



MEETING MINUTES

MTG No.: AY23-24/MTG 3	
Committee/Council/Other: 3rd Faculty Senate Meeting – AY 2023-2024	
Date of Meeting: December 8, 2023	Start Time: 9:00 am
Location: Virtual Microsoft Teams	End Time: 10:30 am
Chair: Dr. Fayez Moutassem	Rapporteur: Ms. Micaela Castillo
Attendees:	
Chair: Dr. Fayez Moutassem	Department Chair / Associate Professor – Civil & Infrastructure Engineering
1. Prof. Stephen Wilhite	Vice President, Academic Affairs & Student Success / Provost
2. Dr. Kevin Scott Konecny	Associate Provost for Student Affairs / Assistant Professor of Education
3. Dr. Anis Semlali	Associate Professor – Interior Design
4. Prof. Mohammed Omari	Professor - Computer Science
5. Dr. Beza Negash Getu	Associate Professor – Electronics and Communications Engineering
6. Dr. Mohamad Kharseh	Associate Professor - Renewable Energy (Mechanical)
7. Dr. Busher Idris	Assistant Professor of Biotechnology
8. Dr. Khaledah Al Mansoori	Assistant Professor – Linguistics / Coordinator of Academic Recovery & Community-Oriented Student Life Activities
9. Dr. Baliira Kalyebara	Associate Professor – Finance
10. Dr. Osama Sohaib	Associate Professor – Business Analytics
11. Dr. Tariq Bhatti	Associate Professor - Marketing / Graduate Program Coordinator
12. Mr. Mohamed Sharul	IT Manager (Guest)
13. Ms. Rania Ali	Registrar (Guest)
14. Mr. Ebrahim Alnuaimi	Manager - Office of Facilities Management (Guest)
15. Engr. Muzaffar Razzaq	Senior Facilities Engineer (Guest)
Rapporteur: Ms. Micaela Castillo	Administrative Assistant – School of Business
Apologies:	
1. Dr. Saad Balhasan	Associate Professor - Petroleum Engineering
2. Dr. Suleyman Ulusoy	Professor – Mathematics
3. Mr. Umar Adeel	Instructor - Computer Engineering
Unexcused Absences:	
1. Salmah Walid El-Jammal	SGA Chief of Staff / Student
Welcome remarks	
Dr. Fayez welcomed faculty members to the 3 rd Faculty Senate meeting for the 2023-2024 academic year. He also welcomed Ms. Rania, Mr. Ebrahim, Engr. Muzaffar and Mr. Sharul for agreeing to attend the meeting.	
AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.1: Approving Minutes of Meeting #2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dr. Fayez presented the action plans and asked for members' comments on the minutes of the previous meeting (Meeting #2).- All members approved the Minutes of Meeting #2.	
AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.2: Issues with current time slots of classes for Architectural and Interior Design Departments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dr. Fayez inquired about Dr. Anis's concerns regarding the new schedule of Interior Design and Architecture classes, expressing concerns regarding the new time slot;<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the spring schedule, the course schedules offered are difficult to adopt in the Architecture and Interior Design time slot.• They struggle to accommodate time slots for both students and faculty members, where some class times are 1 hour 50 minutes, 2 hours 55 minutes, and 5 hours.	

- He is concerned that some students have to wait a long time, especially that some students live in Sharjah or Dubai.
- He suggested adjusting the time slot and providing more flexibility to accommodate the schedules of students and faculty members.
- Ms. Rania responded with the following points;
 - They follow a pattern when creating the schedule where all time slots start at the same time in the schedule.
 - She suggested offering a suitable time slot for courses to avoid any conflict with students' schedules.
- Dr. Anis responded that they arrange schedules with the students and without conflict, but acknowledged that the changes could affect general courses because they might finish late or have difficulty keeping up with general education courses, which would cause practical problems.
- Dr. Anis suggested that Prof. Stephen and Ms. Rania look into the matter, provide more flexibility in the schedule and organize it smoothly.
- Dr. Fayez suggested to Ms. Rania to treat the Architecture and Interior Design department as an exceptional case due to long completion times and late departures of students and faculty.
- Prof. Stephen commented the following points;
 - He believes that discussing courses in architecture studios, where other courses would not meet, could prevent classroom conflict because it would potentially eliminate an important source of conflict.
 - The other issue is to ensure that if the start time deviates from the established pattern, it will not cause difficulty for architecture students to complete general education courses.
 - He also expressed sympathy for the late completion of courses among faculty and students, but noted that not only are architecture courses held in the early evening, but they are also trying to reduce class hours on Friday, scheduling most classes on Monday through Thursday.
 - He suggested obtaining a specific proposal from architecture, so Ms. Rania could work with the department chair and dean to determine if it would work without causing scheduling issues.
- Dr. Anis pointed out that architecture credit hours are more important than other programs such as studio courses, which last 10 hours, compared to most other courses which last 2/3 or 3 hours. Indeed, these courses are designed for 4 credits and a studio, making it a long day for students with many tasks.
- Dr. Anis noted and responded that they will do their best to find a convenient schedule that respects both architecture and general education courses.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.3: Issues with the registration department not answering phone calls of faculty and students

- Dr. Fayez expressed concerns that the registration department is not answering phone calls from faculty and students. He highlighted the following points:
 - According to Ms. Rania, they do respond to calls from students.
 - Regarding faculty members, there are some reasons why the registration department does not answer their phone calls;
 - Some tasks often require email confirmation, which can delay progress.
 - The registration department experiences delay due to phone calls regarding irrelevant matters such as course approval, student attendance, and bus transportation.
 - The registration department suggests that all concerns be addressed via email or MS-Teams for a more effective and efficient response.
- Dr. Fayez also commented the following points;
 - Phone call is an important communication tool that should not be completely abandoned.
 - Some faculty members need to call for quick query or to check about an urgent matter.
 - In addition to irrelevant emails, sometimes irrelevant emails going back and forth, which are not related to the registrar's work, is more time consuming than a quick phone call.
 - He suggested that there should be at least one dedicated agent who would respond to phone calls with a fixed and shared extension number, in addition to other duties and responsibilities.
 - Faculty members should be advised to send emails to address registration and department-related issues only, avoiding irrelevant matters.
- Ms. Rania commented the following points;
 - They handle most calls, but being on front desk most of the time, they take care of students and parents.
 - They also have a call center that occasionally receives calls, announces the numbers, forwards them and calls the student back.

- She encourages students to use email or MS-Teams to maintain records and reminders to the registration office due to SIS system challenges and limited resources, allowing them to access records during busy days and the team to respond quickly.
 - Regarding the faculty, the registration department consistently answers most calls, but missing one or two per day does not imply they are not answering.
 - She encourages all faculty members to communicate via email or MS-Teams, as most faculty members deal with her via MS-Teams.
- Dr. Kharseh shared a message from a student on the following point;
 - The student attempted to contact the registration department via phone but did not receive any response.
 - Dr. Beza added the following points;
 - There are urgent matters related to the registrar, but this requires the faculty to go through the hierarchy from the department chair to the associate dean, causing significant delays in their work.
 - For example, he teaches lab classes and needs a classroom with software, but that requires approval from the department chair, the associate dean, etc., which causes a lot of delays.
 - He suggested the need for a dedicated person to respond quickly to important questions from the faculty.
 - Dr. Fayeze agreed to the suggestion of Dr. Beza.
 - Ms. Rania pointed out the following points;
 - Schools' requests regarding schedules, rooms, attendance, final exams and grades will not be implemented in the system until they receive an official email, even if they have received a phone call.
 - She mentioned that she has three employees in the department who try to handle all the calls, but when they are working in the system or have a student in front of them, they cannot handle the calls.
 - She encourages members to provide advice or clarification, but this will not be implemented in the system until an official email is received.
 - She also encourages if any faculty has an urgent matter to send her message or an MS-Teams call, and she is ready to help and guide the faculty directly.
 - Dr. Beza emphasized the importance of emails, but indicated that actions should not be delayed until approval, especially for urgent matters like class assignments, which should not take too long.
 - Dr. Fayeze urged members to send emails for records and reminded Ms. Rania to inform her colleagues to answer phone calls whenever possible.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.4: Academic issues for students whose Blackboard accounts are blocked due to financial problems

- Dr. Fayeze highlighted the following points regarding the academic issues of students whose Blackboard accounts are blocked due to financial issues;
 - The Provost sent a detailed email last week addressing this issue, and all faculty should be aware of.
 - Dr. Kharseh suggests that blocking should be applied to students and not faculty, allowing them to insert grades and view them once unblocked.
- Prof. Stephen suggested to Mr. Sharul that Blackboard or SIS system could be configured to allow faculty to continue recording grades even if a student is blocked.
- Mr. Sharul commented the following points;
 - They cross-checked with Blackboard support because they previously received a similar request from a faculty member, and they were informed that blocking one student would cause the entire system to be blocked.
 - Students removed from Blackboard are also removed from the course, which makes them not visible in the class list.
 - Blackboard support also highlighted that the functionality will not be added in the near future enhancements.
- Prof. Omari pointed out the following points;
 - Some of the problems they are facing now are that after a month and a half, students will come and say that they are done with financial problems and they are back to the system. So, faculty need to allow them to submit their previous assignments, their previous course activities, their previous quizzes, which will cause a lot of problems because instructors have to reschedule all these assignments as makeup sessions.

- He suggested that if a student is blocked, the registrar sends an email to instructors to let them know that a particular cannot access Blackboard to submit his work. This way the instructor can communicate with the student via email.
- How to do assessments for these students? If a student is blocked or deblocked, a notification email should be sent to the instructor so he can put their grades Blackboard.
- Mr. Sharul addressed the following points;
 - The block does not specifically mention the reason, such as a student not paying their accommodation fees. The block is applied to a specific student or added to the block list, preventing communication.
 - He stated that he can send an email to the student when a block is applied, but he cannot specify the reason for the block. He also can send an email every time it occurs.
- Prof. Omari said that it is not important to know the source or reason for the blockage. What is important for the instructor is only to know when the student is blocked/unblocked.
- Prof. Stephen commented that the reason for the financial block does not matter, as long as the faculty can be informed that the student has been blocked or unblocked.
- Mr. Sharul indicated that he would check the possibility of adding if the student has a blockage in the faculty portal.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.5: Important improvements to the SIS system

- The SIS system should not allow advisors to register for courses online if it detects a conflict between courses' schedules.
- Acquire a complete log for advising students, from first year to current semester, with a single mouse click in the SIS system.
- Dr. Beza addressed the following issues regarding important improvements to SIS systems;
 - Acquire a complete advising log for advising students, from first year to current semester, with a single mouse click in the SIS system.
 - The system only displays course approval history, but it would be beneficial for advisors to have access to the entire advising log or history, from first year to current semester, which could be beneficial for accreditation or reaccreditation.
 - He suggested if there is any way to access the complete history of advising process from first year to current semester.
 - The SIS system should not allow advisees to register online for courses if it detects a schedule conflict between courses;
 - From experience, there is a student who has already registered for courses but there was a course conflict, so the student has to drop some courses and register again to avoid conflicts.
 - The SIS system should reject registrations with conflicting course schedules to avoid issues with course add/drop and delays in the registration process.
 - MATH 113
 - Beginning fall 2022, MATH 113 credit hours decreased from 4 to 3 credits.
 - Some students registered in fall 2022 have in their transcript MATH 113 with 4 credits and for some others have 3 credits.
 - Additionally, there is an inconsistency for students admitted in 2022-2023, but in the system, it is recorded as 2021-2022.
 - He suggested improving the SIS system to avoid inconsistencies which would be more beneficial for faculty and students.
- Ms. Rania commented the following points;
 - Regarding the study plan for the students;
 - EUMS is facing difficulties in specifying the study plan according to the AURAK catalog, so they suggested to advisors to send an email to confirm the student's study plan.
 - Regarding course and credit changes, this depends on the plan to which the student is linked at the time of admission.
 - She advised to share similar cases with their office to check all the study plans and cases of the students as this would help improve the study plans of all the students.
- Mr. Sharul highlighted the following points;
 - Regarding the study plan, there is an option to create the study plan for a student for advising purposes, which was built based on the requirements received from a faculty.
 - For log history, it can track what the student has accomplished and the advisor can also suggest to the student which courses should be taken in the upcoming semester.

- They can also include feedback and comments of which they can take a screenshot as proof for accreditation.
- One of the important points is that the school secretary has to build the study plan in the SIS system, then the system can show which courses are linked to it.
- Improving the system at this stage is not an option since they have decided to move from the existing system to a new third-party system.
- He recommended waiting for the new system to arrive and encouraged members to participate in the evaluation process and provide all their ideas each time they evaluate the system.
- Regarding scheduling conflicts, there is always an option for the registrar to make an override. For the advisor, when he sees a scheduling conflict, it could be a system issue or a manual override.
- Regarding advising history, he suggested having a meeting with Mr. Danilo and Dr. Beza to discuss the possibility of adding historical information and any other information that should be visible.
- Dr. Fayeز recommended Dr. Beza to meet Mr. Sharul early next week and inform him of any feedback or conclusion at the next meeting.
- Dr. Fayeز thanked Ms. Rania and Mr. Sharul for their contribution and participation in the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.6: It is strongly recommended to have a mini-bus dedicated to students' school trips (Monday to Saturday), which will have a positive impact on off-campus activities, especially for students.

- Dr. Fayeز discussed the lack of dedicated minibuses for off-campus activities;
 - It is very important to take students on field trips, extracurricular activities, student chapter activities and also for making industry connections.
 - The CAA has focused on this issue and has high expectations of having a dedicated bus for such trips.
 - Some faculty complained about the difficulty of planning field trips and the difficulty of obtaining a minibus.
 - He mentioned that he had invited Mr. Basheer but he was not available and would like to hear from the Facilities Department.
- Mr. Ebrahim pointed out the followings;
 - They generally depart on a first-come, first-served basis and depending on the availability of their drivers and buses.
 - The idea is possible, but it requires more resources, more investments.
- Dr. Kevin commented the following points;
 - The transport request is processed at the departmental level. But if the bus is not available, they can look for backup plans.
 - He agreed that they need to have more bus transportation services available for student life activities, for faculty field trips; for example, the petroleum engineering program going on field trips and bringing students for site visits.
 - The challenge is resource allocation and there are so many people at the university trying to use limited resources. He mentioned that they could ask the question or push the issue in the next budget cycle.
 - He also mentioned that Mr. Ebrahim and Engr. Muzaffar have an overwhelming number of demands and limited drivers. But drivers, for safety reasons, can only drive a certain number of hours.
- All members noted the above discussion.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.7: Consistent AC issues in mini-bus especially for long trips for student recruitment events

- Dr. Beza stated the following points;
 - The mini bus in AURAK is in poor condition, with poor air quality during a previous trip to Al Ain, causing sweating among students and faculty.
 - He added that it will create a bad image for students and the university.
 - He emphasized the importance of ensuring a better mini bus or bus for the university, as it would not only benefit students but also attract more students.
- Mr. Ebrahim commented the following points;
 - He agrees with Dr. Beza of having mini bus or bus.
 - He mentioned that some 2008 model buses are still running, and they should be considered as an investment. They are considering replacing or removing some buses due to budget constraints.
- Prof. Stephen added that it would be important to carry these items over to the next faculty Senate meeting and try to give an advance notice to Mr. Basheer to ensure his attendance.

- Dr. Fayez noted the above notes and will invite Mr. Basheer in the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.8: Some office rooms do not have working AC and ventilation systems

- Prof. Omari elaborated the following points;
 - Some offices in Building G are experiencing issues with their AC or ventilation systems.
 - For example, in his office the AC and ventilation do not work, so he has to keep the door open all the time but, in some cases, it has to be closed for meetings.
 - He suggested that there should be a ventilation system and it should be turned on.
- Dr. Fayez suggested the following points to Mr. Ebrahim;
 - If they can have their team check each office to make sure the AC and ventilation system is working.
 - If Mr. Ebrahim would like to send an email to all faculty and staff asking them to share with his department issues regarding AC or ventilation.
- Mr. Ebrahim commented they would look into the matter and if there were any other issues they would try to resolve them.
- Dr. Kevin mentioned that there is an order system in the portal to report maintenance issues, such as air conditioning. He suggested that instead of emailing Mr. Ebrahim, he could send a link to faculty and staff to report concerns and maintenance issues.
- Engr. Muzaffar informed they can report any issues from the portal through <https://fmsupport.aurak.ac.ae/>. He mentioned that they will send a notification to remind faculty and staff about the portal.
- Mr. Ebrahim and Engr. Muzaffar noted the above discussion.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.9: All bathroom sinks are not working on the 2nd floor of building G and have already been under repair for long time (urgent matter).

- Dr. Fayez highlighted the urgent need for repairs to the large bathroom of the 2nd floor of building G, which has been under maintenance for four weeks.
- Engr Muzaffar pointed the following points;
 - They have already done the repair where they are installing a new system to make it durable in the G building washroom.
 - They started on the second floor of Building G and will continue to change all the washrooms very soon.
 - He added that they will make it an emergency and proceed as soon as possible to complete them.
- Mr. Ebrahim elaborated the following points;
 - From a design perspective, all basins were like a lower counter and they have to start from scratch and remove everything and replace it with a new foundation with legs that can last a long time.
 - The supplier has already taken the measurements and once the contract is approved, he will come and install it.
 - During winter break, they will finish 50% or more of the work.
- Dr. Fayez recommended if it can be done faster and thanked Mr. Ebrahim & Engr. Muzaffar for their efforts.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.3.10: Updates on free Gym memberships for faculty

- Dr. Fayez addressed Dr. Osama's inquiry about the previous discussion on free gym membership for faculty.
- Dr. Kevin confirmed with Prof. Stephen that they have obtained confirmation from Mr. Basheer that the gym is available for faculty for free.
- Prof. Stephen elaborated the following points;
 - Mr Basheer assured that he fully supported the idea of free use of the gym by faculty and staff.
 - Mr. Basheer said the implementation of free use of the gym for faculty and staff has been delayed because they do not have enough staff for the gym's opening hours.
 - He was also able to confirm with Dr. Kevin that they were able to hire student assistants. So, the staff should be in place and so they just need to get back to Mr. Basheer to confirm that they have the staff to formalize the free use for faculty and staff.
- Dr. Kevin commented the following points;
 - The men's gym currently has more staff hours and it is difficult to find female students interested in covering the 36 weekly hours of women's gym, even though the men's gym has longer hours.
 - This does not include weekends, so it continues to be on their list of area to increase student services to access the gym, especially for graduate students.
 - He added that once it is finalized, they will send an email.

- Dr. Kharseh received an email from a graduate student who complained about paying gym fees but not seeing the gym open on weekends, because he comes on Saturdays only.
- Dr. Kevin said he was actively seeking resources to hire student staff on weekends and suggested that students with Saturday classes and living at RAK could use the gym during the week.
- All members noted the above discussion.

AGENDA ITEM AY23-24.2.11: Other Business

- The Faculty Senate Chair thanked the committee for being here and informed them that the next meeting will be in the next semester.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION DETAILS	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
AY23-24.3.4	Check the possibility of adding if the student has a blockage in the faculty portal.	Mr. Sharul	February 2024
AY23-24.3.6 And AY23-24.3.7	Invite Mr. Basheer to attend the next faculty senate scheduled on Jan 26, 2024 to respond to these Mini-bus issues and requests	Mr. Basheer	Ongoing
AY23-24.3.8	Facilities department will send an email notification to remind faculty and staff about the portal link for reporting any AC/ventilation issues	Facilities Department	Jan 2024

Date of Next Meeting:

Time: **9 am – 10:30 am**

Place: **Virtual on Teams**

Chair's Signature: *Fayez Moutassem*

Rapporteur's Signature:



Distribution List:

- President
- Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs and Student Success
- Vice President, Operational Excellence and Financial Management
- Committee Members