

Reference



*Applying the QAA Code of Practice
Material for the staff in the AOU
Customized for Saudi Arabia Branch
Copyright © 2007*

Guide for Staff Training and Development

*For more information contact:
Arab Open University
P.O. Box 84901, Riyadh 11681
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Branch
Tel. + 966 1 274 22 77*

Table of Contents

Orientation and Generic Training Workshops	3
Managing Faculty Training and Development.....	3
Preparing Orientation Sessions/Workshops.....	7
Coordinated Open Learning: The AOU Platform.....	10
Polling Opinions from Workshop Participants	25

Orientation and Generic Training Workshops

This Guide represents a reference folder which contains a number of documents intended for use and reference in the arrangement and management of training and development activities targeted at academic staff. In particular, academic staff/faculty training and development spans a number of regularly-held workshops. These include the following prototype workshops:

- Induction/Orientation Workshops: These are usually intended for new academic staff, both fulltime and part-time. They aim at introducing the staff to the organization and operation of the institution at the Branch level and at the Headquarter-Kuwait level.
- Generic Training: These workshops are open to both new and old academic staff. They are usually designed to introduce the basic notions and paradigms of the philosophy and operation of open education systems.

These workshops are obviously intended to serve as orientation-type workshops, dealing with general overviews on the platform of open education, and the Branch and University organizational structures.

The following documents comprise the contents of said Guide:

Induction/Orientation Workshop:

1. Preparing Orientation Workshop Sessions
2. General Framework for Managing Faculty Training and Development
3. Coordinated Open Learning Brochure
4. Workshop Questionnaire

Managing Faculty Training and Development

The three main aspects of Faculty Development falling in the realms of academic training, envisaged to be achieved via special training workshops, include the following norms of training:

- Induction/Orientation of new and current faculty
- Generic Training
- Discipline/Course-based Training

I. Induction of New Faculty:

1. Hold an "Induction/Orientation Session" aimed at the orientation of new faculty (Tutors and staff Tutors) to the academic operation of the institution. Orientation sessions should be held at all Branch locations. In particular, cover the following aspects:

- Introduction to the AOU and the SA-Branch organizational structures
- AOU Assessment Policy, and the particular need to utilize the PT3 form for TMA grading and assessment.
- Significance of Local and OUVS accreditation

2. Provide attendants with Handouts. In particular, provide a package containing a number of relevant documents which include:

- Faculty Handbook (Academic Rules, Regulations, and Procedures of Operation). Branch should have an abridged copy intended for this purpose.
- Guidelines for Managing Student Assessment
- Group Marking Strategy
- General Marking Guidelines

3. Polling Opinions: For purposes of Quality Assurance, it may be useful to poll the opinions of attendees. In particular, provide a simple Questionnaire asking them to:

- List the 3 major benefits gained from the Orientation Session
- List 3 other major topics or areas that either need to be added for coverage, or elaborated on in the coverage.

4. Documentation:

- Write up of a brief report summarizing the main topics covered, and including a summary of the feedback provided by the Questionnaire.
- Add Branch views on the feedback.
- Append as well a complete list of attendees.

II. Generic Training:

1. Mount sessions on Generic Training at all Branch locations
2. Sessions should be introduced by the following members, as available: Branch Director; Academic Asst. to Branch Director; Local Center Directors; or Senior Staff Tutors.
3. Poll opinions of attendees via a simple Questionnaire as outlined under the "Induction Session."
4. Documentation: Via a 1-2 pp. report, document event; thereby summarizing main topics covered, and a summary of the feedback gained through the Questionnaire. Append as well a list of the attendees.

III. Discipline-Based Training:

There are two modes of presentation regarding Discipline-based Training:

1. One mode follows after the model practiced by the OU whereby training is made per course at the HQ-Kuwait. In this case, Branch attendees are expected to be trained as trainers for the Branch.
2. The other mode may be training per program. This mode is efficient when human (training) resources are limited; and they usually are. If this mode is applied, then areas of coverage would typically include:
 - Overview of the program of study
 - Typical ways of managing the TMAs; e.g., a combination of TMAs and CMAs in ITC courses.
 - Managing the Midterm Assessments (MAs) with regard to a balance between multiple-choice questions and essay- type questions.

- Special program consideration such as the use of Term Papers; Thematic Projects (for ITC), and Case Studies (for Business Administration)
 - Use of the mandatory course websites.
 - Use of certain proprietary application software packages in all three programs procured from the OU.
 - Poll opinion of attendees via a simple questionnaire as outlined under "Induction Training."
3. Documentation: Each course or discipline-based training session held at the Branch should be well documented. Include topics of coverage; feedback by attendees; and append a list of names of the attendees.

IV. Engaging Faculty in Scholarly Activities:

It is highly important to demonstrate that there are other opportunities which aim at enhancing faculty development. In particular, document the following:

- Conferences attended
- Research grants received
- Other scholarly activities by individual faculty members, or by a group, including, for instance involvement in the development of innovative learning methodologies and/or resources.
- Document on annual basis.

Preparing Orientation Sessions/Workshops

I. Arrangement Platform:

This document sets the general guidelines for convening "Orientation and Generic-type Training Workshops" at all Branch locations.

- Suggested timeframe: start of academic semester/or year
- Session duration: one day; 2 hours in morning; 2 hours in afternoon
- Session speakers: Branch Director; Center Directors; Senior Management/ Senior Staff Tutors.

II. Suggested Contents of Workshop:

It is suggested that specific contents should be targeted for such an Orientation Workshop. In particular, the following suggestions are made.

Morning Session:

This session focuses on roles and responsibilities and management aspects of the Learning Process.

- Overview of the Open Education Platform at the AOU, incorporating a blend of Tutorial Sessions (Tutor-based) and Independent Study (Student-based):
 - Review of the Organizational Structures of the HQ and the Branch
 - Roles and responsibilities of Tutors and Staff Tutors
 - Effective Management of the Tutorial Sessions
 - Office Hours and Tutor Communication to enhance the effectiveness of Student Independent Study
- Available Learning Resources:

- Printed Material
- Supporting Course Websites
- Application Software Packages
- Video streaming of tutorial presentations
- Other supporting initiatives; e.g., Supporting Notes posted on the net by Tutors and Staff tutors
- Attending to student grievances and appeals

Afternoon Session:

This session focuses on various aspects and requirements of "Student Assessment":

- Managing the TMAs; a major role for the Tutors:
 - Application of the PT3 form is highly important.
 - Generous comments are significant feedback to students on their performance.
 - Monitoring role of the Staff Tutor
- Administering the Midterm Assessments (Quizzes):
 - Monitoring role and moderation by the Staff Tutor aims at addressing the issue of "Standardization."
 - Collaborative effort by the team of course Tutors is highly desirable.
- Managing the Final Exam:
 - Exam Preparation; under Dean's direction; but involves participation by all Branches.
 - "Group Marking Strategy" toward addressing the issue of "Standardization."
 - Major leading role for the Staff Tutor
- Role of the Branch Exam Committee
- Collecting Student Work Samples: a common responsibility
- OUVS Accreditation: toward quality assurance in Higher Education
- Local Accreditation: local stamp of approval

III. Targeted Audience:

This workshop is deemed beneficial for faculty members of all ranks. Hence, it is recommended that old and new faculty attend the workshop.

IV. Suggested Handouts:

The following documents should be available for distribution:

1. Faculty Handbook of Academic Regulations
2. Guidelines for Managing Student Assessment
3. Group Marking Strategy
4. General Marking Guidelines
5. Program Description and Learning Outcomes

V. Polling Opinions:

Opinions of participants should be solicited via a simple questionnaire that would ask them to:

- List the major 3 benefits gained
- List 3 other issues that need to be covered in future presentations of same workshop

VI. Documentation:

Branch, at all locations, should document presentation of the workshops:

- Document topics covered
- Write a brief report (1 page) on feedback gained via the questionnaire
- Append Handouts for future reference
- Append list of attendees

Coordinated Open Learning: The AOU Platform

AOU: The Beginnings

The creation of the Arab Open University (AOU) came as a personal initiative of HRH Prince Talal Bin Abdelaziz, President of the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND). Although roots of the concept go back to 1976, it was the more formal call, made by HRH Prince Talal in 1996, for establishing such an institution that would actually put the concept on a serious track. Said initiative was put forth to a congregation of Arab Ministers of Education and in Higher Education, held in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1998. Same concept was unanimously adopted by said congregation as an innovative institution of need.

Following a feasibility study, undertaken by a major international firm in 1999, Under the Chairmanship of HRH Prince Talal, a Working Group started, in 1997, laying the foundations for the establishment of the institution. Following a feasibility study, undertaken by a major international firm in 1999, concrete steps were taken in order to shape the structure of the envisaged institution. In particular, formal agreements of collaboration were subsequently signed with the renowned United Kingdom Open University (UKOU). These agreements provide the AOU with opportunities to tap into learning resources of high quality standards for certain programs of study, offered by the institution. In addition, they allow the AOU, via consultancy arrangements, to benefit from vast accumulated experience at the UKOU.

In June 2001, a formal launching of the institution was made at the Headquarters in Kuwait. Plans were reiterated for the inauguration, in October 2002, of six Branches in: Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt.

The AOU is governed by a Board of Trustees, under the Chairmanship of HRH Prince Talal. Operational aspects are regulated by an established Charter, supported further by detailed Bylaws, and appropriate Rules and Regulations.

Mission Statement

By design, the AOU adopts an open system of learning, and hopes, in consequence, to serve local and regional communities with opportunities of higher education via the offering of market-driven programs of study. In addition, The AOU hopes, as well, to serve the Arab World, via its involvement in constructive activities of studies and research in various disciplines of knowledge.

As such, and as an institution of Higher Education, the AOU adopts a set of goals and objectives congruent with its set mission. These include the following:

- Offering opportunities of quality higher education to a large community of students.
- Providing special opportunities of higher education to women and those residing in remote areas.
- Providing continuing education in various disciplines of knowledge.
- Providing opportunities of professional training in response to market needs.
- Participating, as a contributing partner, in research and scholarly activities in areas of immediate developmental interest to Arab countries.
- Fostering humanistic values and ethics as integral components of its learning and education processes.

Partnership with the UK Open University

Early on, the AOU concluded a number of Agreements with the UK Open University (OU) in order to serve as enabling vehicles of structured and formalized collaboration between the two institutions, without jeopardy to the standing of the AOU as an independent institution.

In particular, these Agreements have allowed the AOU to license, and modify, in accordance with its own philosophy of convictions, the learning materials

prescribed for courses dictated in set three Baccalaureate programs of study in: English Language and Literature; IT and Computing; and Administration.

Furthermore, one of the Agreements has set the stage and requirements for institutional Accreditation and program Validation by the Open University validation Services (OUVS); thereby, inherently subjecting the validated programs to measures of rigor and quality embodied in corresponding Benchmarks set by the British Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The AOU, together with its six operating Branches, has subsequently been accredited by the OUVS in 2004. The three previously mentioned programs of study have also gained Validation status from the OUVS in 2004.

A System of Coordinated Open Learning

Over the last two decades, more than ever, there has appeared a confusing plethora of terms, in attempts to describe forms of higher education that do not subscribe to the widely accepted norms of conventional campus-based higher education. We believe that there are traits of uniqueness in the form of Open Education adopted by the AOU. As we describe the main components that build the AOU system of Open Education, it becomes evident that virtual learning, distance education, and distributed education, in particular, comprise only components of the AOU adopted system of Open Education.

The Open Education system adopted by the AOU aims at the creation of a coordinated open learning process. The main components that erect this process include the following:

1. *The Student Learning Pack:*

This pack contains the main reading material that has been prepared especially for independent study. In addition, the pack contains numerous other items that may vary slightly depending on the particular course requirements. It may contain further reading material in the form of set books, supporting notes, or study guides. In addition, the pack contains a number of audio visual (AV) aids in the form of audio cassettes, video tapes, and online-enabling CDs. Some packs may also contain particular

software application packages, enabled on particular CDs. All packs contain a course calendar that serves as gauging milestones to the progression of study of course material and contents. Copies of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) comprise another constituent of the Student Pack. Hence, this pack is considered a corner stone amongst components of the learning process of open education.

2. *Tutorial Sessions:*

Tutorial sessions are designed to provide a forum of interaction between the tutors and students on one hand, and the students themselves, on the other. Tutorial sessions are held, on average, for one hour a week for course carrying the weight of three credit hours. They are run by qualified and well-trained tutors. In principle, the sessions are supposed to be run as discussion forums treading on the main topics covered in accordance with set course calendars. Tutors are instructed to utilize these sessions in innovative ways that help students learn the material more efficiently and more effectively. They are not intended to serve as straight classroom lecturing forums. Attendance of scheduled tutorial sessions is viewed to be mandatory by the AOU.

3. *Teleconferencing:*

The aim of providing students with a teleconferencing facility is twofold. It provides a means of communication, at a distance, between students and tutors. It also provides a means of communication amongst student groups, in the hope that it helps to promote a community of learners.

4. *Office Hours:*

Tutors are required to maintain announced weekly office hours. They are intended to provide a more informal environment of tutoring. Some Tutors may choose to expand the notion of face-to-face contact to utilizing Teleconferencing facilities as alternative means of providing contact and communication with their students.

5. *Computer and Multimedia Laboratories:*

Acquiring proper computer and Internet skills is a main requirement for all AOU students. As a technology-driven institution, the AOU equips each of its Learning Centers with computer and multimedia lab facilities. The facilities are made available to students over long hours each day.

6. Courses Online:

Some of the courses have mandatory online components as part of the course study. Other courses have websites that serve as a supporting aid to facilitating the learning process. The AOU intends to adopt an effective e-Learning platform which would host the offering of online components for all courses.

7. Lectures via Satellite Links:

Through a project of cooperation with UNESCO, the University has installed satellite links with certain Branches as a first phase of building a fully dedicated satellite network that would connect the Headquarters and all Branches, serving as well as a videoconferencing facility. Supporting the transmission of lectures and seminars constitutes a major objective of erecting this network.

Residential Schools: Some courses may require a more focused and intensive contact over certain portions of course offering. Such a requirement may be met by invoking the concept of a Residential School. In essence, students attend classes at a Learning Center for intensive, short periods as required by the course concerned.

8. The Digital Library:

As the AOU fosters an open system of higher education, thereby embodying elements of distance and distributed education, library needs must be addressed in a compatible manner. Furthermore, the added complexity of operating via six Branches in different countries, dictate unconventional solutions to meeting this particular need. It has therefore been postulated early on that Branches should keep a nominal conventional library supplemented by a "Digital Library", the resources of which can be accessed by all students and the University community.

The envisaged structure of a Digital Library may take on three parallel paths:

- Global Resource: In this path, the University out sources such a service, and render it available to all Branches and the University community.
- Branch Resource: In this path, a Branch may opt, for instance, to supplement the Global Resource by an additional resource that is required to satisfy certain local needs.
- University Resource: The AOU is developing own library resources, where learning material in its various forms, including taped lectures, may be accessed on demand. The resource will be centrally located.

9. *Learning Resource Halls:*

Learning Resource Halls have been devised by the University to serve essentially as reading halls. However, learning materials comprising course student packs, in particular, are also made available to students for examination as they explore various courses of interest.

Coordination and Monitoring the Educational Process

The AOU system has various layers of coordination and monitoring aimed at the assurance of quality implementation of the learning process.

There are three facets to the issues of coordination and monitoring of the educational process:

1. *Learning material design:*

The design of course learning materials is the direct responsibility of the Dean of the respective Faculty. Academic teams form inside and outside the University are usually assigned the tasks of producing the required learning materials for newly designed courses. These tasks are achieved in accordance with set specifications and methodologies of implementation.

On the other hand, course material procured from the UKOU, is methodically reviewed in accordance with General Guidelines of Material Review, adopted by the University for said purpose. The Guidelines attempt to ensure that learning material, in written and AV forms, adheres to practiced norms of Arab-Islamic values and convictions.

2. *Monitoring the tutorial sessions:*

- The tutorial sessions are managed and run by the assigned Tutors. Tutors are qualified with at least a Master degree. In principle, a tutorial session is assigned 20-25 students.
- Tutors form the backbone of the academic tutoring assembly. Some Tutors are qualified at the Doctoral level.
- Then, for each 10 Tutors, a supervising Staff Tutor is assigned. The Staff Tutor is responsible for ensuring the tutoring and student assessment by the Tutors conforms to University policy in a fair manner.
- Staff Tutors represent the core teams of Faculties. They serve in different roles as faculty members.

3. *Coordination of Course Needs:*

The AOU follows a structured system of coordination that helps maintain the needs of course offering and the required consequent follow-up on course delivery, and the assessment of student achievement in accordance with established University Policy.

In this regard, program and course coordination is structured in the following manner:

- *Program Coordinator/Chair:*

Each program of study is assigned a Program Coordinator/Chair who serves to coordinate all aspects of program delivery at the Branch level, including matters of academic advising and intervention to audit graduation requirements at times near to expected dates of graduation. Program Chairs are named by the Branch Directors, and discharge their duties and

responsibilities in close coordination with the Branch Directors and respective Deans, and in collaboration with Course Coordinators at the Branch levels.

- *General Course Coordinator/ Course Chair:*

For each course offered, a Course Chair is named by the concerned Dean of the Faculty. Course Chairs may be drawn from faculty members at the Headquarters, or from those residing at the Branches. Course chairs are, in particular, responsible for coordinating delivery requirements of courses, including preparations of Tutor Marked assignments (TMAs), course calendars, and Final Exams. A Staff Tutor may serve as a Course Chair for more than one course.

- *Branch Course Coordinator:*

Branch Directors name a local coordinator for each course offered. Branch course coordinators discharge their duties in coordination with the Branch Directors and the Program Chairs at the Branches. They are essentially responsible for matters related to course delivery at the Branch level. Staff Tutors at the Branches may be assigned the responsibilities of multiple course coordination.

Qualification by Programs of Study

The University houses five Faculties. Each Faculty bears the responsibility of course delivery for study programs and courses that are hosted by the concerned Faculty.

Degree requirements for undergraduate programs include the successful completion of prescribed curricula in an amount of at least 128 Credit Hours (Cr. Hrs.). Each program is comprised of two main components:

- **General Studies:** Courses in General Studies constitute the equivalent of 31 Cr. Hrs. Language, computer, and independent study skills form the mandatory portion of said requirements. Courses in the Humanities form the elective portion of these requirements.

- Discipline-based Studies: These courses constitute about 96 Cr. Hrs. Some programs provide a list of electives, as well, within this sum of Cr. Hrs.

Some courses are designed and delivered on a semester basis. Other courses, especially OU-based courses, are, on the other hand, offered as annual courses, with varying durations, depending on course weight and extent of coverage.

- *Faculty of Language Studies:*

The Faculty of Language Studies supervises the offering of an undergraduate program in:

Program: English Language & Literature

The program leads to a qualification with a BA degree in English Language and Literature. The discipline-based courses are provided by the United Kingdom Open University (OU) through a special licensing agreement.

The program aims at investigating a broad spectrum of language and literature studies. In particular, it aims to equip graduates with a basic understanding of the structure of the English language, language variation, and language use. In addition, the program helps students develop their skills of analysis and critical evaluation through the study of both classical and modern literary works in prose, poetry, and drama.

- *Faculty of Computer Studies:*

The Faculty of Computer Studies offers an undergraduate program in:

Program: Information Technology & Computing

This study program hosts a wide range of sub-disciplines in the IT field. It offers a balanced mixture of coverage of modern and forward-looking topics. Learning components of the program include topics in computer languages,

computer applications, algorithmic design, systems software, techniques of computing, networking, and elements of software engineering. The discipline-based courses are derived from an appropriate list of OU-based IT courses.

Some of the advanced courses in the program foster elements of research and elaborate investigative work via the requirement of Thematic Projects, in particular.

The language of study employed in this program is English.

- **Faculty of Business Administration:**

The Faculty of Business Administration offers an undergraduate program along two track options:

Program: Business Administration/Systems

Program: Business Administration/Economics

Both track options of the Business Administration program share common courses comprising half of the discipline-based requirements. These courses establish understandings in the foundations of business functions, organizations, processes, and markets.

The Bus Admin/Systems track elective courses build further foundations in IT-oriented contents. The Economics track, on the other hand, turns to more focus on economic concepts as applied to modern business practices.

For both tracks, the learning material, contained in main and supporting readers, is elucidated, by design, in an interestingly integrated approach of delivery that helps to develop critical analysis and thinking skills.

The language of study in this program is English.

In addition, the Faculty of Business Administration has designed, and launched on a trial basis, a program of a Master of Business Administration (MBA), at the Bahrain Branch. Currently, studies are being pursued for offering such a

program at other Branches after further deliberations on possible reorientation of contents and methodologies of delivery.

- **Faculty of Education Studies:**

The Faculty of Education is responsible for the offering of three programs. All courses have been designed under the direct supervision of the Faculty. The language of tutoring in these programs is Arabic.

- Program: BA Qualifying Program

This program is designed to raise the qualification of holders of community college diplomas to the BA degree in Education. Its goal is to qualify graduates at a level sufficient for entry as elementary school teachers, at the lower or the intermediate levels of the hierarchy of elementary schooling. The program requires the study of some 72 Cr. Hr. beyond the credited study of the Community College diploma.

- Program: Higher Diploma in Education

This program of study is laid out over a span of one year. It is intended for graduates of programs, other than Education, who, in turn, wish to pursue a career as specialized high school teachers. In essence, the program is designed to equip graduates with basic foundations in skills and concepts of education theory and practices. Program requirements dictate the successful study of 35 Cr. Hrs.

- Program: Elementary Education

This is rather a newer addition to the family of programs of study in Education. It is a full four-year program that carries the requirement of completion of study of 128 Cr. Hrs. The program serves to qualify high school graduates as elementary school teachers.

- **Faculty of University Studies:**

The Faculty of University Studies is delegated the responsibility of supervision of course design and delivery of a host of courses within the realms of Humanities and General Studies. The AOU attaches special significance to the role of such studies in the makeup of programs of study. It views their role as significant in developing a wider perspective on life, in general, and on their own personal development, in particular.

Student Admission

AOU admissions policy requires that a student possess a general secondary school certificate, or the equivalent thereof, as approved by the concerned Ministry of Education. In principle, students are admitted to selected programs of study, based largely on personal choice.

The AOU administers Language Placement Tests, in both Arabic and English, not as requirements of admission, but as indicators to placing students in the appropriate level in courses of English language skills.

Furthermore, admitted students may, thereafter, submit appropriate documents in order to gain proper credit transfer for courses completed successfully at other recognized institution of higher education. Applications for credit transfer are carefully scrutinized in accordance with approved University criteria established for said purpose.

Student Assessment

The AOU adopts a rigorous policy for the assessment of student attainment in courses and programs of study. The different ingredients of the policy aim at creating a robust and fair system of evaluation of achievement. Each component of the system of assessment is intended, as well, to serve a learning need within the global scope of the Learning Process.

- *Tutor Marked Assignments*: Each course has attached to it a number of TMAs. These assignments are spread out over the duration of course delivery. They are prepared by the respective Faculty, and updated periodically. In addition to gauging student progress of study,

they serve to invoke and develop investigative and research skills. At the advanced level, some of the TMAs are cast as Thematic Projects. TMAs must be corrected by the concerned Tutor. The provision of written comments on the submitted work is obligatory. TMAs carry 35% of the total grade of the course.

- *Quizzes*: Quizzes are viewed to be another contributor to monitoring the progression of attainment of students during the course duration of delivery. Quizzes carry 15% of the total grade. Quizzes are designed and administered locally at each Branch.
- *Final Exams*: The third component of student assessment is represented in Final Exams. These exams are designed under the direct supervision of the Dean of the Faculty. Course Chair bear the major responsibility of producing a balanced exam; and this is achieved by probing inputs from all Branches. In a quest for a high degree of uniformity in student assessment, the Final Exam, for all courses are the same across all Branches. Final Exams carry 50% of the total grade.

The Preparatory English Language Program:

In quest for improving the learning process in a holistic approach, the Faculty of Languages devised a special Preparatory English Program for newly admitted students. The program is run in a more intensive face-to-face tutoring. Based on their scores in the English Language Placement Test, students are classified into different groups. Low scores are usually channeled into the Preparatory Program. The program has proven useful for such students as it prepares them toward a more-qualified entry into the English Language Skills courses.

University Branches

In accordance with approved organizational structures, the AOU Headquarters is seated in Kuwait. However, the University, thereby succumbing to said structure, adopts a distributed system of administration and management. In particular, offices of the Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans, and central administrative and financial units operate from the Headquarters.

Branches, on the other hand, are headed by Branch Directors, and host a number of administrative, financial, and technical units required for the support of operational aspects of the Branches as the learning institutions of the University. In turn, the Branches serve home as well to the larger portions of AOU faculty members.

However, while Branches retain their individual operational identities, the AOU adopts the philosophy of working with and through the Branches as one institution, upholding the same mission.

In general, AOU Branches are established in the different Arab countries under the umbrella of AGFUND through standing formal agreements with local governments, meant to provide the proper legislative framework for the operation of the Branches.

All University Branches operate under same unified guidelines of academic, administrative, and financial policies. However, notwithstanding violation of these guidelines, Branches, do exercise a good room of flexibility in logistic and operational matters.

Issues of Accreditation

The AOU views the accreditation process as a constructive measure of quality assurance. Recognizing the need for checks of rigor, the AOU made its submissions to the UK-based Open University Validation Services (OUVS) for institutional Accreditation and Validation of its three programs in English Language, IT & Computing, and, Business Administration. After careful scrutiny by the OUVS, in accordance with demanding criteria of quality assurance, the AOU earned both the institutional Accreditation and program Validation in January 2004. In particular, program validation was set in accordance with established Benchmarks laid down by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for said purposes.

However, accreditation by the OUVS requires annual monitoring aimed at keeping quality measures in check. In January 2005, the AOU gained approval of its annual monitoring report, being accepted as a check of maintaining

quality standards by the institution and its Faculties hosting the validated programs of study.

In another respect, the AOU, via its respective Branches, has also gained a lot of miles toward local accreditation of its programs by the respective Ministries of Higher Education in Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, in particular.

Polling Opinions from Workshop Participants

Dear Workshop Attendant:

We have, by design, developed this simple questionnaire as a means of feedback on the contents and quality of the workshop concerned. In turn, we thank you for your attendance and your kind participation in completing this questionnaire.

Workshop title: **Date:** .../.../ 2006

Benefits Gained:

Please list the three main benefits gained out of this workshop:

1.
.....
.....
2.
.....
.....
3.
.....
.....

Further Issues of Interest:

Please list three main other issues and items of interest that you would like to see covered in the future, in a similar workshop:

- 1.
.....
.....
- 2.
.....
.....
.....
- 3.
.....
.....
.....

Overall Effectiveness:

Please indicate overall quality of workshop management and presentation using the scale:

- 1. Outstanding 2. Very Good 3. Good 4. Average 5. Poor

Overall quality of workshop management and presentation