

MSc. In Computing
(Cyber Security and Forensics)
Student Handbook

AOU / OU-UK

(Revised 2023)



Arab Open University
Faculty of Computer Studies

MSc in Computing

(Cyber Security and Forensics)

Student Handbook

2023

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Note

Please note that information in this handbook is subject to change and continuous updating. Please check for updates at our website:

<https://www.aou.edu.lb/>

Acknowledgement

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Prof. Omar Al-Jarrah

Dean of the Faculty of Computer Studies

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1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Welcome from the Dean

The Faculty of Computer Studies (FCS) at the Arab Open University (AOU) welcomes you to the Postgraduate Programme of MSc in Computing. The programme offers the student an opportunity to specialize in the field of Cyber Security and Forensics. It has been developed in collaboration with our international partner, i.e., the Open University, UK. The AOU has licensed the core modules of this programme from the OU, UK, and it was first validated in the year 2009. The FCS has been successfully delivering this programme for the past 8 years. The student handbook document is aimed at providing you the necessary information about the MSc in Computing programme. It will serve as a reference and guidance throughout your postgraduate studies at AOU.

The FCS is one of the major faculties of studies at the AOU. We currently offer two British programmes to our students, i.e, the undergraduate degree of BSc (Hons) in Information Technology and Computing (ITC) and the postgraduate degree of MSc in Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics). In addition, FCS offers also an AOU programme in Graphic and Multimedia Design Technology. The FCS currently has 31 MSc graduates and 53 students still studying on the postgraduate programme. The postgraduate programme is currently offered in our Lebanon Branch. Other branches of AOU, such as Oman, Bahrain, Egypt and KSA, have also shown interest in offering this programme in their branches.

The MSc programme in Computing awards a Master of Science or a Postgraduate Diploma. In case you cannot complete your research project and dissertation work, you will be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Computing provided you have satisfied its requirements. The Postgraduate Diploma is only an Exit Award in case you cannot complete the dissertation work or are unable to undertake the T802 dissertation course.

The programme is available in full-time and part-time modes. If you are a full-time student, you can complete your study in two years. On the other hand, if you are a Part-time student you might need two to five years to complete your study. In both cases, the maximum time span for the award is five years.

Our programme is delivered to you in a blended learning mode including 25% Face-to-Face tutoring sessions in addition to online learning through our Arab Campus learning management system, which provides flexibility and rich learning experience with an online community through discussion forums, chatting, email and virtual classrooms. Online interaction will help you to actively participate in knowledge acquisition, and deepening your understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, academic staff members maintain “office hour” schedules and are available for consultation to support the students. An academic advisor will be available to guide you through your postgraduate studies at AOU.

To help you achieve your learning goals, our academic, technical and administrative staff, are ready to provide help and support at any time.

Students successfully completing the programme will receive an MSc from both the AOU and the OU, UK.

We hope you will enjoy our MSc in computing programme. Any aspects of the programme could be openly discussed with me as a programme team leader. You can contact me by email at dean.it@arabou.edu.kw.

We wish you are enjoying the learning experience here at FCS.

Prof. Omar Al-Jarrah

**Programme Team Leader, MSc/ Dip in Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics)
April, 2020**

1.2 Introduction

This student handbook provides you with detailed information about the MSc Programme in Computing at the Faculty of Computer Studies (FCS) at the Arab Open University (AOU). The AOU is a leading institution of Open Education in the Middle East. It has branches in 9 Arab countries i.e. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Oman, Sudan and Palestine. A new branch is planned for Yemen. It has a central Headquarters in Kuwait, which unifies and standardizes the academic and administrative activities of all country branches. The AOU currently has 4 faculties of studies, including FCS. The AOU is in partnership with the Open University (OU), UK, and it has licensed programmes in open education from it for 3 of its faculties, including FCS. The MSc in Computing is a licensed programme from the OU, UK. Hence, you will receive an MSc degree award from both the AOU and the OU, UK.

The main rationale behind introducing an MSc Programme at the FCS is to offer you the opportunity to pursue your postgraduate studies at AOU.

2. Academic calendar

The FCS follows the general academic calendar of the AOU, which consists of 2 main semesters of Fall and Spring and a shorter semester of Summer. The fall and spring semesters are normally of 16-week duration whereas the summer semester is of about 10-week duration. The Fall Semester usually starts in October and ends in February whereas the Spring Semester runs from March till June. The summer semester usually runs from June till August. The term and assessment dates are clearly marked in the Academic Calendar.

A copy of the Academic Calendar of AOU is attached at Appendix "A". The individual course calendars are based on the Academic Calendar of AOU.

Study Plans:

The MSc in Computing programme (Cyber Security and Forensics) consists of a total of 180 points (48 credit hours) of study. This programme can be completed either on full-

time study basis (2 years) or part-time study basis (4 years). Representative study plans for full-time and part-time studies for the MSc programme are shown in the following tables.

MSc/ Diploma* in Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics)

Example Study Plan / Calendar for Full Time Students

Year	Semester	Code	Course Title	Points	Credits
1	1	M811A	Information Security-A	15	4
		M812A	Digital Forensics -A	15	4
		T828A	Network Security -A	15	4
			One Elective Course (from M818A and M816A)	15	4
	Sub-total			60	16
	2	M811B	Information Security-B	15	4
		M812B	Digital Forensics –B	15	4
		T828B	Network Security -B	15	4
			One Elective Course (from M818B and M816B)	15	4
	Sub-total			60	16
2	1	T802A	Research Project and Dissertation	60	16
	Sub-total				
	2	T802B	Research Project and Dissertation – Part II		
	Sub-total				
Grand Total				120+60	32+16

* Students who fail the MSc Dissertation module or who cannot undertake the Dissertation work can obtain as an Exit Award, the Postgraduate Diploma in Computing (E81) – (Cyber Security and Forensics), provided they have successfully completed the 120 points of study (90 compulsory and 30 points of optional modules).

MSc/ Diploma* in Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics)

Proposed Study Plan / Calendar for Part Time Students

Year	Semester	Code	Course Title	Points	Credits
1	1	M811A	Information Security-A	15	4
		M812A	Digital Forensics - A	15	4
	Sub-total			30	8
	2	M811B	Information Security-B	15	4
		Sub-total			15
2	1	M812B	Digital Forensics - B	15	4
	Sub-total			15	4
	2	T828A	Network Security -A	15	4
			One Elective Course (from M818A and M816A)	15	4
	Sub-total			30	8
3	1	T828B	Network Security -B	15	4
	Sub-total			15	4
	2		One Elective Course (from M818B and M816B)	15	4
		Sub-total			15
4	1	T802A	Research Project and Dissertation	60	16
	Sub-total				
	2	T802B	Research Project and Dissertation – Part II		
		Sub-total			
Grand Total				120+60	32+16

* Students who fail the MSc Dissertation module or who cannot undertake the Dissertation work can obtain as an Exit Award, the Postgraduate Diploma in Computing (E81) – (Cyber Security and Forensics), provided they have successfully completed the 120 points of study (90 compulsory and 30 points of optional modules).

3. List of programme director and academic staff, their contact details and availability arrangements

The programme team leader for the MSc programme in Computing is the Dean of FCS, Prof. Omar Jarrah. The list of programme director at the AOU Headquarters and academic staff at the branches is available electronically on the AOU's website at <http://www.arabou.edu.kw>.

The academic staff at the FCS is available during the 25% face-to-face tutorial sessions and during office hours.

4. List of support staff (technical and administrative)

Support staff at the Headquarters and at the branches are ready to support you in your studies. Their contact details are available at branch websites (see Table 1).

Table 1. Useful Branch Contacts and Branch Websites

Branch	Info. Contact
KSA	Saudi Arabia Branch Address : Hay Al-Falah, Opposite Al-Emam Moh'd bin Saoud University - Opposite gate (2) from south side, Al-Riyadh, <i>Arab Open University Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Branch</i> Tel: + 966 1 274 22 77 Fax: + 966 1 274 26 96 support@arabou.edu.sa
Kuwait	Kuwait Branch Address : P.O.Box 830, Al - Ardiya, 92400, Kuwait. E-Mail: Info@aoe.edu.kw Telephone: +(965) 24394400 Fax: Fax: +(965) 24394200

	<p>Website: www.aou.edu.kw info@arabou.edu.kw</p>
Lebanon	<p>Lebanon Branch Address: Omar Bayhoum Str. - Park Sector Beirut 2058 4518, Beirut , Lebanon. E-Mail: admin@aou.edu.lb Telephone: +(961)1392139 Fax: +(961)1392145 Website: www.aou.edu.lb</p>
Egypt	<p>Egypt Branch Address : 2nd District, Services Centre, Shrouk City, Cairo, Egypt Telephone: +(2) 19268 Fax: Fax: +(202) 26890590 Support: info@aou.edu.eg</p>
Oman	<p>Oman Branch Address: Muscat - Qurm, Muscat, Oman P.O.Box: 1596 130 Muscat, Oman Tel : 00968 24699444 Fax: 00968 24699669 www.aouoman.org</p>
Bahrain	<p>Kingdom of Bahrain Branch Address : P.O. Box 18211, Kingdom of Bahrain Building 890, Road 3220, Block 732, A'ali, Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: + 973 17407077 – 17407088 Fax: 973 17400916 Website:www.aou.org.bh</p>
Jordan	<p>Jordan Branch Address: Amman- Tareq P.O.Box 1339 Amman 11953 Jordan Tel. +962 6 5630630 Fax +962 6 5630610</p>

	e-mail: info@aou.edu.jo
Sudan	Sudan Branch Address : Khartoum(2), Building No(53), Street No(47), Second Floor, Office No(8), Khartoum , Sudan Tel : +249117283337 / +24999663302 Email : info@aou.edu.sd
Palestine	Palestine Branch 3 AlSheikh Hasan Salameh St. Sateh Marhaba, Al-Bireh P.O.Box 4375. Tel.: +972 2 2429777 Fax: +972 2 24249444 email.info@aou.edu.ps

5. External Examiners

The Chief External Examiner (CEE) of the BSc in Computing Programme is Prof. Alistair Duffy (CEE), Associate Dean of Research and Innovation at De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester. He is a Professor since 1994. He supervised more than 20 PhD Thesis Projects with a numerous number of Research Project Awards besides being a consulting for many testing projects. He is a member of many professional bodies as the CEng, FIET, IEEE Fellow and FRSA. He also edited more than 10 books and published more than 200 scientific papers and articles, where all of them are published in prestigious international conferences and Journals.

The External Examiners (EE) are:

Prof. Ahmed Al-Dubai the External Examiner for the MSc Computing Programme. He has PhD in Computing Science in Department of Computing Science from University of Glasgow and a Full Professor in Edinburgh Napier University OU UK. He is supervising a considerable number of PhD Research Projects. He is also a member of Program Committee in major conferences and workshops. He has published in the top 10 world leading conferences in his field.

Dr. Rahat Iqbal is an Associated Professor, he has received his PhD in Computer Science in 2005 from Coventry University. He has an experience in Director, Reader in Human Centered Technology and Inventor, Industrial and Academic Roles, Faculty of Engineering, Environment & Computing at Coventry University, UK. Dr. Iqbal has

supervised more than 25 PhD students. He has published 120 papers in International Journals, Conferences, book chapters and workshops.

Dr. Tariq Abdullah has his PhD from Delft University of Technology in Computer Science in 2010, has an experience with Technical and Academic Leadership in Computing and IT beside being a Project Manager at University of Derby. He is associated with higher education sector since 2001 and worked with universities in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Pakistan. He is also a member of many professional membership as Senior Fellow in HEA, IEEE, and BCS. He has also edited about 15 Journal, book chapters and conferences. He has an experience in developing postgraduate and undergraduate study programs. He is the External Examiner at OU University in BSc ITC (Computing).

Dr. Salem Al Jareh has a PhD in Network Security from Newcastle University, UK. His current duties are staff workload manager, Project Coordinator (Group Project, Undergraduate Individual Project, DL Project Postgraduate Project and Industrial Projects). Some examples of recent/current projects are Ultra Low cost passive Radar and Reliability, Security and applicability of location and tracking systems at the School of Energy and Electronic Engineering at the University of Portsmouth, UK. He also has external duties as the External Examiner, Date Module Facilitator and Date External Moderator.

The Academic Reviewer Dr. Neil Smith (OU), Senior Lecturer in Computing, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics, at the Open University, UK.

6. Introduction to the programme

The MSc in Computing programme has been developed in collaboration with our partner institution, i.e., the OU, UK. It is a validated programme of study and it was first validated by the OU, UK in the year 2009, then in 2012, and then in 2015. This programme was introduced to provide opportunities to graduates in the Arab World to pursue graduate studies in the field of Cyber Security and Forensics.

The need for Cyber Security and Forensics analysts in the Arab countries is continuously increasing, and thus the career outlook for graduates looks positive, as there is a shortage

of skilled personnel in both the Cyber Security and digital forensics fields. In addition, the rapidly increasing number of users connected to the internet in the Arab region leads to increasing the percentage of internet-related (or internet-dependent) businesses. The role of Cyber Security analysts is thus crucial for this growing business sector.

In the MSc in Computing (Cyber Security and Forensics), you will develop a wide range of skills and competencies related to Cyber Security, digital forensics and network security that will prepare you for a variety of career opportunities. Graduates can progress to work in cyber-fighting agencies (whether local, regional and international). However, the career opportunity is not limited to those agencies with the huge demand in industry for professionals with both digital forensics and Cyber Security skills especially with the rise of cyber security threats and attacks.

Programme Description, Duration of Study and Admission Criteria

Programme Title: MSc/Diploma in Computing Programme (F66/E81)

Postgraduate Diploma in Computing Code: E81

You need: 120 points (90 points from compulsory courses + 30 points from the elective courses). This Postgraduate Diploma is only an Exit Award in case you cannot complete the Dissertation work or are unable to undertake the T802 course.

MSc in Computing Code: F66

You need: 180 points (90 points from Compulsory Courses + 30 points from Elective Courses + 60 points Research Project and Dissertation)

The structure of the programme of MSc in Computing is presented in the following:

Cyber Security and Forensics Pathway:

Compulsory Courses (90 Points) (24 Credits)

Course Code	Course Title	Points	Credits	Source
M811A	Information Security – A	15	4	OU
M811B	Information Security - B	15	4	OU
M812A	Digital Forensics – A	15	4	OU
M812B	Digital Forensics – B	15	4	OU
T828A	Network Security – A	15	4	OU
T828B	Network Security – B	15	4	OU

Elective Courses (30 Points) (8 Credits)

Course Code	Course Title	Points	Credits	Source
M816A	Data Management - A	15	4	OU
M816B	Data Management - B	15	4	OU
M818A	Machine learning in Cyber Security – A	15	4	AOU
M818B	Machine learning in Cyber Security - B	15	4	AOU

PC/Laptop technical requirements:

Considering the technical requirement of all software utilities used in the MSc courses, below are the minimum requirements for the student PC/Laptop:

- CPU: Intel core i5 or higher
- RAM: 8 GB minimum
- Storage: 500 GB minimum
- 1 Gbps Ethernet adapter and/or Wireless adapter 802.11b/g/n/ac

Research Project and Dissertation (T802) (60 Points) (16 Credits)

The 60-point Research project and Dissertation course (T802) is a mandatory course for the successful completion of the MSc in Computing (F66) degree. For this, your project topic will need to be in the area of Cyber Security and Forensics.

Admission Criteria

For admission to the programme, the candidate should have:

§ BSc degree in:

- Computing (or a related field) from the Arab Open University or another university recognized by the local ministry of higher education with at least a good average GPA, or
- Other fields that are restricted to Math, Physics, and Business Computing. In this case, the candidate should have a professional experience in the computing field and have to register at least 12 credits of remedial courses (passing grade at least B). This is essential to confirm that the candidate has the necessary underpinning knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts required to undertake the MSc.

§ English test score of:

- 7.0 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or
- 600 in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in the Paper-Based Test (PBT) or the equivalent score 100 in the Internet Based Test (IBT).

Professional recognition:

Getting an MSc degree from the AOU offers you two benefits:

- BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, offers you an exemption from some of its membership requirements.
- Upon successful completion of the programme you will receive an MSc from both the AOU and the OU, UK.

Attendance requirements:

The FCS follows the hybrid model of open education at AOU which requires 25% face – to face tutorial attendance in a classroom environment. The 25% face – to – face tutorial sessions are mandatory and if you fail to attend 3 consecutive tutorial sessions without due cause you will be suspended from the course. The 25% face – to- face tutorial sessions are clearly marked as individual course calendar using the following guidelines:

Number of Credit Hours	No. Hours/Tutorial Sessions
4	3-hours tutorial every week

Opportunities available to you on completion of the programme

On successful completion of the MSc degree you will be able to get employment opportunities in both the Middle Eastern (ME) markets and the international markets since this MSc programme would be validated by the OU, UK.

7. Programme specifications

The Programme Specifications document is available on AOU website (<https://web.aou.edu.lb/faculties/computer/Pages/postgraduate-programs.aspx>)

8. Module specifications

The modules’ description are available on AOU website (<https://web.aou.edu.lb/faculties/computer/Pages/course-catalogue.aspx>)

9. Student support, guidance and advice

You are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on your own learning needs and you are offered the following support as appropriate to those needs:

- Student induction day that focuses on the requirements for the Master's courses and project work.
- A student handbook containing information relating to the University, and the Programme of study.
- A virtual learning environment to support you remotely via collaborative tools and technologies
- Access to teaching, support and management staff.
- Access to AOU resources seven days per week e.g. Library, eLearning materials – outside normal class times.
- Access to student services, including Students Union
- Students with special needs are provided full support by AOU's branches through dedicated facilities and tutor's help.
- Financial aid and advice is provided to our students
- Career guidance and advice is offered at the career center and at the programme level

10. Opportunities for personal development planning

Opportunities for Personal Development Planning (PDP) exist at FCS. You can develop your PDP, and it will enable you to merge formal and informal records of learning into a single format from which you can draw information about your learning over a period of time and present it to different audiences.

11. Opportunities and support for study abroad if applicable

The current proposal of the MSc programme requires completion of all modules of study at the FCS at AOU. In case you wish to transfer to another institution you would be required to inquire about the transfer of credits provisions at that institution.

12. Work placement information

There is no work placement requirement in the current proposal of the MSc programme. The main practical work involved is in the Dissertation work and any individual course project work.

13. Facilities and Services

Relevant electronic resources such as Conferencing, libraries, multimedia resources, LMS, software licenses for compilers will be provided to you. The AOU has started with plans for constructing new buildings for branches with facilities for Classroom, Laboratories etc.

A Digital forensics lab is available with software and hardware tools:

1. Oxygen Forensic Detective
2. Forensic Explorer v4 perpetual Educational USB Dongle License (free 1 year update from purchase date)
3. Clamshell (CS) Test Socket (chip reader) Can be applied as well for chip-off IC devices failure analysis, write-and-read in forensic application
4. Coolgear USB 3.0 to IDE/SATA Adapter with Write-Protect Selection
5. AP-Z3X-JTAGF Category: JTAG Equipment and ISP, Write Protected USB 3.0 SATA/IDE Hard Disk Adapter
6. RF shielded test enclosure
7. Aoyue 474A++ Digital Desoldering Station with Built-in Vacuum Pump
8. Proxxon 37110 Micro Mill MF 70
9. Kali Linux PC lab

Students have access to two types of learning resources: virtual and physical.

A. Virtual learning resources: Students are provided with two virtual resources, the learning Management System (LMS) and the online repository.

The Learning Management System (LMS) is the main interface for students, where you are provided with academic and administrative information. The LMS also provides

you with access to the AOU e-library, a portal to a number of rich online databases that provides students with recent publications in different IT fields. Each student has personal login information to the e-Library. Students are introduced to how to access and use the e-library and are encouraged to take advantage of the different features provided.

□ Online repository: in order to facilitate sharing (tutor-students and students-students) course-related materials, an online repository has been created (One-drive folder) where both students and course tutors can upload the material they found interesting to share with each other. In addition, the repository is used to share the open-source tools selected by the course tutor, and related to the course material.

B. Physical learning resources with enough space, desks and computers where students can sit and study while being able to access the physical library. This library is updated every year with relevant and important books and magazines related to the new technologies in the IT field in general and to the MSc. course-related fields in particular. The collection is continuously enriched with new titles and subscriptions.

The AOU's student support staff will be available at the university premises to help you. Also, an electronic helpdesk (eHD) will be posted on the AOU's website to provide advice or guidance on postgraduate studies.

Open access labs and dedicated departmental labs will be made available to you.

Simulators, open source software and cloud-based solutions are the alternative options for physically attending the LAB on-campus when necessary.

14. Assessment and progression regulations

The assessment and progression regulations have been made available to you on the AOU's website at <https://www.arabou.edu.kw/university/Pages/regulations.aspx> In addition, assessment guides will be provided to you with the course material packages.

15. Dissertations

The course T802 is the final component of the MSc Programme of study at FCS at AOU. The Dissertation part of T802 consists of a written report of about 12,000 to 16,000 words. This report is a culmination of about 2 semesters of research work by you under the guidance of your Dissertation supervisor. You must also give an oral presentation.

In order to undertake the T802 Dissertation various software tools and packages would be required. It is your duty to consult your supervisor well in advance of project selection regarding the availability of both the software tools and expertise available at FCS regarding the usage of the tools. You should agree with your supervisor regarding the Software Tools that would be required for T802 projects in advance to avoid any problems.

Matching Students' T802 Dissertation to Supervisors' Research Areas

You will be required to consult your supervisor regarding selection of dissertation topic. You will select a research topic only after consultation and approval of the dissertation supervisor at FCS. This will ensure that relevant expertise tools and guidance is available to you to complete your dissertation.

16. Determination of results

For various course work modules, the assessment usually consists of 3 components i.e. TMAs, MTAs and Exams. The weighting of the assessment components is as follows:

- TMAs: 20%
- MTAs (Written exam: 15% and Practical Project: 15%) totaling: 30%
- Exams: 50%

In order to pass the course, you must obtain at least (i) 60% on continuous assessment (TMA + MTA), (ii) 60% on final examination, and (iii) 70% on overall assessment. The following table provides a mapping between the AOU and OU scales for the course letter grades that you can obtain in each grading system. The passing GPA is 3.0 for obtaining the master degree in AOU.

Your result will be processed centrally at the Headquarters. Your branch authorities will communicate results to you after approval from the Central Examination Committee (CEC) at the Headquarters. The FCS at AOU follows a tiered approach to examination boards and committees. There exist mainly 3 examination committees at the AOU called the Branch Examination Committee (BEC), the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) and the Central Examination Committee (CEC).

External Examiners are members of the FEC and the Chief External Examiner is a member of the CEC. The main role of the assessment boards is to standardize the assessment processes and procedures at AOU and to ensure fair processing of student grades.

For the Dissertation work, the assessment weights are clearly spelled out in the T802 Module specifications [it is available on AOU website (<https://www.arabou.edu.kw>)]

17. Other institutional policies and regulations

The AOU strongly believes in providing equal opportunities to all students studying at the university. It also makes efforts to provide a safe, secure, healthy and confidential environment to you. You have the right to appeal to the branch authorities. Processes and procedures for your appeals are contained in the rules and regulations of the AOU and are accessible to you through the branch website (<https://sisonline.arabou.edu.kw/>)

18. Student participation and evaluation

You are strongly encouraged to participate in and evaluate the academic activities at AOU. Your feedback is solicited through various surveys such as students' views on Courses, Tutors, assessments and Facilities etc. Your views are considered as a very important instrument which is continuously solicited and used in enhancing your learning experience at AOU.

AOU has bylaws for its Alumni association and chapters have been created in the different branches to maintain relations between AOU and its former students and between graduates and their fellows. Thus, your feedback will contribute in enhancing all our programmes.

19. General reading list, including electronic resources

A general reading list has been compiled by FCS staff and will be further enhanced by prospective students. The list indicates some important books and journals in the fields of Cyber Security. The list is available to you at: <http://www.aou-elibrary.com/AOU>.