

For Immediate Release



## **AUB launches new graduate program in Public Policy and International Affairs**

Beirut, Lebanon- 02/09/2015 - Building on a growing regional demand to understand, analyze and help shape the policy agenda in Lebanon, the region and beyond, AUB has launched a new graduate program in [Public Policy and International Affairs \(PPIA\)](#). It was conceived as the academic side of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), and is housed in IFI's new Zaha Hadid building on the upper AUB campus.

The PPIA program has two main objectives. It will:

- Offer students the opportunity to deepen their conceptual, critical and practical knowledge of public policy and international affairs, with particular focus on the challenges facing the Arab region; and
- Provide them with the necessary professional skills, tools, and networks to lead careers in public affairs.

The PPIA program also aims to develop and catalyze new experimental research, in cooperation with IFI, through the interaction of current and new faculty members, graduate students, and organizations outside of AUB.

“The program faculty and those who helped create it over the past 2-3 years are very excited about the huge potential of PPIA, which we feel is rather unique and certainly fills an important need in Lebanon and the region,” said Dr. Karim Makdisi, associate professor of international politics, who also directs the PPIA Program. In particular, Makdisi added, there is a pressing need “to build capacity in public and international policy while also linking this capacity building with the production, translation and critique of knowledge in these fields and practices.”

According to the PPIA website, the program builds on growing international and local demand to study the Arab world; and will strive to increase interaction and knowledge production within a South-South context, a dimension largely deficient in the Arab region.

Graduates will be able to participate in and analyze the policy process in the Arab region, raise awareness about public policy and international problems; advance the capacity, accountability, and responsiveness of public actors; and promote sound public policies that are, as much as possible, informed by evidence.

The PPIA program is designed to help equip college graduates from various backgrounds, in addition to mid-career professionals, with an understanding of policy-making processes and issues in international affairs, and provides them with the necessary professional skills, tools, and networks to lead careers in these domains.

According to the PPIA website, the core strength of this program is that it builds upon the expertise and knowledge of many faculty members across AUB departments, while also bringing together students from around the world.

Currently, the program has welcomed ten graduate students from countries including Lebanon, Yemen, Turkey, the UK and the US, and expects to attract more students in the semesters to come.

The two-year program, which will require 36 credits of coursework, a 6-credit thesis or internship plus project, will lead to a Master of Arts in Public Policy and International Affairs.

Yara Damaj, an AUB graduate and new student in the program, said that she had always wanted to pursue a graduate degree in a field that will allow her to directly impact short-term and long-term policies on the ground. Yara added: “The combination of public policy and international affairs was what drew me to the program - to be given the opportunity to be in touch with prominent scholars while at the same time gaining practical experience that I would not get from other graduate programs out there.”

Farea Al-Muslimi, an AUB graduate from Yemen and newly admitted student, said that he was attracted to the PPIA program because it is not designed like a traditional graduate program. He added, “The diversity of the courses, the access to PPIA professors who are both excellent practitioners and academics, and the location of the program at AUB, in the heart of the Arab region, form key factors contributing to the successful design of a program bringing Public Policy and International Affairs together.”

The program was approved by the BOT in March 2014. [Online applications](#) for the PPIA graduate program are opened, and students are encouraged to apply for the spring and summer semesters.

The program benefits from the expertise of a number of existing AUB faculty in addition to new recruits Dr. Nikolas Kosmatopoulos as assistant professor in international affairs, and Dr. Charbel Nahas, as a Faculty-in-Residence for public policy, who will be contributing to teaching core courses and supporting the program; in addition to Rima Rassi, who serves as PPIA’s program manager.

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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 420-bed hospital.

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