to the Central Examination Committee (CEC) for a final approval.
- 8) The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Scientific Research brings to Central Examination Committee (CEC) members' attention all the

appeal and re-appeal cases that he had received from the University branches for their approval.

- 9) Following the approval of the Central Examination Committee, the student's mark is updated by the authorized persons as required, provided that the changes are recorded in the student's file.
- 10) The student's right to appeal or re-appeal concerning his/her case shall be waived if he/she did not abide by the deadlines noted in Clauses A and C herein.
- 11) The student's result should be confirmed as final and irrevocable 1 semester after its adoption. No changes can occur from this point onward.

Article 11: Language Placement Test (LPT)

- A) All freshmen shall undertake the Language Placement Test in Arabic and English pursuant to the standards approved by the University Council.
- B) Non-Arabic speaking freshmen shall be exempt from the Arabic LPT and shall be treated according to standards approved by the University Council.
- C) Depending on the freshmen's score in TOEFL and/or IELTS, he/she can either be exempt from taking the English LPT or exempted from some courses as shown below. They also ought to have taken either test not more than two years prior to applying.

TOEFL Score			IELTS Score	Student is Exempted from
Internet-Based Test (IBT)	Computer-Based Test (CBT)	Paper-Based Test		
30	93	397	3	EL097
41	123	437	4	EL098

53	153	477	4.5	EL099
65	183	513	5.5	EL111
79	213	550	6.5	EL112

- D) Students may be exempted from pursuing one or more University-required Arabic compulsory course(s) pursuant to the scores obtained in the Arabic LPT, and in accordance with the standards approved by the University Council.

Student Grade in Placement Test	Student is Exempted from
0 – 59%	No exemption
60 – 89%	AR111
90 and above	AR112

If a student is undertaking the updated University requirements, the exemptions will differ as following:

Student Grade in Placement Test	Student is Exempted from
0 – 74%	No exemption
75% and above	AR113

- E) On entry, the freshman's academic record shall contain a record of all courses from which the freshman has been exempted due to his/her performance at the Arabic and/or English LPTs. These exempted courses shall be marked "CR". Moreover, the credit hours associated with exempted courses shall not be included in the freshman's cumulative averages.

Article 12: Cheating and Plagiarism

- A) Any student found to be committing any act of cheating or plagiarism shall be referred to ***The Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures Bylaws at the Arab Open University.***
- B) The following acts represent cases of cheating and plagiarism:
- Verbatim copying of printed or Internet material, and submitting them as part of TMAs without proper academic documentation.
 - Copying other students' notes or reports.
 - Using paid or unpaid material prepared for the student by individuals or firms.
 - The use of materials or tools that are prohibited in examinations, or attempting to do so.

Article 13: Branch Examinations Committee (BEC)

- A) The Branch Examination Committee (BEC) shall be formed at the beginning of each academic year. It shall comprise of:
- Branch Rector/Chairperson.
 - Academic Assistant of branch Rector.
 - Academic Programme Coordinator at the branch (on rotation basis).
 - Admission and Registration Officer at the branch.
 - Head of Quality Assurance Unit at the branch.
- B) The BEC shall assume the following major functions:
- 1) Organize the administering of examinations at the branch.
 - 2) Devise a plan for conducting and marking final exams and entering their results pursuant to procedures adopted by the University and its competent Deanships.
 - 3) Review results of various course examinations, recommend their approval and then submit them to the Admission, Registration and Examination Departments at HQ.
 - 4) Consider student objections pertaining to their final marks as per endorsed procedures.

- 5) Endorse lists of graduates, and issue recommendations.
- C) The VPAA&SR shall be notified of the BEC formation decision by the branch Rector.

Article 14: Course Assessment Committee (CAC)

- A) The Course Assessment Committee (CAC) shall comprise:
- GCC/Chairperson.
 - Two Branch Course Coordinators as members.
 - Two course External Examiner as a member.
- B) The CAC shall conduct the following main tasks:
- A) Review course continuous assessment (TMAs, MTAs) and final exam samples.
- B) Deliberate on course results.
- C) The CAC shall submit its report to the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC).

Article 15: Faculty Examinations Committee (FEC)

- A) The Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) shall be formed at the beginning of each academic year and shall comprise:
- Relevant Dean/Chairperson.
 - Two faculty members at the Deanship.
 - The Chief External Examiner.
 - Head of the Admission, Registration and Examinations Department.
- B) The FEC shall be entrusted with the following main tasks:
- 1) Examine the final course results and make the necessary recommendations to the CEC for approval.
 - 2) Consider external examiners and CAC reports then submit recommendations to the CEC.
 - 3) Approve graduates lists and make recommendations to the CEC.

Article 16: Central Examinations Committee (CEC)

- A) The Central Examination Committee(CEC) shall comprise:

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- The VPAA&SR/Chairperson.
- Academic Programmes Deans.
- Head of Admissions, Registration and Examination.
- Director of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department.
- Chief External Examiners.

B) The CEC shall assume the following tasks:

- A) Approve final course results as per recommendations from the BEC and FEC.
- B) Approve any modifications of students' grades as received from FEC or BAC/BRC.
- C) Approve expected graduate lists.
- D) Approve unified forms of recording marks at the branches to prepare them for viewing by different examination committees.
- E) Devise general frameworks and policies pertaining to University examinations without prejudice to the relevant provisions of University bylaws and regulations.
- F) Study any obstacles impeding the implementation of examination rules and procedures, and submit appropriate proposals for resolving to the University Council.

Article 17: General Provisions

- A) The current bylaws herein shall override any previous bylaws relating to or having the same title or subject matter.
- B) The Vice Presidents, Deans, Branch Directors and Head of Admissions, Registration and Examination shall be responsible for implementing the provisions of the current bylaws.
- C) The University Council shall decide on any cases that are not covered by the provisions of the present bylaws.

Appendix: Coordination, Marking and Sampling

- 1) Group marking means the participation of more than one marker in the marking of an exam script. This can be done by assigning each marker to

mark certain questions in all scripts. Thus, all scripts will have been marked by more than one tutor. In case a course has only one tutor, the Programme Coordinator asks another tutor to review the marking of the scripts.

- 2) Before group marking begins, a coordination meeting shall be held comprising course tutors and the Branch Course Coordinator to discuss the answer key and the full marking of a random sample of exam scripts by each tutor to agree a unified system of marking and to assign a marker for each of the exam questions.
- 3) There should be minutes for each course meeting which shows the names of markers, the question(s) he/she shall mark and his/her signature.
- 4) All markers shall fully abide with the answer key and the marks allotted to each part of the answer in order to guarantee marking objectivity and uniformity in all AOU branches.
- 5) All markers must calculate the marks given by adding them and ensuring that they are correctly transferred to the cover of the exam booklet.
- 6) The marks attained by the student must be recorded on the cover of the exam booklet and inside it in one language to avoid mistakes, which happen when marks are added up. The mark should also be written in letters.
- 7) Emphasis ought to be placed on distributing the marks of each questions to parts thereof in accordance with the marking instructions/sample and avoid writing a single overall mark.
- 8) When group marking is finished, the course coordinator chooses random samples to be reviewed by him in order to ensure marking objectivity and precision.
- 9) The marks reviewing process is made by exchanging scripts between markers in a documented manner.
- 10) There must be documentation of receiving and exchanging scripts in which the number of these scripts is recorded together with the course title, its number, the date of the action, and the name and signature of the person who received the scripts throughout all marking stages.

- 11) An adequate number of TMAs, MTAs and exam scripts for each marker must be sent to the Deanship concerned. The marker's name should be written on all samples.
- 12) Samples must be scanned and sent on a CD, which should be checked to confirm that it functions properly before it is sent to the Deanship concerned in good time.
- 13) The use of examination seals should be the responsibility of one or more members of the control committee.