

Saint-Joseph University  
**Charter**

Beirut  
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## **On the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter...**

The Charter of Saint-Joseph University (Beirut) (USJ) that we are publishing in its original French-language version, paired with Arabic and English translations, owes its existence as a literary and legal work to the team of Jesuits and laypersons who re-founded the University in 1975 under the initiative of Father Jean Ducruet S.J., rector of USJ from 1975 until 1995. The Charter, composed of three chapters, is the fruit of a deep reflection and a historical and social reading of what the University's *raison d'être* could be – its mission, its fundamental objectives, the specificity of its character and its academic, legal, administrative, and financial autonomy, as well as the existential and spiritual relationship it shares with its founder, the Society of Jesus.

This founding text defines the triple mission of USJ: “*This functional mission, or professional concern*” of the University, “*comes within a more fundamental service that constitutes the cultural mission of the University, which makes it contribute to the promotion of human beings*” (article 2). But “*the human promotion that it targets is not limited to the acquisition of a culture and the mastery of a technique; it is open to the fundamental questions that are asked in the conscience of every man about the ultimate meaning of life*” (article 3). Thus the professional formation, which is open to a cultural formation, cannot be separated from a third element, that of the experience of the call of our conscience to fully live human, spiritual, moral, and social values.

The reprinting of this text today, on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its promulgation and on the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of USJ, serves to inspire anew the people of the University in their day-to-day work and in their efforts to build a solid future for USJ, a future that is one with the Lebanese entity for which USJ has given much, and continues to give, never to cease. There is no shortage of obstacles along the way, but the lines of the Charter are not stuck in history; they can very well serve as a source of creativity and starting points for finding solutions that would pave an unhindered path for USJ to fulfill its mission in the best of conditions.

**Salim Daccache S.J.**  
**Rector**

## **Chapter One**

### **MAIN OBJECTIVES AND MISSIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

#### **Article 1 – Constitution**

Saint-Joseph University (Université Saint-Joseph – USJ), founded and administered by the Society of Jesus, is a private Lebanese university whose Head Office is in Beirut. It was established in accordance with Article 10 (on freedom of education) of the Lebanese Constitution, and with the private higher education act of 26/12/1961, governing higher education in Lebanon on the basis of pluralism.

#### **Article 2 – Professional concern and cultural mission**

By way of its rich network of higher education institutions, USJ intends to fulfill the functional and cultural mission that is representative of all universities. Through the education it provides students, USJ renders it easier for them to acquire the skills that will allow them to practice a useful activity in the society that is, ultimately, theirs. This education is adapted to the professional life that students desire, that they see as accessible, and this functional mission – or professional concern – of the University comes within a more fundamental service that constitutes its cultural mission, contributing thereby to the promotion of human beings. In that sense, USJ strives to give its students access to an authentic culture that is valued by specialization: a culture that assumes a technique, this technique being theological, philosophical, scientific, medical, legal, economic, political, or literary.

#### **Article 3 – The role of research**

Just like any other university, USJ cannot limit itself to being a mere center of diffusion of acquired knowledge. Rather, it strives to be a stimulating environment for cultural and scientific research. On one hand, this type of university research is necessary for educating students, especially those pursuing Master's and PhD degrees. It also contributes to the permanent training of professors. On the other hand, USJ would consider itself to have failed in achieving part of its mission if its members did not actively participate in creating research programs, namely those that are of special interest to Lebanon or the Near East, either in research centers affiliated to the University, or in collaboration with independent centers endowed with more resources.

#### **Article 4 – Complete human promotion, supportive of spiritual values**

USJ assumes the Christian perspective-oriented education and research role that was given to it since its foundation. The human promotion it targets is not limited to acquiring a culture and mastering a technique; rather, it is open to the fundamental questions that

every man's conscience is weighed down by: what is the ultimate meaning of life? This openness is the conventional path taken towards the acknowledgement of one God, transcendent of all human values, who gives life its full meaning and guarantees human freedom from all oppression. It is to this God that the Lebanese Constitution pays tribute.

This perspective implies religious freedom. In that sense, it imposes no obligation of legal nature on members of the University community. More specifically, it accepts no discrimination of confessional basis against or among them. It does, however, require of all those participating in university life to promote a sense of personal liberty and openness to spiritual life. Members of all religious denominations, whose very plurality is idiosyncratic to Lebanese society, are called upon to take part in this advocacy, which implies an underlying theme of mutual knowledge and respect.

Serving complete human promotion that is supportive of spiritual values entails the development and confrontation of all the disciplines to which university activity is consecrated. USJ recognizes the right of every discipline to develop and to be researched freely, and so according to its particular principles and methods. It does not, however, consider that this necessary autonomy granted to disciplines implies their mere juxtaposition within the University. On the contrary, it believes that it is the vocation of the "University" to promote interdisciplinary collaboration at the service of mankind and its unity.

### **Article 5 – Biculturalism**

"University pluralism", as is mandatory in many countries, has a specific character in Lebanon: it responds to the will of the Nation to safeguard and develop the wealth of its cultural personality. On its part, USJ, faithful to its history, intends to promote the Arabic culture and language, as well as the French language, in a manner parallel to their adoption by the Lebanese cultural identity. The University, aware of the risks that the unilateral engagement of every university to its own cultural identity could pose on the country, declares itself willing to collaborate with any association of universities in Lebanon that can promote a national cultural policy.

Including the French language alongside the official Arabic language is in conformity with Article 11 of the Lebanese Constitution; however, it does not indicate that studying or using other languages in the education and research process is not accepted at USJ.

### **Article 6 – Confessional and political independence, freedom of reception and judgment**

USJ serves all members of the community, regardless of social and ethnic distinction, which explains the importance it accords to maintaining diversity in its faculty and student body. It refuses to follow one ideology, choosing instead to make its campuses an open space for dialogue and exchanging information as long as no freedoms are

infringed on and no academic activities are disrupted. It hopes to act as leaven to the society it belongs to.

#### **Article 7 – Promotion of participation structures**

Participation is necessary not only for the sake of the environment of the University, but also for the sake of the type of society it strives to promote. The different structures of USJ are thus open to the participation of all those who constitute the university community. Professors participate in the management of the University; students participate in the development of their curricula; researchers participate in the creation of research teams and the definition of their projects; staff participates in the organization of working conditions. This participation is delimited by the competences of every person, keeping in mind that responsibilities must not be diluted. Every university body must specify these limits in its statutes.

#### **Article 8 – Concern of facilitating permanent education**

USJ offers continuous training or retraining programs to those who are already engaged in a professional activity. It organizes in this regard a schedule for part-time students in some of its teaching departments, all while participating in the establishment and functioning of post-professional training centers.

## **Chapter Two**

# **PERSONALITY AND AUTONOMY OF THE UNIVERSITY**

### **Article 9 – Public mission**

As a private establishment with a scientific and cultural nonprofit character, USJ assumes a public mission of higher education and research. Therefore, it enjoys a legal character and an administrative, scientific, and financial autonomy

### **Article 10 – Legal character**

By legal character, a center of collective interests that are organized and legally protected by the power invested in its directors to represent and defend it is intended. Article 1 of the present Charter determines the name, Head Office, and nationality of Saint-Joseph University. Its interests or missions are explicitly mentioned in the other articles of Chapter One of the Charter. The bodies of USJ assume their obligations, practice their rights, and engage themselves in civic responsibility within the limit of the power entrusted to them by their statutes.

### **Article 11 – Decentralization**

By virtue of the university decentralization principle, the legal character of USJ is not the same as those of the different institutions that compose it. Instead, it offers them the freedom to distinctly carry out their own interests, according to their respective statutes and within the limits of their independence.

### **Article 12 – Administrative autonomy**

By administrative autonomy of the University, the autonomy of constitution and management are intended. By virtue of the autonomy of constitution, the University Council has the power to amend statutes of central organization with a three-quarter-majority vote of its members, provided such amendments do not contradict the provisions of the Charter or those of Lebanese legislation. In the same breath, the councils of the institutions that compose the University have the power to draft and amend their statutes under the same conditions, with the help and approval of the University Council. These amendments are, if need be, subjected to authorization requests foreseen by Lebanese legislation.

By virtue of the autonomy of management, the various bodies of the University apply the powers given to them by the statutes without the intervention of any authorities outside the University.

### **Article 13 – Scientific autonomy**

By scientific autonomy of the University, the autonomy of selecting professors and students, the laying out of its education and research programs, and the level required for obtaining a degree are intended. When such student selection, such diploma definition or practice of corresponding professions are governed by laws or conventions, the University can ask to participate in the drafting of these laws or conventions and their amendment, in order for its stance on the matter to be taken into account.

### **Article 14 – Financial autonomy**

By financial autonomy of the University, it is intended that it is up to the University to manage its patrimony, increase its resources, and divide them among functioning, research, and equipment credits. This autonomy does not infringe on the recognized right of the public or private bodies that subsidize the University's funds to control the use of these funds, nor does it authorize the University to make profits – such profits are forbidden by Article 9 of the present Charter.

## **Chapter Three**

# **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS AND THE UNIVERSITY**

### **Article 15 – Loyalty to the Charter**

Having assumed the responsibility to found USJ, the Society of Jesus must be implicated in university life. That does not imply that it must be the only active party or that it can prohibit initiatives and developments, rather that it should foster and support them. Such initiatives and developments could not, however, constitute true progress unless they are faithful to the principles explicitly mentioned in the present Charter: principles of intellectual honesty and moral rigor in education and research, of respect of freedoms, of the promotion of social justice, and of openness to spiritual transcendence. The Society of Jesus vows to maintain the respect of these principles.

### **Article 16 – Education and administration**

This assumed responsibility justifies that the statutes of USJ reserve the Rectorship to a member of the Society of Jesus. It is also considered normal that members of the Society, if they fulfill the common candidacy conditions, teach at USJ or participate in its administration.

### **Article 17 – Spiritual and social activity**

It is important for USJ to be able to offer both its professors and students an environment that fosters their fulfillment, allowing them to feed their faith and responding to the problems raised by each discipline on the moral and spiritual levels. It is also important that the University be able to facilitate the social training of its members as well as their collaboration to the efforts that aim at concretely improving the living conditions of disadvantaged areas and modifying economic structures by setting them within a larger context of justice. The Society of Jesus shall ensure the implementation of such spiritual and social activity.