



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

University
Libraries

REFERENCE AND INSTRUCTION SERVICES DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Version number: 2.0

Document Category: Departmental Policies and Procedures

Document Owner: Associate University Librarian for Research and Academic
Collaboration Services

Date Last Modified: August 27, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Scope.....	3
Policy Statement.....	3
1. Objectives and Functions	3
Library Instruction / Information Literacy.....	4
1. Policy Statement.....	4
2. Objectives	4
3. Types of Library Instruction.....	4
4. Policies	4
5. Procedures	5
Reference and Research Services	6
1. Policy Statement.....	6
2. Types of Services	6
3. Service Points.....	6
4. Procedures	7
Outreach and Communication	8
1. Policy Statement.....	8
2. Types of Activities	8
3. General Policies and Guidelines.....	9
A. Outreach Activities.....	9
B. Communication Material.....	10
C. UL News Webpage & Newsletter	10

SCOPE

This document establishes the policies and procedures governing the services, programs, and activities of the Research and Instruction Services (RIS) Department. It provides a framework for the planning, delivery, and assessment of services that support teaching, learning, research, and engagement within the University community.

It covers the Department's three main areas of responsibility: **Library Instruction and Information Literacy; Reference and Research Services; and Outreach and Communication.** It applies to RIS librarians and staff involved in the delivery and coordination of these services and provides guidelines that promote consistency, quality, professionalism, and a user-centered approach across physical and virtual service environments.

This document does not cover services or operations managed by other library departments outside RIS.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Research and Instruction Services Department aims to develop and deliver dynamic services and programs devoted to strengthening the Libraries' role in teaching, learning, and research at the University. Operations in the department include physical and virtual user services, research consultations, library instruction, faculty research services, and the selection and development of reference sources and research tools.

1. Objectives and Functions

- Develop and deliver a comprehensive library instruction program, including orientation sessions, information literacy classes, discipline-specific workshops, graduate and thesis support, as well as tutorials and research guides.
- Provide in-person and online research support, ranging from quick reference assistance to in-depth, one-on-one consultations and training on using library resources and tools.
- Support faculty in enhancing research visibility and citation impact, managing research data, and complying with open science and scholarly communication practices.
- Design and coordinate outreach initiatives that highlight the library's role in teaching and research, foster collaboration with academic units, and gather feedback from users and stakeholders.
- Develop, maintain, and curate dynamic reference resources and research tools that document, organize, and index key local resources in alignment with evolving academic needs
- Regularly assess research, instructional, and outreach services, implement improvements based on user needs, feedback, and evolving best practices

This policy and procedure document covers the 3 main functions of the Reference and Instruction Services Department:

- Library Instructions
- Reference and Research Services
- Outreach and Communication

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION / INFORMATION LITERACY

1. Policy Statement

The Library Instruction Program aims to support students in developing essential library and information literacy skills. Guided by the principles of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework, learners gain an understanding of how information is created, valued, and shared, and develop the ability to effectively find, evaluate, and ethically use information through library resources and tools. The program fosters independent inquiry, academic success, and lifelong learning.

2. Objectives

The primary goals of the Library Instruction Program are to:

- a) Develop information literacy skills by helping users define research needs, apply effective search strategies, and use information responsibly.
- b) Promote effective use of library resources across formats, tools, and subject areas.
- c) Enhance critical evaluation of information, enabling users to assess authority, relevance, and format of sources.
- d) Foster ethical and informed scholarship by raising awareness of scholarly communication trends, intellectual property, and proper citation practices.

3. Types of Library Instruction

Library instruction is delivered both in person and online, including video tutorials, and is organized into several categories: introductory instruction (such as tours and orientation sessions), foundational skills training (entry-level information literacy), subject and course-specific instruction tailored to disciplines, and advanced instruction for faculty and graduate students. It also covers flexible support such as one-shot workshops, video tutorials, and personalized library instruction.

4. Policies

- Library instruction sessions are delivered by librarians with instructional expertise, strong knowledge of library resources, advanced information retrieval and evaluation skills, and familiarity with the University curriculum.
- Instruction materials are aligned with the principles of the ACRL Framework and incorporate interactive, technology-enhanced approaches, including online tutorials and active learning strategies.
- Library sessions are designed to demonstrate the relevance of library resources to specific courses and to highlight specialized, underutilized, and advanced features of collections and tools.
- Research and Instruction Services (RIS) librarians include subject specialists who address the instructional needs of specific academic departments and disciplines, including embedding librarians within courses.
- The RIS Department collaborates with the English Communication Skills Program and academic departments to provide library tours and instruction sessions tailored to student levels and learning needs. Information Literacy

sessions are integrated within the Communication Skills program, while in academic units, IL sessions are offered upon instructor request.

- Customized sessions are offered to graduate students, in coordination with the Graduate Council and academic coordinators, to support research skills, thesis development, and submission processes.
- Research impact sessions in coordination with the Office of Research, related to publishing, citation tracking, research impact, rankings, and research data management.
- The RIS Department develops and maintains Moodle courses and online learning materials prepared by librarians to support instruction services, information literacy, research skills development, and self-paced learning.
- Library instruction initiatives are enhanced through the development of discipline- and subject-specific research guides that curate relevant resources, tools, and research strategies.
- The RIS Department maintains statistics on instruction activities and systematically collects and analyzes student feedback.
- Library instruction content and methods are regularly reviewed and updated based on emerging needs, user feedback, and developments in information literacy and library pedagogy.

5. Procedures

- Faculty members requesting an information literacy instruction session complete a Library Instruction Session form outlining the specific learning objectives and expected outcomes.
- A minimum notice of two days is required for specialized sessions to allow adequate preparation time for the instruction librarian.
- Library instruction sessions are primarily held in the Antoun Ghattas Karam e-Classroom at Jafet Library; however, alternative spaces such as classrooms, lecture halls, or departmental labs may be used when necessary.
- For sessions held outside the library, the faculty member is responsible for securing the venue, confirming availability, and arranging required technical setup (e.g., computers, projector, screen).
- One-shot instruction sessions organized by the RIS Department are announced by the University Libraries and made available for online registration at least one week in advance.
- Library tours and orientation sessions requested by Student Affairs should be scheduled in a timely manner to ensure proper coordination, planning, and delivery.
- Library instruction activities are scheduled and published on the Library calendar, they are promoted through library social media channels, news, and by email.

REFERENCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES

1. Policy Statement

This policy defines the scope, delivery, and standards of Reference Services to ensure consistent, effective, and ethical support for the university community in accessing, evaluating, and using information resources.

2. Types of Services

Services are grounded in the principles of information literacy and user-centered service, consistent with professional standards in academic librarianship. They include:

- **Quick Information Assistance:** Provision of quick answers related to library services, policies, collections, and access to resources.
- **Research Consultation Services:** In-depth, individualized support including topic refinement, database selection, advanced search strategies, and literature searching.
- **Guidance and Instruction** on identifying, using and evaluating, library and other scholarly resources and tools.
- **Systematic and Scoping Review Support:** Assistance with search strategy design, and use of citation management tools (e.g., EndNote, Zotero, Mendeley).
- **Thesis and Dissertation Support:** Research consultation, formatting requirements, citation practices, and submission procedures in accordance with university guidelines.
- **Arabic Resource Discovery and Development:** Identify, document, and index significant Arabic resources to support local research priorities and evolving academic needs.
- **Collection Development and Assessment:** Contribute to the selection, evaluation, and continuous improvement of library collections to ensure relevance and alignment with academic programs
- **Faculty Support**
 - Development of course-related instructional materials, including research guides, library orientations, and tours.
 - Journal selection and publication guidance.
 - Research impact metrics (e.g., h-index, citation analysis, journal rankings).
 - Creation and management of researcher profiles (e.g., ORCID, Google Scholar).

3. Service Points

Reference Services are accessible through multiple service points to ensure flexibility and user convenience. In-person support is available at the Front Desk for basic assistance and at the Reference Librarian Desk for in-depth research support. Online services are provided through chat, email, and the “Ask a Librarian” platform,

with responses typically delivered within 24 hours. Telephone support is available for brief factual inquiries. In addition, users may schedule appointments for research consultations via email, the library website, or phone.

Users: Reference Services primarily serve AUB faculty, students, staff, and alumni, providing full access to core support services. External users may receive limited assistance, with extended services available through membership or online inquiries in accordance with library policies and resource availability.

Staff: Quick reference, general and library holding information are covered by paraprofessional staff through all access points. In-depth reference services are provided by professional librarians.

Hours: Service hours are extended to cover different staffing levels from 7:30 am to 12:00 am including weekends and holidays.

Copyright and intellectual property are respected; users are educated on fair use, with reproduction limited to small portions for research purposes and handled through Access Services.

User statistics and feedback are regularly collected and used to assess and improve services.

Librarians are expected to maintain professional development through training, mentoring, professional organizations, and independent study.

4. Procedures

- User service takes priority over all other desk tasks; staff must give immediate attention to patrons.
- The Reference Desk must be clean, organized, and staffed by courteous, professional, and visible staff.
- Service is provided on a first-come, first-served basis and in real time without delay.
- Staff must greet users professionally, maintain eye contact, and actively offer help.
- All user inquiries are treated equally, with no judgment or influence from personal beliefs.
- Confidentiality of users and their inquiries must always be maintained.
- A structured reference interview is required for all queries, using clear communication, paraphrasing, and appropriate questioning techniques.
- Staff must develop effective search strategies and evaluate information sources for credibility and accuracy.
- Online services include queue management, user notifications during delays, and review of transcripts for quality improvement.
- Time management is essential, and users must be informed about service duration and closure procedures.

- Sessions must end only after confirming user satisfaction or providing referrals and alternatives.
- Staff must avoid conflict and maintain professional behavior at all times.
- Problematic situations should be escalated to the Reference Librarian or Head of RIS when necessary
- Users who violate library rules may be warned or asked to leave according to policy.
- Reference staff do not provide legal, medical, or financial advice, complete assignments, compile bibliographies, appraise items, or perform scanning/downloading on behalf of users (except in accessibility cases).

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

1. Policy Statement

The Outreach and Communication Program, part of the Research and Instruction Services (RIS) Department, promotes awareness, engagement, and meaningful connections between the University Libraries (UL) and its communities through inclusive and user-centered initiatives. The program supports the AUB and UL missions by increasing awareness and use of library services, collections, spaces, and expertise among faculty, students, staff, alumni, researchers, and the wider community through both in-person and digital engagement.

The program adopts current trends and best practices in academic library outreach, including digital engagement, social media communication, user experience enhancement, community partnerships, data-informed assessment, and inclusive programming that supports learning, research, creativity, and well-being.

2. Types of Activities

Outreach to Students

Student outreach connects students with the library through orientations, tours, workshops, events and social media engagement. The RIS Department communicates and collaborates with Student Affairs, student clubs and student representatives, and maintains a Library Ambassador Program to strengthen student engagement and gather student feedback.

Outreach to Faculty and Academic Departments

Faculty outreach fosters collaboration through the Subject Librarians Program, the Embed a Librarian service, and the management of the Library Liaison Program. These initiatives strengthen partnerships between librarians and academic departments while promoting library services that support teaching, research, and information literacy across the university

Outreach to Centers and Programs

The RIS Department seeks cross-sector collaboration with centers and programs to support research visibility, create teaching and learning objects, support student projects, and contribute to library service development.

Outreach to Alumni

The program welcomes alumni to use reference and research services and participate in special events and activities.

Outreach to the Local Community

The RIS Department welcomes visitors and offers research services to non-AUB researchers. It collaborates with the AUB Neighborhood to organize events and promote initiatives.

3. General Policies and Guidelines

A. Outreach Activities

Outreach activities refer to any initiative that promotes the University Libraries' facilities, collections, services, or programs. It is an ongoing initiative by the UL to provide its services beyond the library walls by working with other AUB community members and with external entities when need be.

- The purpose of all outreach activities is to promote library services and usage and to encourage learning and/or research for the AUB community.
- All activities must fall under the mission of the AUB University Libraries and must respect the UL's rules and regulations.
- Activities can include major yearly events (Open Day, Community Book Exchange Day, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Conferences, etc.), or customary events done throughout the academic year (lecture series, orientation, workshops, seminars, etc).
- Outreach activities are planned at the department's level on an annual basis and are posted on a yearly calendar by the Department's Outreach Manager.
- Certain activities may be assigned to a librarian and staff member who shall be responsible for administering the event, including organization, publicity, and assessment (send email, create an event on Facebook, share it on social media, write a news piece, get feedback...)
- All activities must be conducted professionally and must represent the libraries positively and proficiently.
- All administrative and budgeting details related to any activity are done by the Outreach Manager and in coordination with the Executive Officer at the UL Director's office.
- New activities and agendas need to be approved by the Head of the Department, who decides on whether or not to share with the UL Director beforehand.
- The Outreach Manager is responsible for all contacts and consultations with the Office of Student Affairs, Office of Communications, and the University Protection Office for issues under their jurisdiction.
- Activities with External Partners/Sponsors: Whenever there is partnership with an entity/brand that is not affiliated with the AUB community, the RIS department abides by the AUB Office of Communications' guidelines when selecting, approaching and working with outside partners (suitable partners, ethical brands, professional activity that is in alignment with UL mission and vision, correct logo placement on communication material, etc.). For more:

<http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/Pages/index.aspx> and
<http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/logo/Pages/default.aspx>

- Activities with Internal Partners: Whenever there is a partnership with an entity from the AUB community, the RIS department abides by the AUB professional standards and expectations by ensuring professional conduct that is in alignment with UL mission and vision, mentioning the partner(s) and making sure there is correct logo placement on communication material.

B. Communication Material

The Communication Strategy is the way in which the RIS department promotes its outreach activities. It includes the channels and the best practices for internal and external communication.

Communication material is the material used to announce an event or activity at the UL. It includes Posters, Flyers, UL webpage, Newsletter, UL online calendar, social media posts and email communication.

- All communication material is to be written professionally and clearly.
- All communication material is to be reviewed by at least one staff member before production and/or dissemination.
- All communication materials are to be designed and prepared by, or in coordination with, the UL Graphic Designer to ensure quality, professionalism, and AUB style guidelines.
- All communication material is to include the AUB logo and other logos when required, abiding by the Visual Identity guidelines set forth by the AUB Office of Communications: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/logo/Pages/default.aspx>
- Communication material is to be sent to the Office of Communications for approval before being printed or disseminated, whether to the AUB community or to the public. This DOES NOT apply to material that is posted on a regular basis (Social Media, Newsletter, UL webpage, etc.)
- Material Dissemination is done in cooperation with other UL departments, including the UL Director's office when need be. Dissemination to AUB community is done in coordination with the AUB Office of Communication and/or other partner departments when need be.
- Social Media posts follow the Social Media Policies and Procedures. RIS is responsible for developing the content, in coordination with the UL Graphic Designer and Social Media Specialist, who support the creation of visuals and the timely publication of posts online.

C. UL News Webpage & Newsletter

- All UL News is to be written professionally and clearly, following the general AUB News Writing best practice.
- All news pieces are to be reviewed by at least one staff member before posting.
- All content on the News webpage needs to be relevant to the UL and its activities/collections and/or partners.

- All UL news content is developed by library departments, reviewed and edited by the Outreach Librarian, and submitted for final approval by the University Librarian prior to publication.
- All News piece designs are prepared by the UL Graphic Designer to ensure quality, professionalism, and AUB style guidelines.
- Recommended posting interval: News pieces: at least twice a month, depending on time of year and calendar of events (sometimes posting is more than once a week). Newsletter: three times a year (at the end of each semester)
- UL News and Newsletter webpage abides by the AUB Office of Communications' guidelines: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/Pages/index.aspx> and <http://www.aub.edu.lb/communications/logo/Pages/default.aspx>
