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**The Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning at AUB forms
new steering committee to make higher education in the Arab region more
inclusive and relevant to global industry developments**

In an effort to ensure relevance with global industry developments, the Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching & Learning at the American University of Beirut (AUB) has established a new steering committee to guide its strategic direction.

The committee consisting of 5 members held its inaugural meeting this summer. The esteemed members include Heike Harmgart, managing director for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Alexis Lecanuet, regional senior managing director for Accenture in the Middle East; Samer Abu-Ltaif, corporate VP and president of Microsoft Middle East and Africa; Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar, CEO of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education; and Dr. Alan Shihadeh, dean of the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at AUB.

During the inaugural, the committee members engaged with the hub to align strategies to help transform higher education in the region to provide a supportive and interactive student learning experience that is digital, adaptive, and dynamic. In addition, the committee received a full briefing on the hub's mission and objectives, specific targets, and strategy over the next years, along with a summary of progress to date. This included launching four programs, creating and digitizing over 20 courses, and the progress made in marketing and recruitment efforts. Furthermore, the hub's executive team also presented key challenges and sought recommendations from the committee members on the way forward.



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Looking at the next steps, the committee agreed to increase the hub's efforts in establishing partnerships with the private sector and ensuring the hub's programs reach disadvantaged youth and expand access to high quality education across the Arab region and beyond. The committee members also agreed to share resources and facilitate collaborations with several private sector entities to understand better what skills key ecosystem players require when hiring. Furthermore, the steering committee members emphasized the importance of the learners enrolling in a solid ecosystem that provides student support, career counseling, and wellness advice. Addressing a fundamental question, 'can the learner get a better livelihood opportunity?' the committee members stressed that the student journey must include regular follow-up, networking, and mentorship even after program completion.

"Employers and business leaders often lament the disconnect between what students learn in college and the skills and knowledge they have when joining the workforce," said Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar, chief executive officer of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education. "In light of the large - and still growing - number of university graduates, this is extremely alarming. There is no doubt that university education needs to integrate future jobs and career readiness."

"The Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning is committed to promoting innovation in education and increasing access to, and impact of, high-quality education for Arab youth as well as bridge the education to employment gap," she added. "I am confident that the new steering committee will accelerate our efforts further."

"In addition to serving as an open loop school for students to return to repeatedly at any stage in their careers, the hub acts as a facilitator for digital transformation through partnerships, joint programs, and other avenues for collaboration," said Dr. Srour, director of The Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning. "We look forward to working under the guidance and continuous support of the new steering committee."

ENDS

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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