

# Summative Evaluation Community Report

PADILEIA (Partnership for Digital Learning and Increased Access) is a partnership made up of five organisations: King’s College London (KCL), the American University of Beirut (AUB), Al Al-Bayt University in Jordan (AABU), Kiron Open Higher Education, and FutureLearn. The partnership develops and delivers blended education programmes to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon and to local Jordanian and Lebanese students. The summative evaluation aimed to assess PADILEIA’s overall effectiveness during its four-year lifespan (2017-2021). The evaluation aimed to find out how, and the extent to which, PADILEIA has been successful in bringing higher education to refugees and disadvantaged host community members in Jordan and Lebanon, and also to what extent it has enabled these students to develop skills, access further study opportunities, or gain employment.

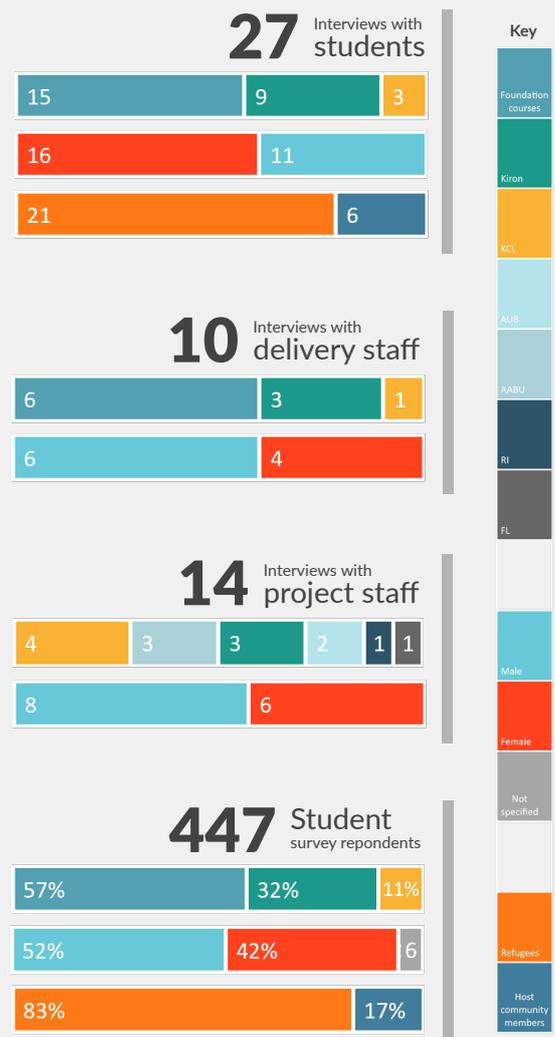
## PADILEIA includes three learning formats:

- 1 Short online courses developed by KCL/ Futurelearn (with options to study independently or guided by a facilitator)
- 2 Foundational programmes (Foundation Courses) taught through a blend of online and in-person classes, hosted at AUB and AABU and also delivered in Zaatari camp by Relief International
- 3 Online study tracks developed by Kiron with credits available for transfer into local universities (with options to study independently or guided by a facilitator)

## The evaluation aimed to find out:

- 1 Whether and how PADILEIA increased further and higher education access for refugees and disadvantaged host communities through its own courses
- 2 Whether the knowledge and transferable skills gained from PADILEIA courses enabled students to access higher education and employment
- 3 To what extent PADILEIA’s approach and design enabled these outcomes

## Summary of data collection



The evaluation findings were also compared with PADILEIA’s internal documents to identify patterns.

# Key findings

This section outlines the main evaluation findings relating to: students' access to PADILEIA courses; students' access to onward transitions; the project's impact on students' knowledge and skills; other student impacts; and the project's wider impacts.

 **13,174**  
course enrolments

 **4,184**  
course completions

 **58.2%**  
completers were female

Figures from project data

## Project coordination

**Strong collaboration, good working relationships, and partnership diversity** were found to enable successful delivery. Staff frequently reported fruitful collaborations with different partners, especially in terms of support services. The regularity of communication, responsiveness and flexibility of partners were all valued by project staff and viewed to strengthen relationships, especially given the contextual challenges in the region during project implementation. The diversity of the partnership was found to be a major strength, combining some partners' academic expertise with others' contextual knowledge and flexibility, to bring students a rich study experience.

However, this diversity also sometimes led to a **misalignment of approaches and priorities**. Universities were reported to have slow, more rigid processes, while NGOs were quicker but less structured and less observant of established models, and it was suggested that the for-profit members' priorities were not always aligned with their not-for-profit counterparts. **A lack of shared focus** with regard to university acceptance and transfers frustrated some project staff, and a lack of clarity around what was and wasn't within the project's power may have left both staff and students disappointed; many students thought that their course would lead straight to getting a place at university, but the project could not guarantee this. This issue may have been better managed by **clearly establishing the project's scope at the planning stage**, then ensuring that this was clearly communicated to all staff and students.

**"Kiron is an NGO, KCL is a university, etc... So it was a rich experience working in different ways on a programme about human nature... Having an international consortium with differences in opinion and vision was very important."**  
(AABU project staff member)

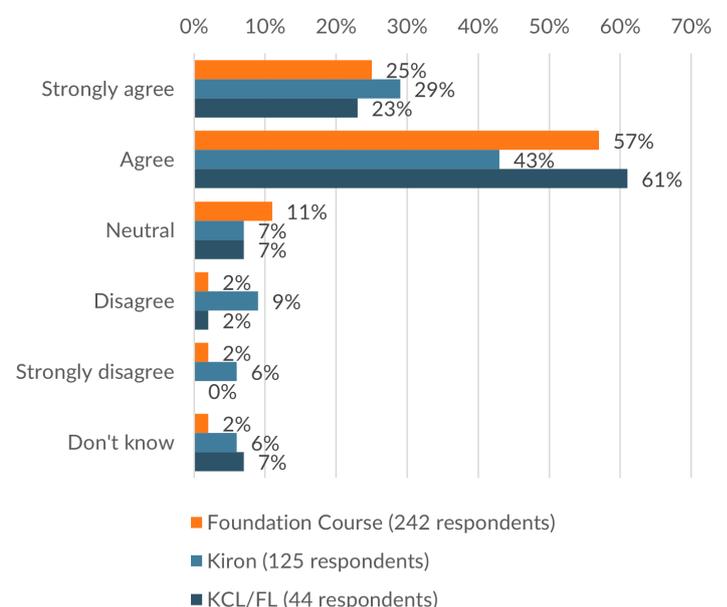
Another key way in which project coordination could have been improved was by **increasing the presence of the lead partner in Jordan and Lebanon**, which would have led to smoother communication and a deeper understanding of the regional context. Finally, the project would have benefitted from a **more robust, centralised monitoring system**, which would have improved communication and information sharing between partners, as well as enabling the project to measure its impact more accurately.

## Access to PADILEIA courses

The evaluation found that PADILEIA has **increased education access** for refugees and disadvantaged host community members in Jordan and Lebanon. Through a holistic combination of **rigorous academic support** and a **multi-strand mentoring programme**, both delivered through a **blend of online and in-person** formats, students benefitted from more **flexibility** to fit their studies around existing commitments, **physical study spaces**, and **direct staff support**. This approach was also found to **increase female participation**.

[...] continued on the next page

Extent to which survey respondents agree that they were given enough academic support, by course offering (%)



## Access to PADILEIA courses (continued)

Having instructors and facilitators to guide students' learning was also a key success factor; the **high teaching quality** was identified as crucial to ensuring students' success. Having a range of support available, especially **technical, English language, and psycho-social support**, was found to greatly impact students' course access. Additionally, having a **student-centred, adaptable project design** enabled staff to change the support on offer in light of students' changing needs, which was especially important given the regional instability and the forced shift to online-only delivery during Covid-19.

"Teachers were very nice and highly qualified, they motivated us to learn and participate, they also motivated us to apply for scholarships. The teachers tailored the classes and the contents to the students' level."

(Year 1 AUB refugee student, female)

Key factors that may have limited student access to the courses included **poor internet connectivity, domestic pressures, financial difficulties, and context instability**. Internet issues were a particular problem for refugee students. Though project support measures, such as **providing internet access in study hubs, financial support** for internet access and transport, and **devices** for some students, were often effective, the findings indicate that **more devices** could have been provided. In addition, the project could have **communicated more clearly with students** about what financial support was available, and how to access this support.



**19%**  
now studying at  
university



**12%**  
gained a  
scholarship



**20%**  
gained  
employment

Figures from evaluation survey data

## Onward transitions

The evaluation found that **the project had enabled some students to progress to higher education and employment**. 22% of survey respondents reported that PADILEIA had helped them to continue studying, and 14% reported that PADILEIA had helped them to get a job. A key factor in these successes was the **application support** they had received from the project, which involved training students to apply for courses and scholarships, write CVs and cover letters, and prepare for interviews.

A major achievement according to project data was that PADILEIA enabled 20% of all Foundation Course students to access university. However, evaluation data showed that many students were **still looking for work (38%) or study opportunities (37%)** following their PADILEIA study. Some students **could not access funding**, meaning that

"I was given a grant recently to start my own business. Without the MOOC business course I would not have been able to apply for this kind of grant."

(Year 3 KCL Business Management MOOC student, refugee, female)

they missed out on the opportunity to transfer to higher education. **Scholarships in the region are rare and often restrictive** in terms of who can apply for them, which suggests that this issue was often beyond PADILEIA's immediate control. However, **increasing the project's overall focus on helping students to gain scholarships** and allowing **more time and resources for making agreements with universities** allowing students to transfer credits could have helped more students to access university.

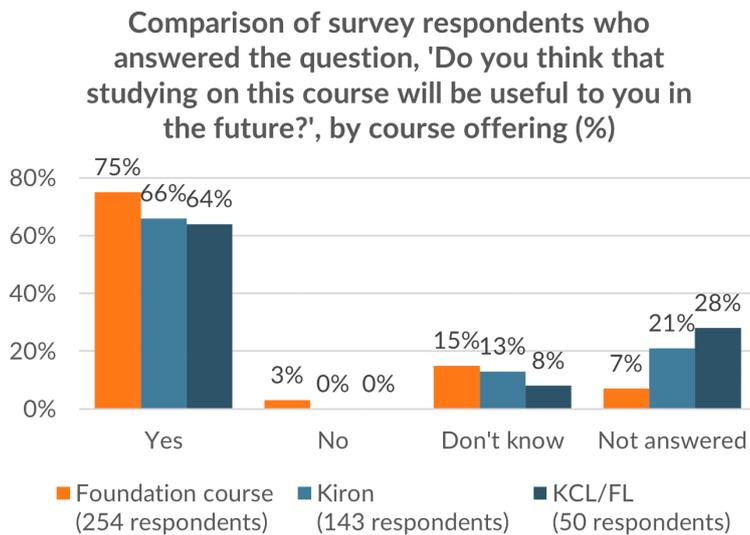
"If we do not have scholarships for those students they will not be able to take up the places offered to them. It is one thing to hit a milestone; it is another to set it up as a sustainable pathway."

(Kiron project staff member)

Finally, though some **students reported successfully gaining employment** following their course, more time and resources could have been put into this pathway by **creating links with employers** to be able to offer internships or further training, and **making students more aware** of which employment opportunities were available to them.

## Knowledge and transferable skills

The project was found to have been **highly successful when it came to course knowledge**, with students making notable **gains in digital literacy and English language**. Other notable subject-specific knowledge **gains were made in mathematics, sciences, business, and graphic design**. In terms of transferable skills, qualitative and quantitative data revealed **strong perceived gains in a variety of areas**, including: communication, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, teamwork, problem-solving, organisational skills, research skills, study skills, and CV writing and application skills. There was significant evidence that students **found these knowledge and skill gains useful**, with multiple reports of students using their newly acquired skills in their current jobs, to complete university assignments, and for job and study applications.



**"I have seen how it gave them hope to grow, and not give up. They have experienced war, displacement, and have experienced many negative situations. PADILEIA gives them hope for the future."**  
(AUB project staff member)

**"Currently I work as a volunteer within a local NGO and I meet people from all over the world. This course made it possible for me since my English now is much better."**  
(Year 4 AUB refugee student, male)

## Other student impacts

The evaluation also identified a range of other impacts that PADILEIA had on its students. Students reported **high increases in confidence when performing specific tasks**, with an average of 81% of respondents reporting confidence increases across a variety of scenarios. There was also an increase in confidence across a variety of skills, including **English, digital skills, and skills related to work and study applications**. PADILEIA was also found to help students to **become more sociable and develop their networks**, with many reporting new, long-lasting friendships. Finally, the project was found to **enhance students' future aspirations and motivation to succeed**, and generally increased students' **hopefulness about the future**.

**"I plan to start a software engineering company when I finish my degree. I want this company to provide internships for refugees in Lebanon who cannot access work easily in Lebanon. This is influenced by the course we had, since I felt they helped me a lot in achieving my dream of studying at university."**  
(Year 2 AUB refugee student, female)

## Wider impacts

There was strong evidence to suggest that PADILEIA's approach had a **meaningful impact on universities in the region**. The value of PADILEIA's expertise with online learning was **spotlighted by Covid-19**, at which point the project was able to pivot relatively easily to the online-only mode. This had the effect of softening other institutions' attitudes towards online and blended learning.

Finally, the project was able to help create **positive long-term benefits on refugee and vulnerable host communities**. Refugee students felt that PADILEIA had **helped them integrate into society**, while host community students were led to be **more accepting of refugee community members**. There was evidence of students **having aspirations to use their PADILEIA experience to positively impact their communities**. Finally, the **study hubs will also remain for future community use**, and as a symbol of the power of education to bring unity, strength and hope for the future.

# Conclusion

Overall, this evaluation finds that PADILEIA has successfully increased refugee and vulnerable host community students' access to education. This success is due primarily to the project's strong academic offering, mentoring opportunities, and robust student support services, which were effectively delivered using the strengths of PADILEIA partnership members and a high level of blended learning expertise. In addition, PADILEIA successfully enabled some students to progress to higher education and employment, although further work is needed to ensure that more students can access these transitions. The project was highly successful at developing students' knowledge and transferable skills, which will stand them in good stead when seeking new work and study opportunities. PADILEIA also had an important impact on students' confidence, motivation, and hopefulness for the future. Finally, the project meaningfully contributed to changing attitudes around online and blended learning in the region, and helped to promote unity between refugee and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon.

## Recommendations

The evaluation made a number of recommendations for PADILEIA to use when developing future projects. Here are the top 10:

### Recommendations for the PADILEIA partnership

- 1 Put more budget and resources into tackling the issue of funding to enable more students to take up places at university.
- 2 Develop relationships with employers to increase the variety of pathways open to students following their PADILEIA course.
- 3 Ensure that students and staff understand what the project can and cannot help them to achieve in terms of opportunities following students' PADILEIA studies.
- 4 Continue to prioritise delivery through local partnerships, recognising that local presence and expertise is a critical component of projects related to displacement.
- 5 Share details of PADILEIA's positive impact on students' confidence and aspirations.

### Recommendations for delivery partners within the PADILEIA partnership

- 6 Increase options for courses to be guided by a facilitator to ensure students are supported when learning remotely.
- 7 Increase access to internet-enabled devices for students studying online.
- 8 Increase support for in-person learning, potentially through prioritising study hub development and travel assistance.

### Recommendations for the wider refugee education and connected learning sectors

- 9 Continue to promote online and blended learning within universities to enable more students to access higher education.
- 10 Advocate for better internet access for refugees in camps.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all students and PADILEIA delivery team members who participated in this study. Thanks also to research consultant Amer Laham for his work on data collection. A final thank you to the project management staff at all PADILEIA partner organisations who assisted with the design and delivery of this research study.