

SDG05

GENDER EQUALITY

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS



GENDER EQUALITY

KEY HIGHLIGHTS SDG5

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

BALAMAND CAMPUS FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN CFSP

GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH, LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

EMPOWERING WOMEN: STUDENT AND UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ATHLETICS

WOMEN'S ACCESS SCHEME

WOMEN'S ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

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ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN STEM

GENDER REPRESENTATION DASHBOARD

RELATED POLICIES

KEY HIGHLIGHTS SDG5

- 9 SDG 5-related research publications
- 134 female varsity athletes in 2025-26 (106% increase since 2023-24)
- 51% female STEM graduates by 2026
- 58.6% of female students received financial aid in 2025-26
- 1 Dedicated Lactation Room established
- Campus Family Support Plan launched
- Gender Action Plan assessed and upgraded
- 1 female academic appointed to CNRS-L
- Multi-university Gender Equality Roundtable hosted

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Over the last two years, researchers have contributed significantly to advancing gender equality through research addressing women's entrepreneurship, workplace resilience, reproductive health, sexual and reproductive rights, women's participation in STEM, digital empowerment, and equitable healthcare access. Studies explored adolescent engagement in sexual and reproductive health research in the Arab Middle East (1), barriers to infertility treatment and strategies to improve access across the MENA region (2), and the role of telemedicine in expanding reproductive healthcare services (4). Additional research examined factors affecting sexual and reproductive health outcomes among young adults (3), highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive and inclusive healthcare approaches.

9

SDG05 related research Publications

In the area of women's economic empowerment, research investigated how women entrepreneurs build resilience in challenging socioeconomic contexts (8), as well as the use of social media marketing and artificial intelligence to enhance the social performance of women-led microenterprises (7). Studies on sustainable and small businesses in fragile economies further contributed to understanding inclusive entrepreneurial development and value creation (6). Research on digital consumer engagement and brand awareness also provided insights relevant to women-owned enterprises operating in increasingly digital markets (5).

Furthermore, researchers examined the role of women engineers in advancing sustainable development and addressing global sustainability challenges (9), emphasizing the importance of women's leadership and representation in STEM fields. Collectively, these publications contribute to reducing gender disparities, strengthening women's economic participation, improving access to reproductive and healthcare services, promoting women's leadership in science and engineering, and supporting inclusive and sustainable development goals (1-9).

The Times Higher Education Awards Arab World 2025

One research project shortlisted related to Gender

SDG5 Publications

[1]. Abbas, N., Aly, M., Silverman, H. (2026). Engaging adolescents in sexual and reproductive health research in the Arab Middle East: a qualitative study of researchers' perspectives. Culture, Health and Sexuality.

[2]. Ata, B., Al-Rumaih, H., Matar, H., ...Sherif, S.S., Nakad, T.I. (2026). Bridging the Gap: barriers to infertility treatment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and expert recommendations for enhanced access. Middle East Fertility Society Journal.

[3]. Fekih-Romdhane Md PhD, F., Maalej, E., Cheour, M., Harb, F., Hallit, S. (2026). The Relationship Between Psychotic Experiences and Sexual Risky Behaviors: Moderating Effects of Childhood Trauma and Depression in Population-Based Young Adults from Tunisia. Healthcare (Switzerland).

[4]. Hamdan, Z., Bou Deleh, R., Al Khoury, J., ...Ghadieh, H.E., Zoghbi, M. (2025). Telemedicine in Obstetrics: Building Bridges in Reproductive Healthcare—A Literature Review. Reproductive Medicine.

[5]. Jbara, H., El Nemar, S., Bakhit, W., Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A. (2026). Impacting Brand Awareness and Emotions in Retail Consumer Decision-Making Within a Digital Context. Analytics.

[6]. Khabbaz, L., Kuran, O., Youness, H. (2026). The adaptive enactment of value propositions in fragile economies: Evidence from sustainable MSMEs. Sustainable Technology and Entrepreneurship.

[7]. Kuran, O., Khabbaz, L. (2025). Leveraging social media marketing and AI to enhance social performance in women-led microenterprises. Journal of Marketing Communications.

[8]. Kuran, O., Khabbaz, L. (2025). Women entrepreneurs in challenging contexts: the role of purpose and coping strategies in building resilience. Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies.

[9]. Nakad, M., Charif, H., Gardelle, L., Abboud, R.J. (2025). Empowering sustainability: Can women engineers play a key role in achieving a sustainable future?. Sustainable Futures.

BALAMAND CAMPUS FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN CFSP

In 2025, the University of Balamand (UOB) launched its Campus Family Support Plan (CFSP) as part of the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) and British Embassy initiative to advance gender equality and foster a more inclusive, supportive, and family-friendly university environment. The Plan focuses on strengthening gender-responsive policies, institutional governance, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of gender considerations across university operations.

To support implementation, UOB established a cross-campus CFSP Committee and appointed Gender Focal Points representing academic and administrative units.

The Campus Family Support Plan (CFSP) Committee held its first meeting on May 16, 2025, bringing together representatives from academic, administrative, and student affairs units across the University's campuses. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Dima Issa, Head of the CFSP Committee, who introduced the objectives of the Campus Family Support Plan and highlighted its role in promoting a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable university environment.

Committee members discussed key concepts and shared perspectives to establish a common understanding of the initiative's goals.

Representatives from President office, Provost office, other faculties, Human Resources, Student Affairs, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office, Student Recruitment, Comptrollers, Data and Institutional Research, Career Services, Communications, and the University's campuses in Dekwaneh, Souk El Gharb, and Akkar participated in the meeting, reflecting UOB's commitment to a collaborative and institution-wide approach.



Discussions also explored the scope and identity of the initiative, emphasizing that the Campus Family Support Plan is intended to support the entire UOB community. The meeting concluded with introductions from committee members and a shared commitment to advancing the implementation of the Plan across the University.

The establishment of the CFSP Committee marks an important milestone in UOB's efforts to strengthen gender equality, well-being, and inclusive engagement in line with the University's sustainability and SDG 5 objectives. The initiative marks an important step in UOB's commitment to equity, diversity, and

inclusion, reinforcing the University's efforts to create a supportive and family-friendly environment for students, faculty, and staff. Through the active engagement of its community, UOB continues to advance gender-responsive practices and strengthen its contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality.

Through regular consultations, planning meetings, training activities, and awareness initiatives, the University strengthened institutional engagement and promoted a shared commitment to gender equality and inclusive workplace environment.

As part of this ongoing commitment, UOB successfully established a dedicated **Lactation Room** at its Main Campus in Koura, providing nursing mothers among students, faculty, and staff with a private and supportive space. The University is also exploring opportunities to expand similar facilities to its other campuses as part of its long-term commitment to creating a family-friendly learning and working environment.

In October 2025, UOB completed a comprehensive evaluation of its **Gender Action Plan (GAP)**, which highlighted significant progress in mainstreaming gender equality within institutional strategy, policies, and governance structures. The assessment recognized achievements including the integration of gender equality objectives into institutional planning, the establishment of the CFSP, strengthened stakeholder engagement, and the advancement of gender-sensitive policies and leadership development initiatives

To further institutionalize these efforts, UOB launched the three-year research project, **"Institutionalizing Family Support in Universities: Challenges, Strategies, and Impact."** The project aims to assess family-supportive policies and practices, identify institutional needs and priorities, and evaluate the long-term impact of CFSP initiatives on the university community.

Through these initiatives, the University of Balamand continues to advance **SDG 5: Gender Equality (women empowerment)** by promoting equitable opportunities, supportive policies, and a more inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff.



Advancing Gender Equality in Higher Education: A Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable Initiated by UOB

On 14 November 2025, the University of Balamand (UOB) hosted a collaborative roundtable at its Dekwaneh Campus, bringing together representatives from LAU, MUBS, USJ, and the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB). The discussion focused on advancing gender equality in higher education through inclusive policies, capacity building, gender-responsive budgeting, and institutional collaboration.



The event provided a platform for sharing best practices and exploring opportunities for research and partnership, reinforcing a collective commitment to creating more equitable and inclusive academic environments.



READ MORE ABOUT THE EVENT

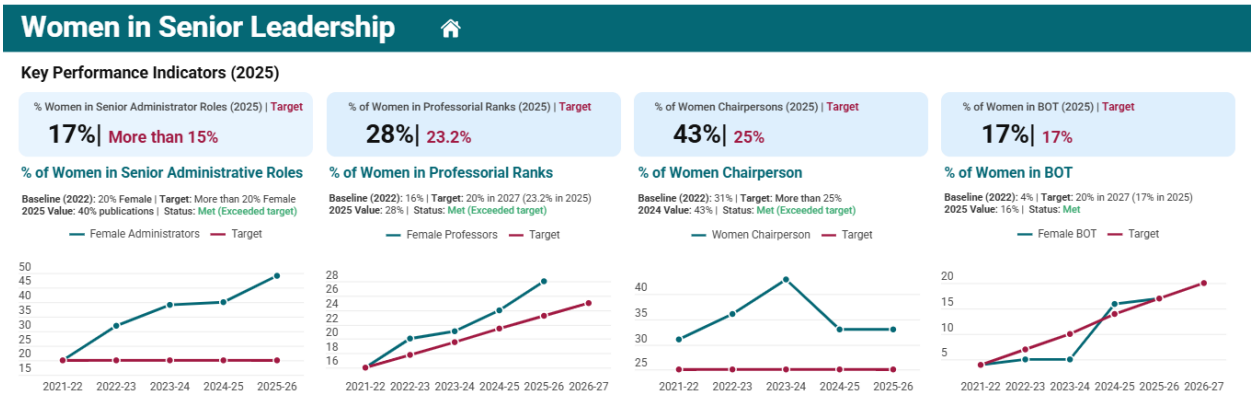
Assessing and Evaluating the Gender Action Plan

In October 2025, the University of Balamand (UOB) completed a comprehensive evaluation of its Gender Action Plan (GAP), developed in collaboration with the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) as part of the national *Women on Board* initiative. The evaluation highlighted significant progress in embedding gender equality across the institution, including the integration of gender objectives into the University's Strategic Plan, the establishment of a Campus Family Support Plan and Gender Focal Points Network, and the development of gender-sensitive policies and communication frameworks. It also recognized active student and faculty engagement through advocacy initiatives, research on women's empowerment, and leadership development programs that enhanced women's confidence and participation in decision-making roles. UOB achieved a Medium-High rating in the Local Gender

Mainstreaming Assessment and the highest Advanced Commitment score under the UN Women Gender Equality Marker, reflecting strong institutional commitment while identifying opportunities for further development. The report recommends future initiatives such as a Gender Research and Policy Institute, gender-responsive budgeting, women's leadership incubators, and expanded community engagement, reinforcing UOB's position as a regional leader in promoting inclusive and gender-responsive higher education.

Institutionalizing Campus Family Support Plan at UOB

As part of its Campus Family Support Plan (CFSP) and commitment to SDG 5: Gender Equality, the University of Balamand launched the three-year research project, Institutionalizing Family Support in Universities: Challenges, Strategies, and Impact. The initiative seeks to strengthen family-supportive policies, promote inclusion and well-being, and enhance gender-responsive governance. An IRB-approved multilingual needs assessment survey revealed strong demand for expanded family-support services, leadership development opportunities, and clearer communication of existing policies. While respondents generally viewed UOB as an inclusive workplace, the findings also highlighted opportunities to improve awareness of gender and family-support initiatives, strengthen reporting mechanisms, and support equitable career advancement. The results also informed the development of a proposed *Women's Leadership Impact Dashboard* to monitor Gender Action Plan (GAP) and CFSP indicators. Through evidence-based planning and continuous assessment, UOB continues to foster a more inclusive, family-friendly, and gender-responsive university environment.



Sample Screenshots from the Dashboard.

Women's Empowerment Through Awareness and Cultural Engagement

The **University of Balamand** hosted the theatrical performance *“Wadad: An Ant That Digs in Stone”* to highlight women’s leadership, human rights, and social justice. The play portrayed the journey of **Wadad Halawani**, who transformed personal loss into advocacy for the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Lebanon. Through this cultural event, organized under the **CFSP**, the University raised awareness of women’s contributions to social change, celebrated female leadership, and promoted dialogue on gender equality, justice, and empowerment.



GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH, LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

UOB Hosts Research Study on Gender Division of Domestic Work

The Sociology Program organized a research event examining the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work in Lebanon and its implications for gender equality, family dynamics, and social development. The initiative promoted dialogue and awareness around SDG 5 while engaging students in discussions on gender roles and social change.











Dr. Dima Issa Appointed to the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L)

For more details: Visit the University of Balamand | News Details

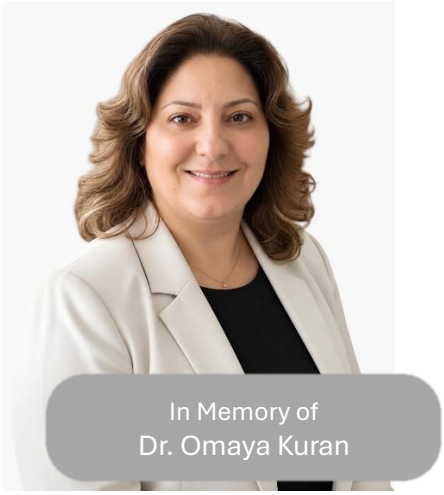


Dr. Dima Issa's appointment to the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research reflects the University's contribution to advancing women's representation in national research leadership and policymaking. In addition to her research on gender, identity, and media, Dr. Issa leads the implementation of UOB's Campus Family Support Plan, including initiatives supporting working mothers and promoting a more inclusive campus environment.



University of Balamand Research Shortlisted for Times Higher Education Award

Research co-authored by Dr. Omaya Kuran examining rural women's entrepreneurship in Lebanon was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Awards Arab World 2025. The study highlighted barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and proposed practical interventions to promote gender equality, economic inclusion, and sustainable development in underserved communities.



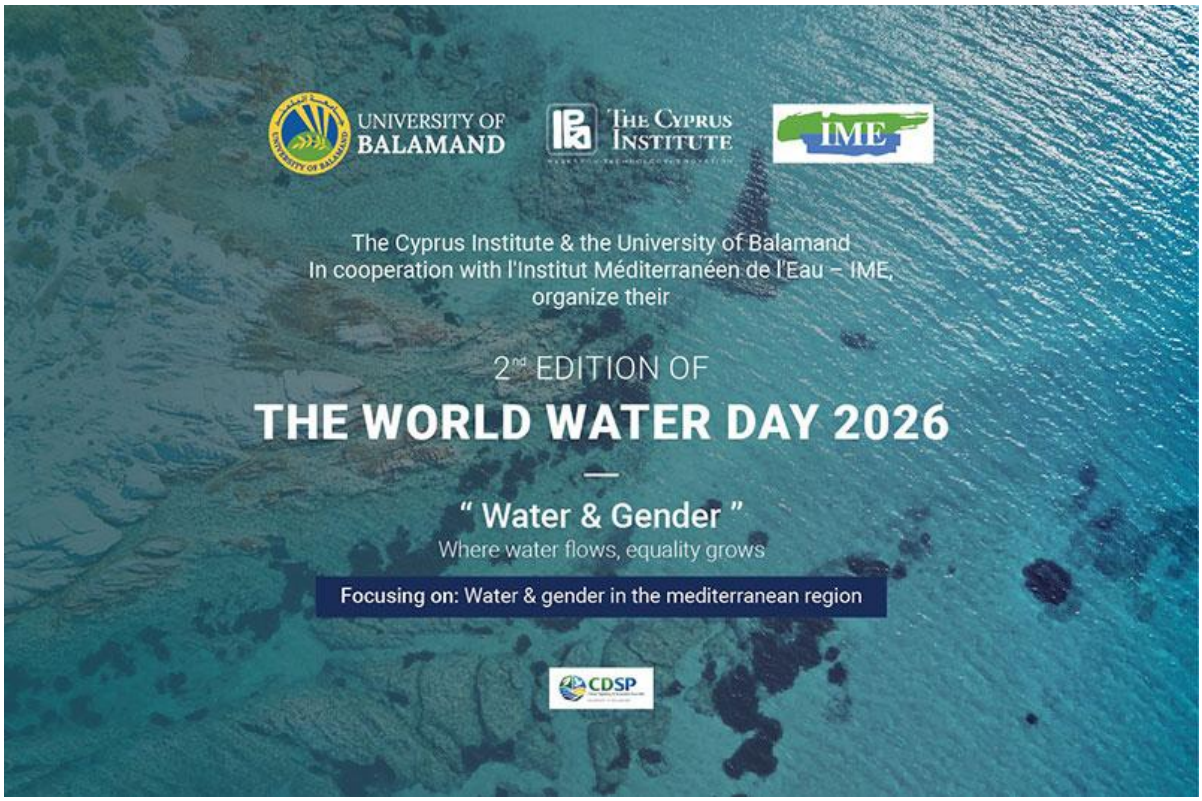
UOB gratefully acknowledges the contributions of *Dr. Omaya Kuran* to research and women's empowerment. Her work and impact remain an enduring part of the University's commitment to advancing gender equality and sustainable development.

UOB Marks World Water Day 2026 with Focus on Gender and Water Governance

The University organized an international webinar titled "Where Water Flows, Equality Grows" to explore the intersection of gender equality and water governance. The event emphasized women's leadership, gender-responsive policies, and inclusive decision-making in addressing water, climate, and sustainability challenges across the Mediterranean region.







EMPOWERING WOMEN: STUDENT AND UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

UOB Students Attend “Women with Goals” Roundtable Event:

Students participated in the "Women with Goals" initiative, receiving mentorship, career coaching, leadership guidance, and networking opportunities with accomplished women professionals.





UOB organizes Healthy Ventures: Women Entrepreneurs Event

The Career Services Center organized a panel featuring successful women entrepreneurs, including several UOB alumni, who shared insights on leadership, innovation, resilience, and business development.



University of Balamand Students Take Part in “He for She” Roundtable

Students participated in a roundtable discussion highlighting the importance of male allies in advancing gender equality and supporting women in leadership and the workforce.



UOB Welcomes Aline Kamakian for a Talk on Restaurant Entrepreneurship and Resilience:

Students engaged with entrepreneur Aline Kamakian, who shared lessons on entrepreneurship, resilience, leadership, and women's financial independence.



UOB Student Honored at Presidential Palace for Inspiring Achievement:

Sara Saliba, a deaf student and athlete, was honored nationally for her achievements as the first Arab Taekwondo athlete to qualify for the Deaflympics. Her success highlights the University's commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and empowering women and persons with disabilities to excel academically and athletically.



UOB Students Achieve Distinction at UN Youth Voice 2025:

University students received recognition for projects addressing gender equality and social impact, demonstrating the University's commitment to youth engagement, advocacy, and civic leadership.



The Nursing Student Society Recognizes Influential Lebanese Women Leaders and Entrepreneurs:

The Nursing Student Society organized an event showcasing influential Lebanese women and women-led businesses, inspiring students through examples of leadership, entrepreneurship, and achievement.





Breaking Barriers: The IEEE Women in Engineering WIE – UOB Student Branch Recognizes Leading Women in STEM

On International Women's Day, the IEEE Women in Engineering Student Branch organized a conference highlighting pioneering women in STEM and leadership. Through keynote addresses, panel discussions, and professional development workshops, the event promoted women's participation in science, engineering, technology, and decision-making roles.







UOB Student Clubs Lead Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign

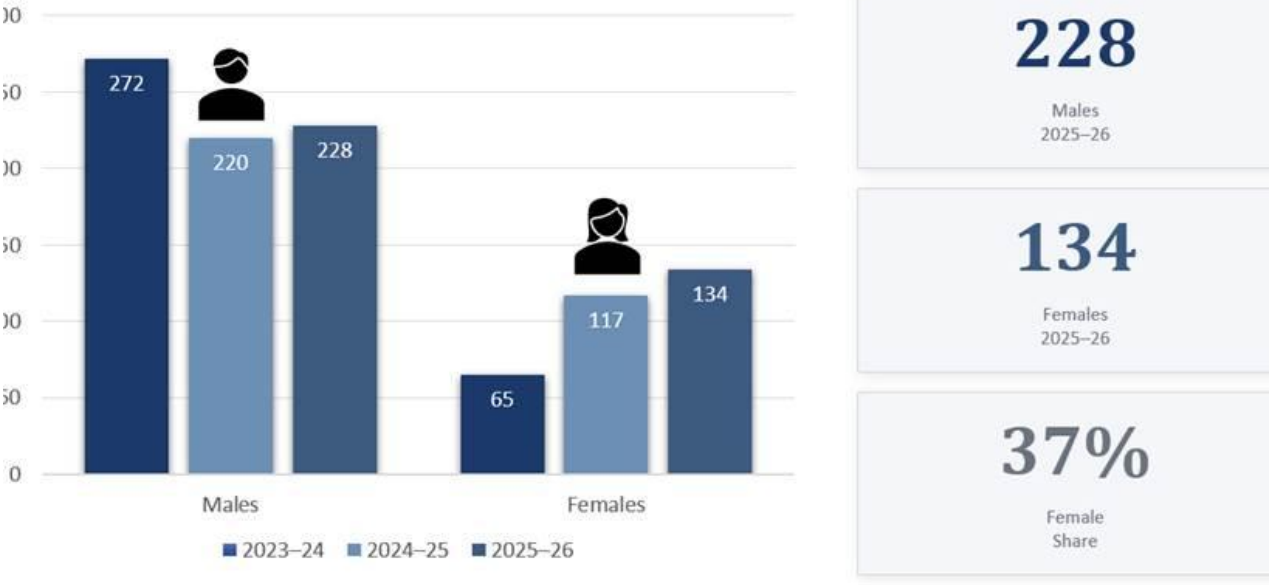
In October 2025, several University of Balamand student organizations joined efforts to raise awareness about breast cancer and promote women's health across campus. The initiative was led by the Psychology Club, Medical Laboratory Club (MLC), Music Club, IEEE Student Branch, and Premed Club, who collaborated to organize awareness activities in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



Through educational and student-led engagement activities, the campaign highlighted the importance of early detection, regular screening, and informed health choices. The initiative encouraged members of the university community to become advocates for women's health while fostering a culture of awareness, support, and solidarity.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ATHLETICS

The University of Balamand, through its Office of Athletics, Wellness, and Recreation, is committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable athletic environment where all students have equal opportunities to participate,



compete, and succeed. The University supports both women's and men's varsity teams, ensures equitable access to athletic facilities and opportunities, and promotes leadership development among student-athletes. By encouraging the active participation of women in sports and enhancing their visibility, UOB contributes to challenging traditional gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality across campus.

Athletics serves as a powerful platform for empowering students through confidence-building, leadership, teamwork, and personal growth. Female student-athletes are encouraged to engage in a wide range of sports programs and to assume leadership roles, including team captains and student representatives. These initiatives help cultivate a culture of inclusion, respect, and equal opportunity within the University community.

The impact of these efforts is evident in the significant increase in female participation in varsity athletics over recent years. The number of female athletes more than doubled, rising from 65 in 2023–2024 to 117 in 2024–2025 and reaching 134 in 2025–2026. In comparison, male athlete participation remained relatively stable, with 272 athletes in 2023–2024, 220 in 2024–2025, and 228 in 2025–2026. This sustained growth in female participation reflects the success of the University's outreach, inclusion, and support initiatives and demonstrates a strong commitment to achieving balanced gender representation in athletics.

These achievements directly support the University's contribution to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by expanding opportunities for women in sport, fostering female leadership, and creating an environment where all students can thrive both athletically and academically.

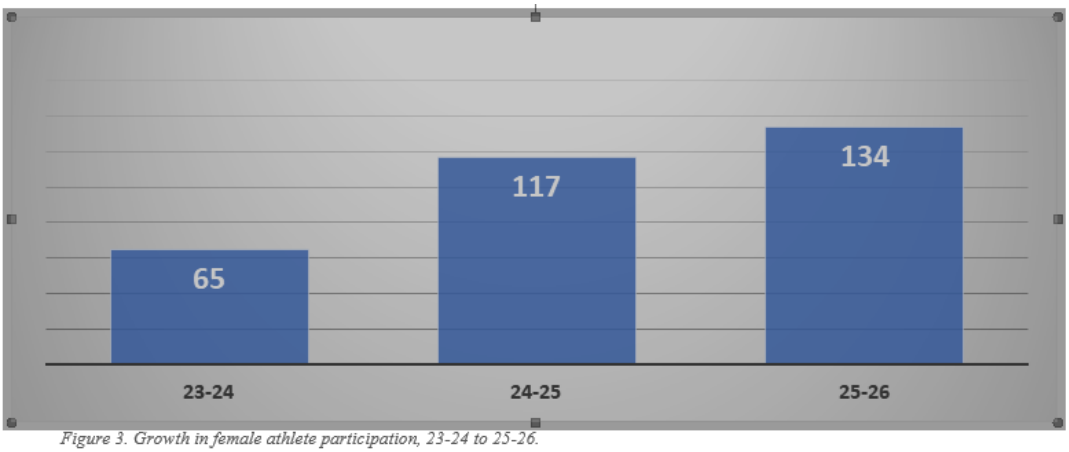


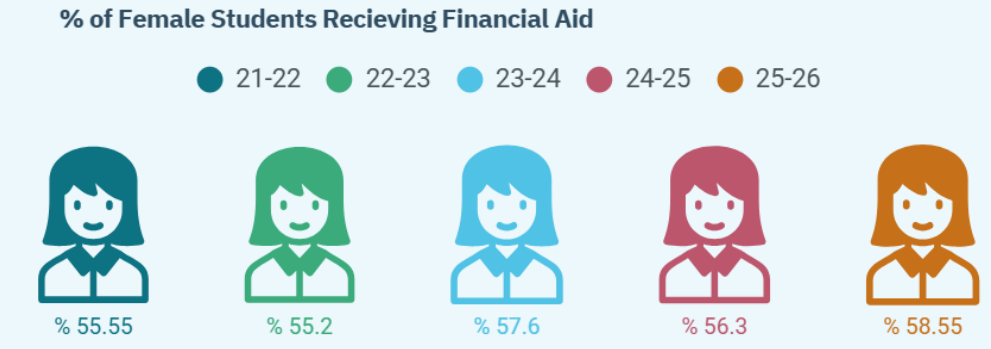
Figure 3. Growth in female athlete participation, 23-24 to 25-26.

WOMEN'S ACCESS SCHEME

The University of Balamand is committed to ensuring equitable access to higher education through policies and support mechanisms that promote equal opportunity for all students, including women. In line with its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the University provides equal access to admissions, financial assistance, academic resources, and university support services, helping to remove barriers that may affect student enrollment, retention, and success.

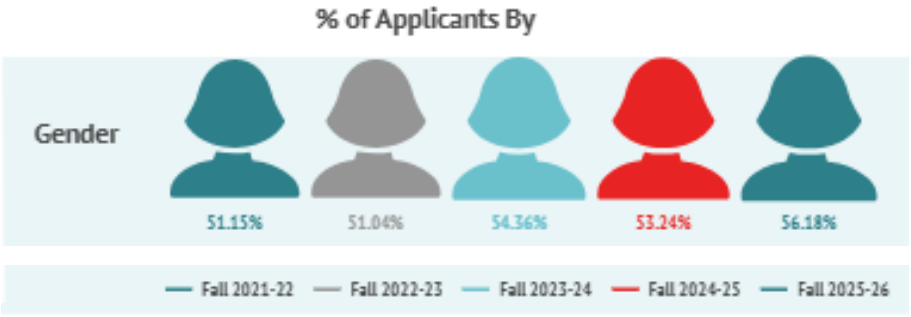
To support access and participation, the University offers a range of financial aid and scholarship opportunities to eligible students. These are complemented by academic advising, student support services, and co-curricular opportunities that foster student engagement, progression, and achievement across all academic programs. The University also maintains policies that prohibit discrimination and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the campus community.

Financial aid data demonstrates the substantial reach of these support mechanisms among women students. During the past five academic years, more than half of all female students received financial aid, with participation rates of 55.6% (2021–22), 55.2% (2022–23), 57.6% (2023–24), 56.3% (2024–25), and 58.6% (2025–26). The increasing trend, culminating in the highest rate recorded in 2025–26, reflects the University's sustained commitment to reducing financial barriers and ensuring that women have equitable opportunities to access, continue, and successfully complete their higher education.



WOMEN'S ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

The University of Balamand systematically monitors student access and participation through gender-disaggregated admissions and progression data. **Female applicants** represented 51.15% of applicants in Fall 2021-22, 51.04% in Fall 2022-23, 54.36% in Fall 2023-24, 53.24% in Fall 2024-25, and 56.18% in Fall 2025-26, demonstrating continuous monitoring of women's access to higher education.



ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN STEM

The proportion of female graduates within STEM disciplines increased steadily from 46% in 2024 to 51% in 2026, reflecting significant progress toward gender parity in STEM fields. Throughout the same period, women consistently represented more than half of all graduates, with the overall percentage of female graduates. While female participation in STEM remained slightly below their representation in the overall graduate population, the gap narrowed considerably, demonstrating the University's continued efforts to strengthen women's engagement and success in STEM education. This supports SDG5 and 4.

YEAR	FEMALE STEM GRADUATES (%)	FEMALE GRADUATES (%)
2024	46%	56%
2025	46%	55%
2026	51%	58%

GENDER REPRESENTATION DASHBOARD

The University of Balamand monitors gender participation and advancement across admissions, academic achievement, athletics, financial support, and STEM education. The indicators below demonstrate continued progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment across the institution.

Indicator	2023	2024	2025	2026
Female Applicants	51.15%	51.04%	54.36%	56.18%
Female Graduates	48.99%	52.20%	52.60%	53.07%
Female STEM Graduates	43%	46%	47%	50%
Female Athletes	65	117	134	134
Female Students Receiving Financial Aid	55.6%	55.2%	57.6%	58.6%*

Female representation increased across key institutional indicators, including admissions, graduation, STEM participation, financial aid, and athletics. Most notably, female representation among STEM graduates increased from 43% in 2023 to 50% in 2026, demonstrating substantial progress toward gender parity in traditionally underrepresented fields.

RELATED POLICIES

The University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy promotes equitable access, non-discrimination, equal opportunities, access to academic and financial support services, and fairness in admissions processes. The policy was approved in 2023 and applies to all students, faculty, and staff.

The University maintains a Sexual Harassment Policy that prohibits sexual harassment and gender-based misconduct and provides confidential mechanisms for reporting, investigation, and resolution. Applicable to all students, faculty, and staff, the policy promotes a safe and equitable learning and working environment and supports the University's commitment to gender equality and the prevention of violence and harassment.

PATERNITY AND MATERNITY LEAVE

The University of Balamand maintains a maternity leave policy that supports women's participation and retention in the workforce. The policy provides maternity leave entitlements for eligible employees and is included in the publicly available University of Balamand Bylaws. It also highlights the paternity leave for faculty members. The bylaws were reviewed and republished in 2024.

	MATERNITY LEAVE (MOTHER)	PATERNITY LEAVE (FATHER)	PAY STATUS	REFERENCE
NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS (STAFF)	**70 consecutive days maternity leave** with pay, covering the period before and after delivery. The employee may not return to work before 30 days following childbirth.	**3 consecutive days paid leave**	Full pay.	Section X: Special Leave and Maternity Leave; Annual Leave Schedule.

CONCLUSION

The University of Balamand remains committed to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality through research, policy development, institutional reform, student engagement, and inclusive support systems. During 2025-2026, the University strengthened its commitment by expanding gender-focused research, implementing the Campus Family Support Plan, supporting women's leadership and entrepreneurship, enhancing family-friendly facilities, and promoting equitable participation in academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities. Through sustained efforts to remove barriers, foster inclusion, and create opportunities for women and girls to thrive, UOB continues to build a supportive and gender-responsive university environment. By integrating gender equality into its governance, teaching, research, community engagement, and student experience, the University contributes to the empowerment of women and girls and reinforces its role as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable development in Lebanon and beyond.