

**The Making of a Good PhD Program: The case of Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities
and Social Sciences-Lebanese University**

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Graduate and Post Graduate Programs in Education in Arab Universities: Quality and Added
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Abstract

Pursuing a PhD at the Lebanese University (LU) is very demanding and as a candidate, the researcher is facing a lot of obstacles due to the program's lack of clear criteria and transparent process which constitute two of the criteria of a good program. To investigate if a PhD program follows internationally acceptable standards, assessors should look into several other factors such as research skilled courses, core courses, qualified faculty and facilities and research methods provided for the candidates (Sanders, 2012; Pre-Grad program, 2013).

This study investigated the PhD program at the Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences at the Lebanese University from the perspective of the PhD candidates and highlighted the problems the program faces due to the lack of definite criteria and program assessment. A questionnaire was distributed to the PhD candidates and informal interviews were conducted to collect the data. The researcher used the analysis of literature review to base her evaluation of the program. The study reveals that the PhD program lacks clear criteria and faces problems such as preparing adequate researchers and providing research related courses. Recommendations were provided in the end.

Keywords: Graduate Program, Evaluation, Lebanese University, Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities & Social Sciences, Criteria, Degree Requirements

Biography: Mira Alameddine has an MA in Education and an MA in Philosophy. She is specialized in teaching ESP, particularly Business English and Technical Writing for Engineers, and Moral reasoning. Her career has lead her into the field of research on teaching business English for Arab learners and the effects of teaching ethics on business and engineering students. She has published several articles on teaching business English and Business Ethics. Ms. Alameddine is a part-time instructor at Rafik Hariri University (RHU) and Lebanese American University (LAU). Currently, she is pursuing her PhD in Education at the Doctorate School of Literature, humanities and Social Sciences at the Lebanese University.

A. Introduction

As graduate students embark on their quest for graduate studies, they need to arm themselves with the proper knowledge that will enable them to choose the best program to apply to. These graduates should look for a program which provides them with the best education and training there is. They need to research their options for graduate schools available for them and the procedures needed for applying to these schools.

Pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree (known as PhD), is not easy. A PhD, the highest degree in academia, requires a much focused expertise and skills. Requiring an extended study and huge intellectual effort, only 1 % of the population acquires a PhD (Purdue, 2013). To end with quality work in a PhD, the researcher should “i. have good ideas; ii. know a lot (mastered relevant literature; iii. be able to take one’s good ideas and develop them; and iv. be able to express the results of this process clearly and effectively” (Heck Jr., 2011). PhD candidates should be aware that they have to have acquired the knowledge required for their line of field. They also need to realize the importance of being able to develop their idea or work in a critical manner. If candidates cannot develop their ideas and clearly express them, then they cannot be researchers. To become researchers, students need graduate schools that can teach them research skills and develop their ideas in clear, precise writing.

What, then, makes a good graduate study?

Some thinkers argue that what makes a good graduate program is ‘subjective’ (Richardson, 2003) depending on one’s needs and preferences, requirements and faculty (degreedirectory.org, 2012). To Carl Gilleard, the chief executive of the Association for Graduate Recruiters in the USA, “what distinguishes a good graduate program is that it delivers what it promises” (Richardson, 2003). The question that arises for the researcher of this paper is “what does the Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences (DSLHSS) at the Lebanese University (LU) promise its candidates?” It is a question that this study will attempt to address.

When looking for a good school, factors such as acceptance rates, students’ GPA, ability to provide candidates with transferable skills (Richardson, 2003; Gilbert et al., 2004) become relevant. Schools that provide their candidates with transferable skills are highly desired in higher education (Nabi & Babley, 1999). Those that instill in their students skills such as personal self-reliance are considered ‘top’ graduate schools because these programs provide their students with knowledge that matches the needed technical, communicative and interpersonal skills needed in modern-day workplace (Dickinson, 2000; Fallows & Stevens, 2000; Morgan & Turner, 2000). Moreover, graduate schools that require high average test scores and GPA, such as Harvard, Stanford and UCLA (a public university), are usually considered good (degreedirectory.org, 2013). Programs that include highly qualified teachers are regarded as good choices. However, good teachers do not necessarily mean famous research faculty (Heck Jr., 2011) but rather those who excel at educating and training. Having intellectual brilliance does not necessarily mean that one has adequate and successful pedagogical ability. Good programs are those that prepare their future researchers through their faculty that teaches well and thus could improve students’ results up to 40% (Richardson, 2003). In this manner, having good professors as supervisors become an important criteria for making a good program (graduate.purdue, 2013)

In developing countries such as Lebanon, students seeking a PhD are faced with two options: either pursue it in Lebanon or go abroad. Those who opt for the former are left with very few options; only a handful; of universities offer a PhD, one of which is the LU. For developing countries, higher education becomes pivotal for its advancement and development (Almaneeh, 2000 & Ashwin, 2001 as cited by Issa & Abo Alma'ty, 2011). It is no longer considered a luxury, but a necessity since it prepares and produces the qualified personnel that will administer the nation's progress and development (Al-Assad 2000 as cited by Al-nadi, 2009). Thus graduate programs provide societies with intellectuals and scientists who in turn enrich society's scientific and cultural heritage and disseminate this knowledge to the world (Al-rasheed, 1990 as cited by Al-nadi 2009 & Issa & Abo Alma'ty, 2011). In this manner, improving this sector becomes important.

To improve graduate programs, assessment and evaluation of programs are essential. Good universities undergo these assessments periodically since this process reveals the weaknesses of the programs and thus allows the institution to improve them. Some of the studies done in this regard have revealed that these programs are below the required level. Problems such as increase number of students with low number of qualified faculty, primitive and inadequate facilities, undermining the importance of research and graduating students with low standards are too common in many of the Arab graduate institutions (Issa & Abo Alma'ty, 2011; Al-Sharif, 2011). Moreover, many of these institutions have been found to follow the pure lecturing method that derives the students away from critical and scientific reasoning, and fails to support and publish well-done research (Al-Sharif, 2011).

Studies have revealed that industrial and developed countries are 'successful' not because of their wealth alone, but because their higher institutions provide these nations with the required human power (Kisnawi, 2001 as cited by Al-Deek, 2009). For the Arab world to develop and catch up with the needs of the 21st century, graduate and higher institutions should follow the scientific method of research, instilling ethical investigating skills that are based on application and theoretical background. In this respect, students no longer are merely acquiring a PhD, but *become* PhD holders.

In conclusion, improving the higher education sector in the Arab World in general, and in Lebanon in particular, becomes vital so that the Arab nations can keep up with the demands of globalization. This improvement requires regular assessment of the graduate programs to determine their weaknesses and strengths. From this comes the study at hand, for it aims at evaluating the PhD program at DSLHSS at the LU from the perspective of the students and the literature available.

B. Research Objectives

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the status of the post graduate program at the DSLHSS at LU, as revealed by the candidates' attitudes, to identify its strengths and weaknesses so as to improve its performance and better serve the Lebanese society. To present such an assessment, the study will investigate the following questions:

1. What is the status of the PhD in Education at the DSLHSS from the perspective of the candidates? That is, what are the attitudes of the graduate students towards the DSLHSS?
2. Is there a difference in attitudes towards DSLHS between the genders?

3. Are the PhD requirements clearly stated at the DSLHSS? Do the candidates have knowledge of these criteria?
4. Does the DSLHSS possess the criteria of a good PhD program? The criteria being:
 - a. Time required for earning the degree;
 - b. Percentage of women doctorate students in the program;
 - c. Average number of publications per candidate;
 - d. Cooperation between faculty and candidates in supporting research and scholarship for continued betterment of society;
 - e. Courses designed specifically for PhD students/researcher preparing them for their dissertation;
 - f. Facilities and research methods provided for the candidates;
 - g. Clear admission criteria
 - i. GPA: ≥ 3.5 in MA
 - ii. Source of MA degree
 - iii. Research and Publications

Finally, the study aspires to be successful in bringing the Lebanese academia a step closer to having a program that can follow the internationally recognized scientific criteria of a strong post-graduate program.

C. Literature Review

In 2004, ARWU, known as the Shanghai Ranking, published a report of the top 500 best universities in the world. The criteria the report followed included quality of instruction, number of prestigious and well published faculty, and university size in terms of number of specializations and student body. Harvard University headed the list followed by Stanford and Cambridge Universities (Al-Sharif, 2011). None of the Arab universities were on that list. Lately, the 2012 report included only three Arab universities: two in the 400th rank, namely King Abdul-Aziz University and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals; and one in the 500th rank- Cairo University (ARWU, 2013). This alarming finding provides the Arab world in general and the Arab Academia in particular, with serious challenges to improve the available higher institutions and their curricula.

In this section, an overview of the literature regarding criteria of good post graduate programs and importance of assessment and evaluation is presented.

PhD programs are structured to give its students in-depth expertise in a specialized domain. These programs train their candidates to follow a life in academia as professors or researchers, although many graduates might not want to become researchers. Hence, to earn a PhD, the candidate must be able to master a certain subject and add new knowledge to this field. Mastering a particular subject or field requires extensive readings of published literature on the topic. These readings are usually done in the first phase of the PhD program where students are expected to take courses that are part of the degree requirements. At the end of this phase, candidates are expected to choose an advisor and write their dissertation proposal (Princeton review, 2013).

Usually, universities and higher education institutions set clear general guidelines for students to follow while applying and earning their PhD degree (Purdue, 2013; Princeton Review, 2013; Heck Jr., 2011; EcolePolytechnique, 2004; Boston University, 2013; SMEAL

College of Business, 2013; Ohio State university, 2013; UNC-Chapel Hill, 2013). Each university establishes its own criteria for admission depending on its offered specializations and the community's needs. Furthermore, most of these universities admit only those candidates who have research skills (Jaber, 1988 as cited by Al-Nadi, 2009) and high intellectual ability (Purdue, 2013).

After investigating the PhD requirements of some of the major universities in the world, the researcher has been able to summarize the criteria on which these universities admit their students to the PhD program (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2013; Stanford University, 2013; Brown university, 2013; University of Cambridge, 2013; SMEAL College of Business, 2013; Sanders, 2010; Pre-Grad program, 2013):

- 1) A high grade point average in the MA
- 2) Entrance exams
- 3) Successfully completing required courses on the PhD level (around 8)
- 4) Comprehensive exam after completing the courses
- 5) A professor from within the department to supervise the dissertation; and the candidate can request two readers
- 6) Submission of a PhD Proposal
- 7) Oral defense of the dissertation
- 8) Good research skills.

Acquiring a PhD is training for research. Research is, thus, the heart and soul of the PhD. It is research that broadens the horizon of knowledge through exploration, contemplation and investigation of the phenomena under study. Hence, graduate studies equip their students with the required skills for research and train them to acquire transferable skills (Walsh et al., 2010; Thomas & Grimes, 2003). It is therefore, essential for students to pursue their PhD degree for the sheer joy of research and not for the wrong reasons.

There are several factors that contribute to the success of a PhD program. Factors such as how much time it takes to earn a degree, percentage of women doctoral students in the program, and average number of publications per faculty member and candidate (Sanders, 2010; Pre-Grad Program, 2013) are among these. Moreover, these good PhD programs also train their doctorate students to develop research skills to conduct research studies based of sound and scientific procedures (Alpay & Walsh, 2008; Walsh et al., 2010). Another factor of good programs is good departments that have qualified faculty (Guerriero, 2002 & Heck Jr., 2011) who are available and accessible to the doctorate students (Guerriero, 2002; Metwali, 2012) and committed to graduate education; they also have to be specialized in their domain with extensive research and teaching experience (Metwali, 2012). These good programs, furthermore, accept only 'good' students who are critical thinkers that can analyze and research given phenomena and then conduct a study to establish new knowledge about the phenomena (Metwali, 2012).

Finally, good programs are those whose departments are equipped with adequate and up-to-date resources such as internet facilities for all its doctorate students, extensive library items (for accreditation, a minimum of 50,000 entries from books and journals should be available at all times for students) and research facilities. Internet ability has become a vital resource in facilitating education because it allows students to manage their time between work and

studies (Shimazu, 2005). Programs such as Blackboard or Moodle assist teachers in carrying out their courses for teachers can post their lectures notes, PowerPoint presentations and any other material needed (Holloman, 2005; Braun, 2008).

In order to determine the quality of a program, researchers should evaluate the program so that improvements can be made accordingly. This process, known as evaluation- “the examination of the worth, merit or significance of an object” (Scriven, 1998), is necessary for the enhancement of a program. Program evaluation is different from continuous informal assessment because program evaluation follows a set of guidelines. Whether formal or informal as reflected by the learners’ attitudes, it is important to conduct an evaluation of any program for two reasons; first, evaluation allows the university administration to know the program’s merits and its worth; and second, it provides the administration with easy to improving their program (NOAA, 2013). Evaluation is essential for the development of a program because it clarifies, in a systematic way, what things are successful and what are not in the program.

There are several reasons for assessing and evaluating a program according to Frazer, 1994 (as cited by Al-Nadi, 2009). The assessor’s objectives are to monitor and hold higher institutions accountable for their performance and quality of education. Through evaluation, these higher institutions can monitor its quality assurance. While investigating quality of a program, researchers look at the faculty qualifications. These faculty members have to be able to base their teaching methods on sound theories (Bornman, 2004; Schon, 1983) and be updated with the latest research and through quality assurance experience new “pedagogical world” (Wals & Jickling, 2002) that leads their students to new areas of learning and research.

The literature review reveals many studies that discussed the issue of assessment of higher institutions and graduate programs and the process of such an evaluation. Al-Sharif (2011), Al-Nadi (2009) and Issa& Abo Al Ma’aty (2011) cite several studies to evaluate graduate programs done in the Arab world that reveal that these programs experienced similar problems as that of the DSLHSS. Problems such as lacking a variety of majors, programs that change graduation requirements without notifying the students, and lacking in research facilities and well-equipped libraries, or the lack of clear criteria and policy for research, along with the inability of providing their candidates with research skills, are all too common.

Graduate program evaluation is important. Universities should perform it on regular basis. Studies have revealed that from research, many graduate programs have been able to assess their performance and later rectify the problems and improve the quality of education and implementation. Most studies done in the Arab world revealed that many graduate programs face almost the same problems such as lack of research skills, facilities and funding. Most of these problems also surface in the DSLHSS’s graduate program. The next part of the study will explain how this research was carried out and the analysis of the data.

D. Methodology

After analyzing the literature review based on program evaluation, the study was carried out to investigate the status of the PhD program at the Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences at the Lebanese University in Sin El-Fil from the perspective of the PhD candidates by the researcher herself.

1. Design

The researcher used a non-experimental approach which followed the descriptive method of analyzing the data. Two tools were used in data collection: a questionnaire and informal group interview with the participants after handing in the questionnaire. These tools present a basic form of triangulation (Cresswell, 2002), which in turn is needed to ensure an adequate understanding of the analysis (Silverman, 2000). Secondary data was greatly used in the analysis of the problem at hand to reach recommendations for future improvements.

2. Population and Sample

The participants are 30 doctorate students of the DSLHSS at LU: 8 males constituting 27% and 22 females making up 73%. The sample was randomly chosen- those who were still attending the doctorate days taking place at the Doctorate School in Sin EL-Fil branch. 16 participants had received their MA from LU, 4 from AUB, 9 from other universities and only one from LAU. 63% had high GPA, above 3.5 and only 27% had GPA between 3.0-3.5 while 7% did not answer. 53% were 1st year students, 40% were in their 2nd year and only 7% were more. Finally, 43% of them were specializing in education, 3% in philosophy, 10% in Communication and Media, 7% in Linguistics, 7% in Arts and 30% in other majors and more than 70% of them are not published.

3. Measurement

A questionnaire was developed based on the criteria the researcher had concluded from her research on the characteristics of a good Doctorate program. The survey was administered after adjustments were made due to feedback after piloting it. The questionnaire was selected by the researcher since collected data is easily quantifiable and gives the participants time to respond freely and at the same time remain anonymous. The items in the survey were 22 questions which followed the 3-point likert scale of 1=Disagree, 2= Unsure or Neutral and 3= Agree.

Casual interviews were also carried with 17 (3 males and 14 females) participants to supplement the questionnaire. Doctorate students were asked about their opinions regarding the program and the problems they were facing.

4. Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants before the doctorate days and the directions were explained to them. The questionnaires were in two forms: Arabic and English (same questions but translated to Arabic for those who do not know English). The researcher stayed around to answer the participants' inquiries and later carry out the informal interview with some of them (around 15 participants). Notes were taken to document the participants' opinions regarding the program.

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequencies of the data and a Chi-Square Test was conducted to answer research question 2.

E. Results

40 questionnaires were distributed to doctorate students and 30 were returned: 14 in English and 16 in Arabic. The population was 8 males and 22 females. The majority of the

respondents were 1st year students with GPA of above 3.0 in MA. The majority, 73%, were also unpublished.

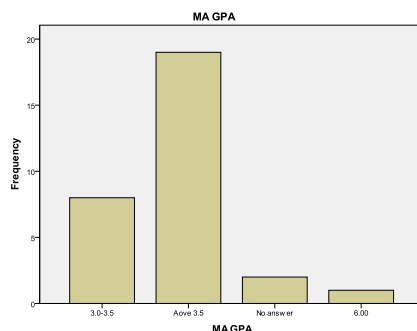


Figure 1: Students' MA GPA

Table 1 indicates that 13/22 participants who were unpublished were former LU students.

Table 1: Number of Publications by University

Previous University	0	1-2	3-4	> 4	Total
AUB	3	0	1	0	4
LAU	0	0	0	1	1
LU	13	2	1	0	16
Other	6	1	2	0	9
Total	22	3	4	1	30

1. Programs' Requirements

To investigate the students' knowledge of the programs' requirements, the participants responded to five questions that revealed their knowledge. As **Table 2** reveals, the majority of the participants (<40%) were unsure of what the program's requirements were.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Students' Knowledge of the Program's Requirements in %

	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	No Answer
1. I knew what the requirements for graduation were	26.7	43.3	30.0	-
2. I knew what the credit requirements were	26.7	40.0	30.0	3.3
3. I knew what the evaluation processes were	30.0	40.0	26.7	3.3
4. I knew how much time it takes to earn the degree	10.0	33.3	53.3	3.3
5. I knew what the exit criteria were	36.7	46.7	13.3	3.3

30% and less knew what they were while 25% and at times 30% did not know what these requirements were. Only the time it takes to complete the program and acquire the degree was known by 53% of the participants while only 10% did not know. The majority of these participants-70% (30% did not know and 40% were unsure) did not know what the evaluation processes were. This reveals the ambiguity that the administration had followed. When candidates were informed of their acceptance to the program, they were not given a letter of acceptance or a contract sheet whereby the program's requirements would be clearly explained. This posits problems for students for when the requirements are not known from the beginning, students do not know what they are expected to do. One 2nd year student complained, during the informal interview, that she had 'lost' the first year because she did not know about the credit procedure and thus missed all the lectures and doctorate days she was

supposed to cover in her 1st year. Moreover, 37% did not know what the exit criterion was, while 47% were unsure. Again, ambiguity in what is required by them leads students to struggle with their performance. During the informal interview, the participants agreed that the DSLHSS was the best option for them, despite the problems they were facing, since their degree will be classified as first degree. They, however, were not aware of the fact that they should have investigated the criteria required. Moreover, being a LU graduate (16/30), it was 'natural', as one candidate explained, for them to choose the DSLHSS.

Results presented so far reveal that the DSLHSS, whether intentionally or not, does follow at least two of the mentioned criteria of good doctorate program-namely the percentage of women doctorate students in the program; 73% of the participants were females (Sanders, 2010; Pre-Grad Program, 2013) and more than 60% had averages above 80/100. Although the number of participants is relatively low, only 30, but when attending credit accumulating events held at the DSLHSS in Sinn El-El Fil, one can experience the female dominance.

2. Supervisor

As **Table 3** shows, most candidates are satisfied with their supervisors and find their supervisors cooperative and helping- 80%. Only one student in the interview said, "It has been very hard for me to meet with my supervisor. He keeps putting me off." Moreover, 83% acknowledge that their supervisors are well-published. These factors concur with the required criteria of a good program.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Students' Attitudes towards their Supervisors in %

	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	No Answer
1. My supervisor is cooperative	13.3	3.3	80.0	3.3
2. My supervisor supports me in doing research	3.3	13.3	80.0	3.3
3. My supervisor supports me in continuing the betterment of society	6.7	16.7	73.3	3.3
4. My supervisor is well-published	3.3	10.7	83.3	3.3
5. My supervisor is updated with the latest research	3.3	16.7	76.7	3.3
6. My supervisor prepares me for my dissertation	10.0	33.3	50.0	6.7

However, what is alarming and needs further investigation is that almost half of the participants (13/30) either confessed that their supervisor does not prepare them for the dissertation (10%) or are unsure that they are being prepared (33%).

3. PhD Courses

Questions of set D regarding core required courses revealed the candidates' dissatisfaction with what the program offers. 37% commented that the courses they were forced to take from M2 do not equip them with research skills and another 37% were neutral.

Table 4: Core required courses equip students with research skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	disagree	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	neutral	11	36.7	36.7	73.3

	agree	7	23.3	23.3	96.7
	No answer	1	3.3	3.3	100.0

Interpreted, this information means that more than half of the participants believe that the courses are useless. During the informal interview, the candidates agreed that the courses they were taking did not add any new knowledge for them. Two of them even commented that they were taking the same material in two different courses. Other participants complained that in one of the courses, the professor even requested them to memorize some parts of the lectures and expected them to reproduce the information given in class with only some basic analysis of the subject discussed.

Moreover, the informal interview revealed that the Doctorate candidates who had their MA from universities other than LU were dissatisfied. They faced problems because they were not informed from the beginning of the required courses they had to take to render their non-LU MA credits acceptable to DSLHSS graduate committee. One of these candidates explained “it was 6 months into the program that I was told of the courses. I *missed* the Fall semester and only by coincidence I knew that the Spring semester started and I missed the first three weeks of the term!” Moreover, the courses given to them did not meet their needs. One of these courses was Research Methodology which prepares its students for their proposal. However, the doctorate students had already presented and defended their proposal in April/May of 2012. These students regarded the courses as a ‘total waste of time’, as one participants declared, that did nothing for them other than delay their work with the dissertation.

4. Satisfaction with the Program

To investigate research question 2, a crosstab was conducted along with the informal interview. As **Table 5** reveals, females were more dissatisfied than males which agree with the literature (Al-Sharif, 2011; Al-Nadi, 2009; Issa & Abo Al Ma’aty, 2011).

Table 5: Sex * How satisfied are you with the program?

		How satisfied are you with the program?			Total
		dissatisfied	neutral	satisfied	
Sex	Male	2	4	2	8
	Female	8	7	7	22
Total		10	11	9	30

The informal interview further explained the findings. Only two male candidates expressed their mild annoyance with some of the procedures in the DSLHSS, particularly those dealing with supplementary courses-for these participants had their MA from universities other than LU. One stated “Is it acceptable that I am given a course I had already taken in Belgium just for the number of credits?” The other just commented “It is totally unacceptable!” Most of the female candidates agreed with them.

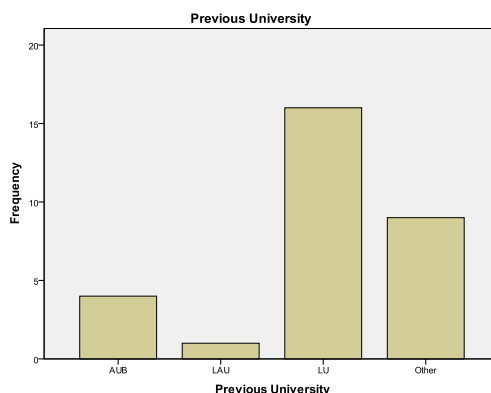


Figure 2: Students' Previous University

The other male candidates had a nonchalant attitude towards the program; their 'don't care attitude' was the result of their reasons behind their wanting a PhD. Most of the male participants interviewed wanted the degree to improve their status in the Public Schools Sector and not to become researchers (Purdue, 2013).

The data further reveals that 2nd year students are slightly more dissatisfied than 1st year students. This could be due to experiencing the complications that occurred the year before, when the program reopened. The program's procedures and requirements were set from the beginning and announced on the university's website. These procedures were not available for 2nd year students when they first started in the program.

Table 6: How satisfied are you with the program?

Year of Study	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
First	5	5	6	16
Second	4	6	2	12
Other	1	0	1	2
Total	10	11	9	30

What was surprising to the researcher was the fact that the majority of the dissatisfied students came from the LU. 10/30 students were displeased with the program and seven of those came from the LU. The researcher had assumed that the former LU students participating in the doctorate program would be satisfied with the program having been accustomed to the procedures. In the researcher's experience with the program, the difficulties were in the lack of clear admission criteria, the complicated registration procedures, the ambiguity of program requirements and later the change in the credit-point accumulation for the completion of the degree requirements. Thus, the researcher assumed that these obstacles would not be experienced by former LU students since they did not have to take supplementary course, had all their official papers needed for registration in order, and had already taken Research Methodology as part of their M2 requirements. However, this was not the case. During the interviews, these students expressed their frustration regarding the credit-point procedures. Their frustration came from the fact that they are expected to publish and participate in conferences, both as presenters and attendees; yet, the university does not provide nor assist them with these facilities. For instance, none of these participants knew about the call for

papers for the LEAS conference titled *Graduate and Post Graduate Programs in Education in Arab Universities: Quality and Added Value* taking place in November 2013 in Beirut-Lebanon. Thus missed the probability of participating in the conference.

Table 7: How satisfied are you with the program

Previous University	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
AUB	2	1	1	4
LAU	0	0	1	1
LU	7	6	3	16
Other	1	4	4	9
Total	10	11	9	30

F. Analysis

The literature reveals that admission and exit criteria for graduate program should be clearly stated. Ivy graduate schools state these conditions plainly on their websites (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2013; Stanford University, 2013; Brown University, 2013; University of Cambridge, 2013; PENN State, 2013; UCLA Graduate Division, 2013). In their study, Issa and Abo Alma'ty (2011) concluded that it is important to have clear and transparent admission criteria and that the quality of accepted students should be graduate level- those who have or could develop research skills with proper training (Purdue, 2013). The accepted students should have a minimum average of 80/100. The DSLHSS does follow this criterion. The study reveals that the majority of the participating PhD students fulfilled the requirement of an 80% GPA. Al-Nadi (2009) cites Saud 2001 regarding the importance of clarifying the admission criteria for students. This requirement is clearly stated at the DSLHSS. Moreover, Issa and Abo Alma'ty (2011) argue that for a graduate program to meet international standards, it has to clearly articulate its objectives. Like these researchers' investigated university, the DSLHSS does not have clear objectives. The program needs to identify its objectives for then, it will be reflected on the acceptance criterion. Only those who fulfill the program's objectives would be admitted.

The data reveals that the majority of students are satisfied with their supervisors. This concurs with previous studies (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011). The DSLHSS supervisors are well published and are highly qualified to supervise academic performance. Although some of these supervisors are famous in the academic life, they are easily available for the students, thus fulfilling a major important requirement (Guirriero, 2002; Heck Jr., 2011). What should be investigated in the future is that if these supervisors are from the DSLHSS or not, particularly those who were the source of the 13.3 % dissatisfied students because they were uncooperative.

A good criterion of a good school is its facilities and resources such internet connectivity. The DSLHSS professors acknowledge its importance (Shimazu, 2005; Braun, 2008) and use it effectively, however, without the DSLHSS help or assistance. Their initiative has facilitated the graduates' work and educational chances (Holloman, 2005).

The last finding regarding the supervisors- namely that they do not prepare their students for the dissertation has to do more with the program as a whole. Good programs prepare for research (Boston University, 2013; SMEAL College of Business, 2013; Ghaffar, 1994

&Istaz, 2004 as cited by Al-Deek, 2009; Al-Deek, 2009). Through well-planned courses, graduate programs train their students for research. From the data DSLHSS offered courses do not prepare their students for research which concurs with the literature review (Haddad, 1999 as cited by Al-Sharif, 2011 & Al-Nadi, 2009), but merely seek from students a reproduction of the information. These courses require change and update to include vital courses for research preparation (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011). For instance, instead of providing courses on how to operate SPSS and conduct scientific research, the Statistics course given at DSLHSS is mainly concerned with solving equations in the traditional way. The data also concurs with former studies (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011, Audi, 2009; Al-Deek, 2009; Al-Sharif, 2011) that students have no knowledge of the evaluation criteria and process. Only 26.7% knew of the process. The findings also reveal the dissatisfaction of some of the participating candidates. It seems that as the literature review shows, many graduate programs in the Arab world face almost the same problems, and the Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences is of these programs as well.

However, the program does not lack its advantages and strengths. The program does produce needed graduates and "satisfies the demands of public accountability" (Biggs, 2001 as cited by Bornman, 2004). This fact renders the program as having achieved one of the criteria for quality assurance (Bornman, 2004), for it provides the Lebanese workforces with the needed skills for an affordable price. Moreover, another factor for quality assurance is the graduate program's placement record (Heck Jr., 2011) which the graduate program at DSLHSS satisfies. The programs' PhD holders do land better jobs and are highly valued by their community. They enjoy career enhancement opportunities (Fox & Byers, 2011) because of their degree. These graduates are usually offered positions in the educational sector for their degree is classified as first level.

G. Limitations

There are several limitations present in this study. The researcher acknowledges the following as the most important: when evaluators are in the process of evaluating any program, they should not build their assessment on a single source of evidence (Bromley, 2008). This act is considered dangerous (Walsh et al., 2010) for the data generated could be biased. The researcher acknowledges, therefore, that these findings cannot be generalized for it is built on one source, namely the small sample of participants; this demands further investigation. Moreover, due to time constraints, the study did not investigate:

- The faculty's attitude towards the program;
- The feedback from administrators/decision makers of the program;
- The background of the uncooperative supervisors;
- If the reasons for dissatisfaction are the same among the candidates who come from different universities;
- Why there are more female students: is it because male candidates are pursuing it elsewhere?
- The availability of research facilities for students.

Finally, the researcher believes that a way to validate the results would have been through a comparative study- comparing the DSLHSS program with another, like those who are among the 500 in the Shanghai Ranking. This, however, was not possible in the study.

H. Recommendations and Conclusion

Feedback from the participating students during the interview suggests several recommendations, which in turn, comply with those present in the literature review. In their discussions, the participants and the researcher concluded that the program should:

- Apply the international quality assurance system which will keep the program up-to-date and make it possible for the administration to discover and solve any problem (Agha et al, 2011).
- Revise the program's objectives to investigate their efficiency in fulfilling society's needs (Metwali, 2012; Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011; Belboush, 2011) and to determine if the program is achieving its objectives (Al-Sharif, 2011).
- Revise the curriculum and offered courses (Agha et al., 2011; Issa& Abo Alma'ty 2011; Belboush, 2011; metwaly, 2012) so as the courses would be designed to prepare the students to become better researchers.
- Support and emphasize more research instead of evaluating students' performance through summative tests (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011).
- Unify requirements of graduation among the different majors in the program, (Audi, 2009) providing the program with the required faculty in all majors of studies (Agha et al., 2011; Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011; Metwali, 2012).

Moreover, Audi (2009) recommends as a solution, that graduate universities of a certain area unite so as to supplement each other's needs. For example, the DSLHSS would cooperate with AUB or LAU to benefit from their library facilities while the latter can benefit from programs the DSLHSS offers and they do not.

In conclusion, the paper revealed that the doctorate students participating in the study are not as satisfied with the program as should be. They would like to see more transparent administrative criteria, articulated clearly from the beginning. These students wanted the program to provide them with better research and transferable skills to be better equipped and nationally recognized.

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