OU ARABIC FLAGSHIP PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK

2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR

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LETTER TO THE STUDENT

Marhaba! On behalf of the entire University of Oklahoma Arabic Flagship Program staff, we would like to welcome you back to another year of study and community.

We begin the 2017-2018 academic year looking forward to continuing the excellence of the program and our Flagship scholars. This summer, three of our students returned from the capstone year having received excellent scores on their proficiency exams. This fall, we are proud to welcome back several of your classmates who completed summer programs at the University of Texas, the University of Arizona, and in Meknes, Morocco. We are excited to build on this record of success and continue supporting you to high levels of proficiency in Arabic language and culture.

As a Flagship student, you are part of an innovative language education program. The Language Flagship leads the nation in designing, supporting, and implementing a new paradigm for advanced language education, featuring rigorous language and cultural immersion both domestically and at our overseas Flagship center. The goal of the Flagship Program is to create highly-educated global professionals who can use their superior language abilities to pursue their career goals. The Language Flagship sponsors 27 programs at 22 institutions worldwide, where hundreds of students study nine critical languages. As a host institution for the Arabic Flagship Program, the University of Oklahoma is joined by the University of Texas, the University of Maryland, the University of Arizona, and Indiana University.

Our priority at the OU Arabic Flagship Program is the success and welfare of our students. Please do not hesitate to contact the program assistant, program coordinator, or director with any questions or concerns. *Bit-tawfiq!*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

GETTING ADMITTED

In order to join the Flagship program, applicants must be full-time OU students and have completed at least one semester of Arabic. Students must commit to complete the entire program, including the capstone year abroad, and must demonstrate that learning Arabic is a personal or professional goal.

New Flagship students must agree to the terms and conditions involved in being a participant in the Flagship program, consent to the tracking and use of their personal data throughout and after their participation in the program, and demonstrate progress toward professional-level proficiency based on Flagship standards. When you join the program, it is also understood that you are committed to completing **all required components** of the program (including required courses and the capstone year abroad).

Upon admission, students will receive an invitation to register in the Language Flagship's Student Certification System (SCS). Registration is mandatory, and you will not be eligible to receive Flagship funding until you have completed your profile on SCS.

STAYING IN GOOD STANDING

Once per semester, the director and program coordinator will meet with each student individually to discuss their progress. This includes course requirements, summer plans, funding status, and will also be an opportunity to answer any student questions.

Students' academic progress is monitored each semester. Flagship students must maintain a 3.25 overall GPA or higher, and earn an A or a B in every Arabic course. Students who fall below the 3.25 GPA threshold will be placed on probation and must improve their academic performance the following semester in order to continue with the program. Consistent failure to meet program standards, including participation in extracurricular activities, will have consequences, including permanent withdrawal of funding or dismissal from the program.

MAKING A PLAN

It is never too early to start planning your Flagship journey, and it is strongly recommended that all program participants take advantage of Flagship's summer study opportunities. Students who do so, whether they enroll in domestic programs or study abroad, consistently experience proficiency boosts and gain confidence in using Arabic. Successfully completing a

summer program also makes your application to the capstone year program more competitive, as it demonstrates a high level of commitment to your language studies.

Summer programs are a great way to earn course credits quickly and efficiently. Intensive summer programs are currently offered at the University of Texas in Austin, the University of Maryland, and the University of Arizona. Flagship students may also apply for the summer immersion program in Meknes, Morocco.

Here are some tips for making the most of your summers:

- Research summer programs early and often, and discuss available options with program faculty and staff to find the best fit for you.
- Find outside scholarships and apply (see the section on Scholarships & Awards for more information).
- Keep Flagship staff posted on any changes in your plans. The sooner we know, the better we can support you.
- If you are applying for the Flagship summer abroad or capstone year programs, participate in the Advanced Intensive Week of Arabic (AIWA) workshop. This year, AIWA will be held during the week of **January 8-12, 2018**.

If you are an ROTC student, stay in contact with the program coordinator and your Professor of Military Science to better coordinate your Arabic study plans with any summer training obligations.

LIFE AS A FLAGSHIP STUDENT

ROUNDTABLE

Roundtable meetings are held on Friday afternoons from 3:00 – 4:20 pm in Farzaneh Hall room 146. The roundtable is a casual, non-classroom environment where faculty, staff, and students meet to explore topics related to Arabic language and culture. Students are expected to attend regularly, unless they haven a documented class conflict.

The schedule and topics for roundtable meetings are set at the beginning of the semester and is subject to change. We welcome student feedback and programming ideas at any time – let us know if there is a topic you'd like us to highlight!

Students are expected to speak Arabic as much as possible at the roundtable, making it an excellent opportunity to practice your speaking in a collaborative, interactive environment. Exceptions to the Arabic-only rule are brief and limited to opening announcements and occasional visits.

TUTORING

Tutors are available in the Language Learning Center, on the second floor of Kaufman Hall, from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Outside of regularly scheduled hours, tutors and students are welcome to arrange to meet by appointment elsewhere on campus.

We recommend that first-year Arabic students spend at least 3 hours each week working with tutors in the language lab. As a general rule, students of all levels should expect to spend 2 hours reviewing material and completing assignments for every hour spent in the classroom.

Program tutors include both advanced-level Flagship students and native speakers. Flagship students are great assets to beginning and intermediate students, having already encountered the material from these courses as a language learner. Native speakers are better equipped to help students with speaking and colloquial dialects, and are a great resource for improving conversation skills. Tutors are also assigned to follow specific Arabic courses to offer support during in-class activities.

Students should make an effort to speak Arabic as much as possible in the language lab, and bring any textbooks, notes, or handouts needed to address your questions.

Some of the many areas tutors can help with include:

- Grammar guidance
- Homework questions
- Challenging reading assignments

- Editing writing assignments
- Practicing conversation skills
- Rehearsing presentations

Please note that working with a tutor is not a substitute for attention to your class assignments. Although tutors are happy to assist with questions about homework assignments, they have been advised to never complete another student's work. Ideally, students should consult with tutors and attend professors' office hours to ensure that they have as many opportunities as possible to improve their language abilities.

LANGUAGE PARTNERS

Each Arabic Flagship student will be paired with a native speaker who will work with them as a language partner. This program is designed to help students practice their conversation and support them for success in speaking Arabic, including in preparation for the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).

Many students and alumni have commented that their language partners were one of the best resources for building and activating their vocabulary. Language partners are given guidelines on the best methods for developing students' speaking skills. Students must meet with their language partner for an hour each week, although they are encouraged to spend more time working with them if possible.

The program coordinator oversees the language partner program, so please direct any questions or concerns to her.

CLUBS & EXTRACIRRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The Arabic Flagship Program offers a number of extracurricular activities to its students. In addition to attending roundtable and meeting weekly with their language partner, all students are required to participate in at least one club.

Clubs offered during the 2017-2018 school year will include:

- Music Club, Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 pm
- Darija (Moroccan dialect) Club, Fridays 1:00-2:00 pm
- Belly Dance Club, Tuesdays 7:00-8:30 pm
- Poetry Club, Mondays 5:30-6:30 pm
- Egyptian Culture Club, Fridays 2:00-3:00 pm

Other activities may be scheduled throughout the year, and may include guest lectures, film screenings, and reading groups. Stay tuned for updates from program staff for more information about these opportunities.

ARABIC FLAGSHIP LIBRARY

Arabic language resources are available to be checked out from the program coordinator in her office, Farzaneh Hall room 107. These materials cover a wide range of topics, and include:

- Arabic-language films
- Dialect books and dictionaries, including Moroccan, Syrian, Egyptian, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Libyan
- Novels and poetry
- Arabic music
- Grammar and composition reference books
- Dictionaries

The Flagship Program at OU also subscribes to online tools you can use to support your learning:

- Icflix.com hosts a large online collection of Arabic-language films.
- Foreigncy.us is an online training system geared toward advanced students.

Contact the program coordinator for login information for these sites, or if you'd like the Flagship library to get a copy of a particular book or resource.

ARABIC HOUSE

Through the Arabic House, we offer a housing option for Flagship students to live with native speakers of Arabic. The residence is located in Traditions West apartments to the south of campus, and consist of either 2 or 4 occupants (always combining both native speakers and Flagship scholars). Apartments have individual bedrooms with a shared living room and kitchen.

This residence is a unique immersion opportunity for Flagship students. Arabic is expected to be the primary language used in the Arabic House, and program staff will meet regularly with residents to facilitate this aspect of the program.

Occupants for the Arabic House have already been selected for the 2017-2018 year, and the application process for the following year will begin early in the spring semester of 2018.

The program coordinator overseas the Arabic House, so please contact her with any questions or concerns.

MEASURING ARABIC PROFICIENCY

Staying on track in the Flagship program requires more than just earning good grades in your Arabic courses - it also means making progress toward your language proficiency targets. Proficiency refers to the range of abilities needed to respond and communicate authentically, particularly in non-classroom settings. Certification in the Flagship program, after completing the capstone year, confirms your proficiency level and provides evidence of your language skills to potential employers.

There is no single universally-accepted system defining language proficiency or fluency. This is especially challenging with Arabic, due to its numerous dialects. The Flagship program addresses this by using ILR and ACTFL proficiency benchmarks. All students will take a proficiency exam once per year and participate in practice OPIs to ensure regular progress

A final note: the Arabic Flagship Program has emphasized the need for students to gradually but steadily demonstrate language skills "appropriate for the task required," which means switching comfortably between MSA and colloquial Arabic depending on the context and type of task. Exclusive use of MSA is limited to specific contexts in Arab culture, and command of at least one colloquial dialect is essential, especially in everyday interactions.

INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ROUNDTABLE (ILR)

The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) is an association of federal agencies, from the Peace Corps to the CIA, which has been established to coordinate and share information about language-related activities.

ILR skill levels are the most commonly used proficiency guidelines for those seeking careers with the federal government, although they are also frequently used by government contractors and non-governmental organizations. Visit their website at www.govtilr.org to explore self-assessment tools and estimate your proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and intercultural communication. The ILR scale ranges from o (no proficiency) to 5 (educated native proficiency). Flagship students should plan to reach level 3 (general professional proficiency) in order to be certified.

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES (ACTFL)

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) develops proficiency benchmarks for language students. For more information about these skill levels, visit their website at www.actfl.org. In order to be certified, Flagship students should reach Superior proficiency according to the ACTFL scale.

ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEWS (OPI)

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), administered by American Councils, is the primary test for speaking skills. Please refer to the Speaking section of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for more information about how the interview is scored. All students will participate in a practice OPI at least once per year to track their progress, and become comfortable with the format of the interview.

OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

While Flagship students study in the classroom during the fall and spring semesters, your learning doesn't have to stop when classes aren't in session. Make the most of your time off campus by planning to take advantage of Flagship-approved programs. These intensive study opportunities are a great way to boost your language abilities and even get ahead in your coursework. Scholarships may be available to qualified students in good standing.

DOMESTIC SUMMER PROGRAMS

Intensive summer Arabic programs are offered at our three of our fellow Flagship institutions:

- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Maryland

Although they do not offer the cultural experience one would gain studying in the Arab world, summer institutes can dramatically boost students' skills and confidence in the language. Student feedback, especially related to the Arabic Summer Institute at UT Austin, has been overwhelmingly positive.

These programs are highly structured and rigorous, and all offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction, allowing students to participate at almost any point in the program. Benefits of intensive summer programs include:

- Transfer up to a year of academic credit upon completion (note that you must earn an A or a B in all Arabic classes for your credit to be approved)
- Structured lessons focused on improving listening and speaking skills, including developing proficiency in colloquial Arabic dialects
- Film discussions, guest speakers, and cultural events

Flagship scholarships are available to offset the costs of these programs, although students are responsible for their own travel and housing.

OVERSEAS SUMMER PROGRAM

Applications for the Flagship overseas program are very competitive and admission is never guaranteed. One of our goals as program staff is to help you lay the groundwork for a competitive application. It is also important that students take time to review the skills associated with their recommended proficiency level. After all application materials have been received and candidates have taken the pre-program exam, the Arabic Council (a panel

of faculty and staff from all the Arabic Flagship programs) convene to review all applicants and decide which will be approved.

Admissions decisions are sent out in early to mid-March. At this point, American Councils will reach out to provide comprehensive acceptance package to admitted students, conducting pre-departure orientation sessions, and managing the overseas program. American Councils is responsible for employing professors, interns, and the onsite resident director who works to ensure that students have a safe and productive experience overseas.

Students who are completing their sixth semester of Arabic (i.e., 3000-level courses) and who have achieved a 1+ proficiency level are eligible to apply for the summer abroad in Meknes. The summer abroad is not a mandatory part of the Arabic Flagship Program, but students are highly encouraged to apply – besides the considerable benefits to your language abilities, gaining firsthand experience in Morocco serves as excellent preparation for the capstone year.

In order to apply for the summer program at AALIM, students should plan to participate in AIWA the week before classes start in January.

CAPSTONE YEAR

The capstone year abroad in Meknes, Morocco is the defining experience of the Arabic Flagship Program, and has been designed to support student progress from a level 2 to a level 3 or higher on the ILR scale. In addition to making these gains in language ability, students are expected to engage independently and actively with the host culture.

Flagship students in good standing who are in the process of completing their 4000-level Arabic courses may be considered as candidates for the capstone year. The most competitive applications are typically submitted by students who participated successfully in Flagship summer programs or other off-campus language study experiences. In addition to strong scores on the pre-program exam and an excellent academic record, students' applications should demonstrate a high level of maturity, open-mindedness, and preparation for the challenges involved in a year of immersive study in a foreign culture.

The academic components of the program are as follows:

- Classes in Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan dialect, and Egyptian dialect
- Direct enrollment in a course at Moulay Ismail University
- Translation workshops
- One-on-one sessions with language partners
- Guest speakers
- Cultural excursions to sites of historical and cultural significance throughout Morocco

Capstone students also take part in an internship each semester, where they will use Arabic in a professional capacity. Students are encouraged to research local organizations in Meknes

and identify potential opportunities that align with their interests. The resident director is available to help students facilitate their internships, but this assistance is not a replacement for prior planning and initiative. Some past internship sites have included:

- Aml Association for Social Development
- Library of the Great Mosque
- Al-Oush Orphanage
- Misa Press

The capstone year program is administered by American Councils, whose staff facilitates student academic and extracurricular experiences. They will help students make housing arrangements, which depending on student choice may include apartments or host families. Students' safety and security are of the highest importance, and numerous pre-program orientations will be organized to ensure student preparation on topics such as cultural adjustment, relationships and dating, LGBTQ issues, and sexual harassment.

For administrative reasons, all participants must maintain undergraduate student status throughout the duration of the capstone year. Students should notify their academic advisors ahead of time in order to delay their graduation until they return. If you are considering returning to OU to complete degree requirements after the capstone year, discuss this with your advisor as well.

After successful completion of the capstone year and post-program proficiency testing, students are eligible to obtain Flagship certification. This serves as a formal recognition of Flagship program completion, and is highly regarded by federal agencies, private sector employers, and academia.

Unfortunately, every year some applicants from Flagship universities are not admitted to the capstone year. It is recommended that students independently investigate and pursue additional options for their language study or professional development goals.

OTHER OVERSEAS OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the Flagship overseas center in Morocco, there are numerous programs offering study abroad in the Arab world. These provide students with a chance to study in a country of particular interest to them, and many offer full or partial scholarships. The OU Arabic Flagship Program does not necessarily endorse any of these opportunities.

Critical Language Scholarship (http://clscholarship.org/) institutes offer fully-funded intensive language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences for U.S. undergraduate, Master's, and Ph.D. students. Programs last 7-10 weeks, and Arabic courses are currently offered in Morocco, Oman, and Jordan.

The **Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center** (https://www.sqcc.org/) in Oman supports Arabic language students through its annual SALAM program, which allows students to gain a deeper knowledge of Arabic while becoming familiar with Omani history and culture. Full funding is available.

The **Al-Mashriq Center for Arabic Instruction** (http://www.almashriqcenter.com/) in Jordan includes language courses, volunteer and internship opportunities, and excursions to sites around Jordan. No funding information is available, so students interested in this program should pursue additional scholarship options.

Students can participate in summer programs at **Al Akhawayn University** (http://www.aui.ma/en/arabic.html) in Morocco. The Arabic and North African Studies Program covers a full year of Arabic language instruction and is complemented by the opportunity to sample university courses on topics ranging from Islamic civilization to North African literature and Moroccan cinema. Scholarships are available that cover 75% of the cost of attendance.

STUDY ABROAD PREPARATION

With careful prior planning, study abroad can be an endlessly rewarding part of your university experience. This section will present an overview of the study abroad experience to ensure that you have a safe, productive, and fun experience overseas.

GENERAL TIPS

- Attend all scheduled orientation sessions, and ask questions if you have them.
- Students who have previously participated in your program are a great resource. Reach out to them with any questions or concerns.
- Research your host institution and the town you'll live in. Be sure to consider a variety of sources, as not all information is up to date or accurate.
- Keep a journal or a blog, and take pictures. Details of your trip will fade from your memory faster than you think, so make sure you're documenting your experiences!

ACADEMICS

- Discuss the possible challenges of long-term intensive language study with your professors.
- Sketch out a daily routine that includes time to study and plenty of breaks. Stay flexible, and be prepared to adjust your schedule during the first few days of the program.
- Ask about credit transfers before you leave. (Note: credit for students studying in Flagship programs at AALIM transfers automatically once we receive your transcripts.)
- Ask yourself what you want to get out of the program. Know your proficiency levels before you leave, and set benchmarks for your progress.
- Bring up any difficulties with your professors as soon as you notice them.
- Coordinate and share ideas with your classmates.

LOGISTICS

- Establish emergency contact procedures with your family.
- Keep copies of your important documents (passport, ID, important contact numbers). Both electronic and hard copies are recommended.
- Make a budget and stick to it.
- Get an internet plan for your phone or a local mobile to stay connected while abroad.

SAFETY

- Use common sense when navigating your new environment. If something feels unsafe, avoid it or ask for help.
- Get to know your surroundings. Over time you'll learn the safest routes to take and the best places to study and meet friends.
- Recognize the parts of town that locals and/or tourists usually avoid.
- Avoid very crowded or very empty places.
- Suspicious behavior or *any* situation that makes you uncomfortable should be reported to your resident director as soon as possible, even if you think it's nothing.
- Walk with a friend whenever possible, especially after dark.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

- Realize that many of the cultural norms you take for granted cannot be assumed overseas. Studying abroad is a great opportunity to reflect on your own preconceptions and norms, and realize that your experiences and views are not the only ones.
- Spend plenty of time with the local people. Speaking with them is not only good practice for your conversation skills, but it helps you get to know the community.
- Culture shock can manifest in different ways for different people, and there is no set schedule for adjusting to a new place. If you feel that you are having trouble getting settled, consult your resident director.
- Try to model respect for local norms, even if they're different from what you're used to.
- If you find yourself in a difficult or uncomfortable (but not dangerous) situation, ask yourself: Why did this person react this way? What can I learn from this experience? How should I respond the next time something like this happens?

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Flagship funding is available to students in good standing who participate in approved off-campus programs. Program scholarships are merit-based and can only be applied to Flagship-approved intensive language programs or study abroad at the AALIM Center in Meknes. Note that scholarships are intended to offset part, not all, of the cost of attendance for these programs. Students who have not completed their profiles in the Student Certification System (SCS) will not be able to receive Flagship funding.

However, Flagship funding is never guaranteed, and students are enthusiastically encouraged to investigate and apply for outside funding sources and scholarships. Completing the FAFSA is a good first step, as some outside scholarships are need-based. Deadlines vary from year to year, so be sure to start planning early to leave yourself plenty of time to complete your applications.

The OU Arabic Flagship Program does not necessarily endorse any of these opportunities.

FUNDING ON-CAMPUS STUDY

The **Sooner Heritage Scholarship** distributes over 2,700 awards annually, which usually range from \$700 to \$1,200. See www.ou.edu/scholarships for more information.

The **Department of Modern Languages**, **Literatures**, **and Linguistics** offers a variety of departmental scholarships. Students may apply for these by visiting the Centralized Academic Scholarship Hub (CASH) site at www.ou.edu/scholarships. The university scholarship cycle begins in October, and applications are due by the end of January.

The Qatar Foundation International sponsors **Arabic Study Awards**, which offer up to \$5,000 to rising university juniors and seniors based on unmet financial need. Applicants must have filled out the FAFSA, and declared a major in either Arabic or Middle Eastern Studies. The application opens in the spring. See their website at http://www.qfi.org/programs/youth-engagement/academic-excellence/arabic-study-awards/ for more details.

FUNDING STUDY ABROAD

The **Institute of International Education** (http://studyabroadfunding.org) maintains a comprehensive database of study abroad funding sources. Visit their site to filter offers by country and field of study.

The **Boren Award** (https://www.borenawards.org) is an excellent option for students applying for the capstone year. An initiative of the National Security Education Program

(NSEP), this program awards up to \$20,000 to students studying critical languages and cultures. The application deadline is at the end of January, although your application materials will be due to Dr. Melanie Wright (mwright@ou.edu) approximately a week in advance for review and submission.

The **Gilman Scholarship** (https://www.gilmanscholarship.org), administered by the Institute of International Education, aims to enable students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad. Amounts vary depending on proposed time spent abroad and student need, but Arabic Flagship students will automatically be considered for the Critical Need Language Award, for a total award amount of up to \$8,000. Deadlines vary depending on the proposed term for the study abroad program.

The **Presidential International Travel Fellowship** (https://oklahoma.studioabroad.com) is a scholarship offered by the OU Education Abroad office. The deadline for students participating in summer programs is in February.

Musafir Travel Awards (http://www.qfi.org/grants/students/musafir-travel-awards/) are offered by the Qatar Foundation, and grant up to \$2,500 to current undergraduate students who have completed at least four semesters of Arabic before studying abroad. Applicants must be accepted to an Arabic language program through OU, and applications are due in April.

AWARDS & COMPETITIONS

Not only can the following opportunities enrich your resume, but they also allow you to realize the practical benefits of your language study. Flagship students have successfully applied for these opportunities in the past, and those interested are encouraged to research them further.

MANY LANGUAGES, ONE WORLD

Many Languages, One World is an essay contest and global youth forum sponsored by the United Nations Academic Impact and ELS Educational Services. Entrants must submit an essay in Arabic (2,000 words or less) discussing global citizenship and cultural understanding, and the role that multilingual ability can play in fostering these. Sixty winners will be selected as delegates to the Many Languages, One World Global Youth Forum, where they will have the opportunity to speak at the United Nations General Assembly.

The deadline for this contest is at the end of March, and students interested in participating are encouraged to begin drafting their essays early in order to seek feedback from tutors and

faculty before the submission deadline. See www.manylanguagesoneworld.org for more information.

FULBRIGHT U.S. STUDENT PROGRAM

The Fulbright program provides grants for individually-designed research projects as well as English Teaching Assistantships (ETAs). In the Middle East and North Africa, grants are currently available in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian territories, and the United Arab Emirates, although this list is subject to change.

The Fulbright program facilitates cultural exchange through direct interaction on an individual basis in the classroom, field, home, and in routine tasks, allowing the grantee to gain an appreciation of others' viewpoints and beliefs, the way they do things, and the way they think.

Fulbright grants usually last 9 months to one year, and are available to U.S. citizens who have earned a Bachelor's degree by the time their grant period starts. The online application for the following year's awards opens in April, and interested students should plan on completing their application materials before the campus deadline in September. Visit their site at www.us.fulbrightonline.org for more information, or contact Bushra Asif (bushrasif@ou.edu), the coordinator for the Fulbright application process here at OU.