

Birzeit University's PAS Program

A Rigorous Education and
a Space of Solidarity



جامعة بيرزيت
BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

By the PAS team

The Palestine and Arabic Studies program (PAS) at Birzeit University, founded more than thirty years ago, is an academic program for international students who wish to take university-accredited Arabic language courses and interdisciplinary courses focused on Palestine and the Arab world. The program offers four levels of modern standard Arabic and three levels of colloquial Palestinian Arabic in addition to social science courses on various topics that include the Palestine question, Palestinian and Arab society and culture, intellectual thought, gender studies, and visual and literary cultural production, among others.

The PAS program creates a unique space that aims to build international solidarity with the university and serves as a window into the lives of besieged Palestinians. Students are exposed to Palestinians' daily social, cultural, and political life, revealing its complexity, vibrancy, and diversity. This opportunity is particularly unique because Birzeit University, the oldest Palestinian university, has been described as a microcosm of Palestinian society and boasts an actively engaged student body. As Birzeit University is recognized internationally for its scholarly rigor, the PAS program has developed links with numerous universities worldwide, from the Global North to the Global South.

"The PAS program at Birzeit University has given me insight into what life is like as a university student living under occupation. Weekly field trips throughout Palestine are an integral part of the program that connects diaspora students with their heritage. ... As a Palestinian who lives in the United States, I consider it my duty to disseminate the information I gained through PAS regarding the plight of the Palestinian people. PAS equips me with cultural competency and language skills that are integral to my identity as a Palestinian, and I encourage all diaspora students to join!"

A PAS student, 2023



The PAS program provides students with a high standard of Arabic language training under the guidance of experienced and enthusiastic teachers and fosters intellectual and critical engagement with scholarly work about Palestine and the Arab world, encouraging an ethical commitment to solidarity and justice. The program introduces enrolled students to Birzeit University scholars who provide individual mentorship and expose them to ongoing research in various fields. PAS furthermore engages students in voluntary work, as interactions with Palestinian communities are central to the pedagogical experience, facilitated through field trips to multiple sites in the West Bank that link class material

to lived experience. Students are also assigned an individual conversation partner to enhance their language skills as they engage with Palestinian students and campus life. Through PAS, international and Palestinian diaspora students build relationships with Birzeit University and Palestine that extend far beyond their time of study.

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