



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

September 2016

ABTS Online: Equipping Arab Church Leaders Worldwide

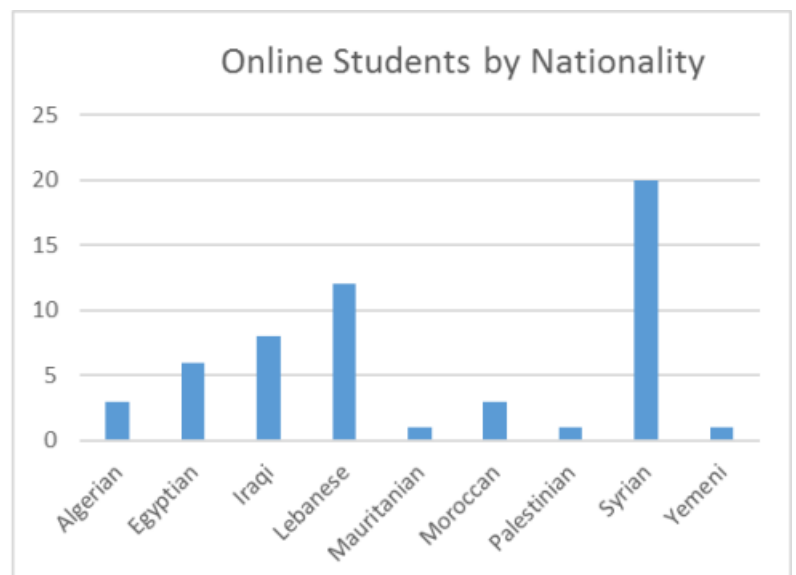
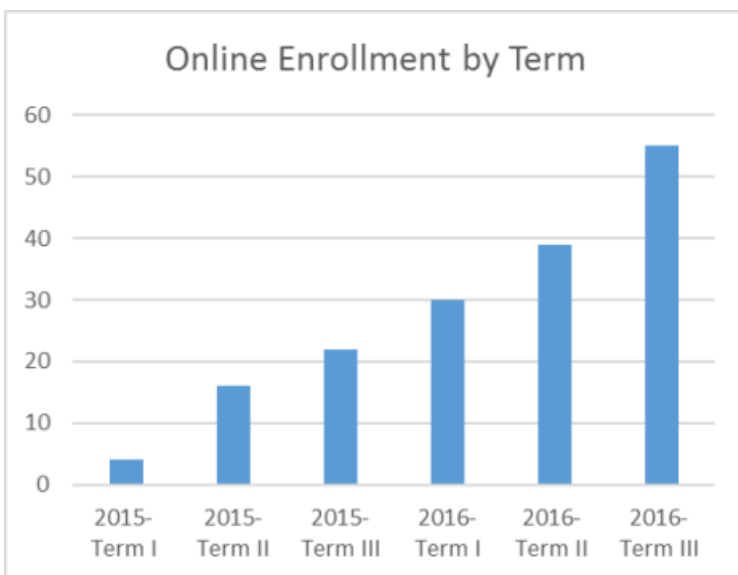
One of the major challenges for the Church in the Arab world is leadership. As the Church grows, there is an increased need for forming leaders who are well-trained in using the Bible and engaging their culture so that they can make the Good News of the Gospel relevant to their communities. Due to capacity limitations of our residential program, and due to the inability of many to move to Lebanon for training, there is a need for more accessible education. We need to be able to take the learning to the leaders where they are serving. Through Online theological education, ABTS is able to equip hundreds more, to prepare them for ministry.

Since February 2015, ABTS has “Gone Online” to reach unreached students who cannot leave their countries and ministries to enroll in the ABTS residential programs. The online platform has also enabled us to reach Arabs living as expats in different countries around the world who are active in ministry among the Arab diaspora. ABTS Online is an Arabic language program that offers an Online Certificate in Ministry, providing biblical-theological formation and ministry training that is contextually relevant for the Arab world.

ABTS Online courses engage students using the Moodle Learning Management System. The program has been designed to be comparable to the first year of the residential Bachelor of Theology. To earn the Certificate in Ministry,

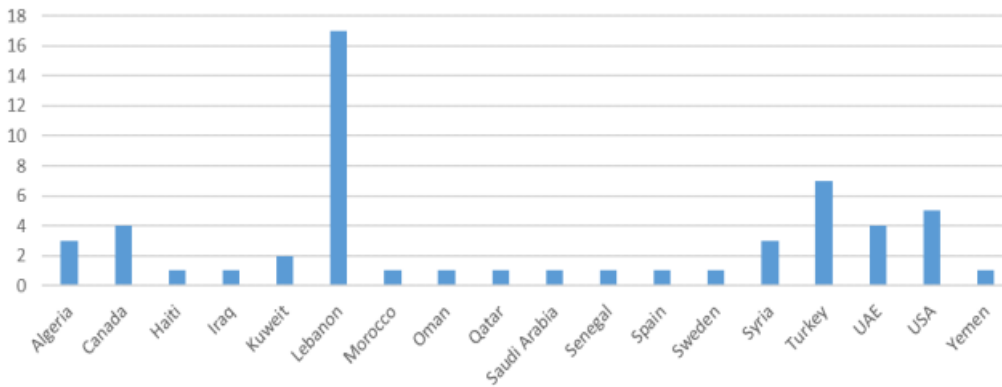
students must complete 14 core courses, ministry practicum, elective courses, and a non-formal component including mentoring and written theological reflections. The aim of ABTS Online is to develop students holistically by addressing the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of spiritual growth.

Today, we have over 50 students from around the world enrolled in ABTS Online. In each course, students are divided into groups and facilitated by a tutor. Each student studies the lesson content and interacts with online learning activities such as quizzes, case studies, forums, and writing assignments.



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Online Students by Country of Residence



Are you interested in supporting the Online training of Arab church leaders? The development of Arabic-language Online theological education is made possible through the generosity of our friends and partners. Contact Partnerships Manager [Wissam al-Saliby](#) today to know how you can donate.

Since the start of the Online program, we have witnessed a constant growth in enrollment every term. At its current rate, we foresee reaching 200 enrolled students by 2018. The majority of students are Syrians refugees, 33% of the students are women, and the largest concentration of Online students is found in Lebanon.

We have gathered feedback from some of our Online students to give you a sense of how they've been benefiting from our Certificate in Ministry.

Moussa, Syrian male student living in Damascus | "The program's courses have helped me in my ministry. Courses including Pastoral Care and Counselling, Biblical Interpretation, Biblical Theology, History of the Church and Small Groups have improved my understanding of God's Word, my managing of day-to-day situations and my teachings at the young adults meeting. It has also offered me a vast understanding of theological matters and how to apply them in real life. It has also helped to enrich my preaching and teaching ministries with very exciting, beneficial information."

Zineb, North African female student living in Spain | "Since 2010, I've been producing and presenting a TV show which broadcasts over an Arab Christian satellite TV channel and on the Internet. I regularly answer phone calls, emails and other forms of media from my viewers and respond to their questions. My vision is for the Gospel to spread in North Africa and for the believers in North Africa to grow in the correct faith in Jesus Christ. I decided to enroll online

with ABTS to be better equipped to present theological topics in my show and to better answer the questions I receive. I was encouraged to apply to study online with ABTS by the director of our ministry who himself is a 1974 ABTS graduate."

Ali, Algerian male student | "I had felt the need to study and delve deeper in the Word in order to advance even

more in my ministry. So I got introduced to the ABTS Online through the leaders of our mother church in Tizi Ouzou. Because of my responsibilities both in the ministry and with my family, I cannot become a residential theology student, so the online program is perfect for me. By God's grace, I now am in the sixth course. My favorite courses are those related to teaching, interpretation and biblical theology because I do a lot of teaching in my ministry."

George, Syrian student living in the UAE | "Those responsible for the program are very cooperative and very helpful. We are in constant communication either through my mobile phone or through the telephone. I also communicate with other students through an online forum, and we share our opinions and thoughts on the contents of the lesson we took.

"The online courses highlighted some incorrect teaching methodology that had been wrong for fourteen years of my ministry. For Sunday School, I used to prepare the lesson, present and leave the class. And that was it.



However, in order for a church to teach people, it must let them do the work. If I want to give you a lesson about Jonah, I must do my share of preparation and research to extract the message I aim to send, but I must also leave it to the student to do his share of work, regardless of his or her age.”

Hiba, Iraqi female student living in Lebanon | “I came from Iraq to Lebanon as a refugee. Back in Iraq, I had been constantly praying that I may be able to study theology online. However, my circumstances there two years ago had hindered me. When I came to Lebanon, the Lord allowed me, in His timing, to study theology online through ABTS. The courses Biblical Interpretation, Effective Christian Leadership and Small Groups were very useful as they are related to my ministry. I am thankful for all the efforts of

those responsible for the online program. And may the Lord bless the labor and love of all.”

For more information visit:

www.abtslebanon.org/ABTSOnline (English)

www.abtslebanon.com/ABTSOnline (Arabic)

Join us in lifting up this program in prayer, that the Lord may bless it and use it to empower Arab Christian leaders called to serve Him. Also, pray with us for the tutors, program coordinators, and local mentors, that the Lord would grant them the wisdom and grace to lead our online students down the right path.

Bill Merrifield, ABTS’s new Leader of Innovative Learning

We are excited to share with you that Bill Merrifield has joined us this September in the position of Leader of Innovative Learning. Bill will oversee our Online program as well as develop innovative and context-relevant approaches to e-learning across the various ABTS programs. Bill graduated from Wheaton College in 1995 with a BA in Theological Studies. In 2001, he earned an MA in Religion from Trinity International University. While at TIU, he met his wife to be, Joelle, a Lebanese national. After a year of marriage, they decided to move to Lebanon in 2002. Today, they have three boys and a girl.

Bill shared with us, “During our first few years in Lebanon, I was involved in quality control management, learning the Arabic language and culture, running my own business, and growing our family of four children. My gifting has always been in education, and in 2010 I made a shift and started teaching in the Civilization Studies program at the American University of Beirut (AUB). During my four years at AUB, I completed a second Master’s Degree in Middle Eastern Studies and discovered that my passion is exploring innovating approaches to teaching and learning. In 2014, I started a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon, where I am currently working towards completing my dissertation examining the relationship between culture and critical thinking. In both my roles as instructor and student, I have grown to appreciate the incredible potential and incredible challenges of online education. I am excited that ABTS is investing in developing a quality online program and is ready to confront the challenges of e-learning. I am looking forward to working with our dynamic faculty at such a crucial time.

“Please pray for the wisdom and skill to develop a feasible plan for the growth of e-learning at ABTS. And please pray for balance in my personal life to manage my family’s needs, my doctoral studies, and my responsibilities at ABTS.”



Please lift up the new students in your prayers. They will be facing the challenge of a new culture upon their arrival to Lebanon early October and need our prayer support. Also, pray for the start of this year’s residential theology program, the online program and the Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MRel). Second and third year residential students resumed classes on September 12. The fourth term of ABTS online and the MRel Islam module will begin in October.

ABTS is a ministry of the [Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development](http://www.lsesd.org) (LSESD). ABTS and LSESD benefit from the support the [Middle East Bible Outreach](http://www.middleeastbibleoutreach.com), a 501(c)(3) corporation based in Atlanta, GA, that coordinates efforts among our US friends.