

FP Jareeda

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Welcome to Another Edition

James Scotland, Chair of the Foundation Program's Newsletter Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Welcome to the latest edition of the Foundation Program's quarterly newsletter, FP Jareeda.

The COVID 19 pandemic has affected us all. In this issue, you will learn more about how the Foundation Program has responded to the instructional challenges that the pandemic

has brought. In addition, you will discover more about teaching online.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy reading about the Second Qatar Math Day, the Foundation Program's recent Open Days, and the history of the Foundation Program Department of English



James Scotland: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

The Director of the Foundation Program Meets with Foundation Program Students

Jeffrey Maggard, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

To enhance communication between Foundation Program (FP) students and FP upper management, two Question and Answer (Q&A) meetings were held in February 2020. At these meetings, the Foundation Program Director, Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, and the FP upper management team gave students the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and make comments. During the sessions, FP upper management gauged student feedback about topics such as class schedules, course content, delivery, assessment, and support ser-

vices.

Nineteen male students attended the first meeting on February 3rd, in the Men's Foundation Building (A06). Eleven female students participated in the second meeting on February 5th in the Women's Foundation Building (D05). At these Q&A sessions, students asked questions about the Department of English's summer courses. Some students inquired about summer schedules, while others wondered if it would be possible to offer foundation-level courses this summer.

A number of students provided positive feedback; for instance, some said they were content with classroom sizes, and that they were having positive experiences in the Foundation Program. Others stated that the English and Math Success Zone tutoring sessions were very helpful.

As for suggestions, students said they would like to have hands-on workshops related to Foundation Program students' majors and extra-curricular English language activities related to speaking.

The Second Qatar Math Day, 2020

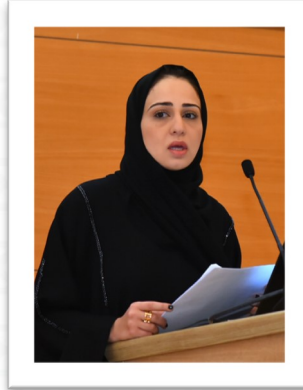
Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program



Dr. Mohamed Ben Haj Rhouma, Head of Foundation Program Department of Math: Photograph courtesy of Ali El Hussein



Dr. Temadher Al-Maadeed, Assistant Professor and Head of Qatar University's Math Statistics and Physics Department: Photograph courtesy of Ali El Hussein



Engineer Noor Al-Nakhala, Senior Math Specialist at Qatar University's Student Learning Support Center: Photograph courtesy of Ali El Hussein

ies, and The Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Physics (MSP) in the College of Arts and Sciences. This was the second Qatar Math Day to be held at Qatar University; the first, very successful, Qatar Math Day was held in 2018. The 2020 Qatar Math Day was a specially-designed forum to develop scientific knowledge, exchange experiences and share research in different areas in order to support mathematics education in Qatar.

The opening ceremony was attended by HE Dr. Ibrahim Al-Nuaimi, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Omar

The second Qatar Math Day event was held on 16th February, 2020. The event was co-organized by Qatar University

in collaboration with The Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar. Qatar University (QU) sponsors included two departments - the Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM) under The Deanship of General Stud-



Qatar Math Day 2020: Photograph courtesy of Ali El Hussein

Al-Ansari, the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Qatar University, and Professor Ibrahim Al-Kaabi, Dean of Graduate Studies and Dean of the College of Sciences.

This well-organized and informative event included various talks, seminars, and workshops that focused on the latest developments, methodologies, and strategies to advance education and research in the field of mathematics. Guest speakers came from Oman, Kuwait, and the United States; local speakers represented the Ministry of Education, the College of the North Atlantic-Qatar, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar, Carnegie-Mellon University in Qatar, and Qatar University.

There were over 270 participants, including presenters and attendees from the Qatar University Foundation Program Math Department and the Department of Math and Physics, teachers from government schools, various delegates, speakers, and interested students. The one-day



Mr. Sari Mahmoud, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, running the workshop *Developing Metacognitive Skills through Problem-based Learning*: Photograph courtesy of Sara Salmeh

event provided a comprehensive program which included three keynote speeches, eleven seminars, and six workshops. These addressed issues in both pure and applied mathematics education. In addition to the plenary

sessions, workshops, seminars, and presentations, two special workshops were held by a Desmos' presenter on how to use Desmos (an advanced graphing calculator) applications in teaching math.

The conference honored the winners of the Fourth Qatar University Mathematics Championships. Students of Actuarial Mathematics were honored for passing the internationally recognized Actuarial Organization Tests.

Many thanks are owed to the dedicated conference organizers, colleagues, and volunteers from the Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the FPDM and the MSP.



The Implementation of Distance Learning

Sara Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program

In light of the coronavirus pandemic and in order to ensure the safety of Qatar University (QU) students and its community, on 10th March, 2020 Qatar University switched to distance learning. Accordingly, all faculty in the Foundation Program (FP) started to teach online.

Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, the Director of the Foundation Program, commented that "Prior to the implementation of online learning, FP faculty members already utilized a wide range of online resources in order to

support face-to-face teaching. During the transition to online teaching, this prior experience was extensively drawn upon. The FP is committed to the achievement of the learning outcomes of this semester to ensure that students are prepared for the academic requirements for the next academic year."

Within the FP, several meetings were held directly after the QU directive to move classes online. The primary purpose of these meetings was to enable faculty to continue

teaching without compromising the quality of students' educational experience and to give faculty all the support they need in this regard.

Members from the FP E-learning Committee and the FP Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee organized several training sessions for faculty. These committees also facilitated faculty access to Pearson and Cambridge webinars. The primary goal of this training was to deepen faculty's knowledge of QU-approved online learning platforms and resources. These training sessions addressed synchronous and asynchronous language teaching, online learning pedagogies, maximizing students' online experience, and ensuring that student learning outcomes (SLOs) are met.

Online platforms which have been utilized by faculty include: Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, and Microsoft Teams. Additionally, many faculty members now pre-record their classes and lessons and make them available to the students online. Furthermore, to maximize student support and engagement, FP faculty members now conduct their scheduled office hours online.


The FP Student Affairs Office has also continued to support foundation students. The FP Success Zone quickly imple-



Dr Hezam Al-Awah - Foundation Program Director: Photograph courtesy of QU Photographer Mohamed Sherif Mohamed Selim

mented distance tutoring services for English and math for all foundation students using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. During work hours, tutors are available to provide 30 minutes of individual tutoring for students. The FP Success Zone has also created a series of videos and worksheets on grammar, writing, and math. Online exam revision sessions continue to be provided by FP Math Success Zone. In addition, the FP Special Needs Committee implemented an online support scheme in order to facilitate the transition to online learning for special needs students.

Currently, the priority of the Foundation Program is to enhance students' learning experience and to ensure that their acquisition of skills and knowledge of the English language and math is fully supported as per Qatar University's directives and recommendations.


 البرنامج التأسيسي
 Foundation Program
 QATAR UNIVERSITY فطر

عمادة الدراسات العامة
 Deanship of General Studies

Distance Tutoring Services Available - Spring 2020



Foundation Program (FP) Success Zone is pleased to inform you that we are offering one-on-one online tutoring services via Blackboard, from Sunday to Thursday, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. Online tutoring is offered to students registered in the following courses:

- W001 & W002: Writing Workshop
- R001 & R002: Reading Workshop
- C001 & C002: Integrated Core
- ENGL 110: English I
- ENGL 111: English II
- ENGL 250: English for Communication I
- ENGL 251: English for Communication II
- ENGL 202: English Language I – Post Foundation
- ENGL 203: English Language II – Post Foundation
- MATH 021: Elementary Algebra
- MATH P100: Pre-Calculus

Students can access the online tutoring by clicking on the link sent by email by FP Student Affairs Office earlier. We also offer a wide range of supplementary [videos](#) and [worksheets](#) for math and English courses on Blackboard to support students with their learning.

For any enquiries: fpstudent@qu.edu.qa

#FPSuccessZone

Poster courtesy of Sara Salmeh

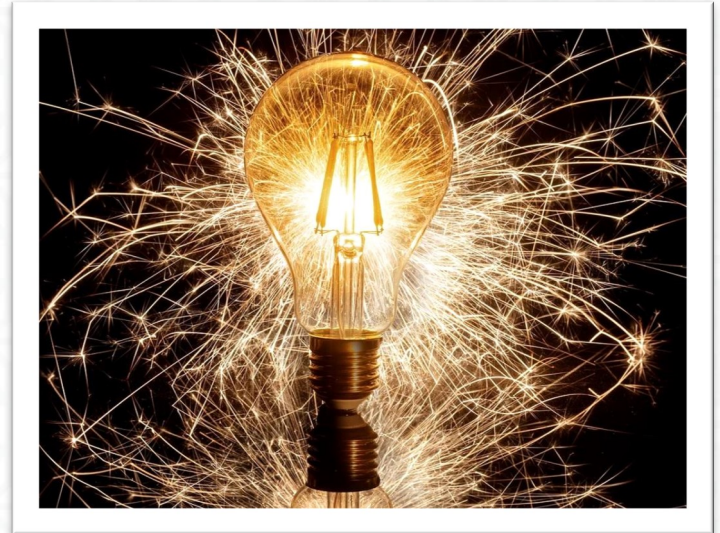
Supporting the Implementation of Distance Learning

Naima Sarfraz, Chair of the Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On 10th March, 2020 Qatar University implemented a complete switch to online learning. Recognizing the urgent need to maintain 'physical distancing', the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) has provided the faculty with extensive training on using online platforms to help them transfer their real-world classrooms into a virtual learning environment. Going online, the department took the decision of blending online instruction with independent study tools to help students achieve their academic goals without compromising the quality of their learning. The Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee (AE&PDC) was tasked to provide a continuous support system for the

faculty to enhance their understanding of the key considerations and potential tools available to them as they enter the world of online learning.

The AE&PDC focused on sharing webinars that were designed to give educators practical tools to cultivate a greater sense of well-being and pedagogical confidence in the virtual classroom. Approximately 50 webinars by world-renowned publishers and speakers were shared. In addition, 10 in-house professional development workshops were conducted by members of the AE&PDC. These workshops were intended to share best practices when teaching online with a specific focus of meeting the learning needs of students enrolled in the Foundation Program. Several demon-



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

stration lessons were also prepared by the AE&PDC and shared with faculty. Finally, the AE&PDC has made these resources available to faculty members.

Going online has helped the FDPE to reshape the teaching and learning process. To that end, the AE&PDC is planning to hold its first 4-day Virtual Academic Excellence PD event from May 11th to 14th. Renowned scholars in the field of Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages (TESOL) will offer presentations, workshops and seminars. It will be the first virtual event of the Department where Zoom will be used as the platform for communication. The shift to online teaching creates professional and instructional challenges; however, it also creates new opportunities for progress and development. The committee hopes that this will be an opportunity for all faculty to enhance their online teaching practices.



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

Effective Online Teaching Approaches

Jeffrey Maggard, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Like many teachers in the Foundation Program's Department of English (FPDE), I have used the Internet for most of my teaching career. In 1995, when the Internet became widely available, I was a young teacher who had taught traditional courses (with textbooks) in the USA and Japan. I soon understood the power that the Internet had in attracting the attention of students. However, I also knew that for the Internet to become a valid and reliable teaching medium, teachers needed to create new pedagogically viable ways of using it.

Over the years, I have learned that teaching online classes, as well as hybrid and/or blended courses, requires much more than the use of interactive websites and attractive applications. To teach online courses effectively, faculty should be mindful of approaches that help them make each lesson achieve positive learning outcomes. Here are 18 approaches that do just that. These approaches not only leave smiles on student faces, they also result in faculty satisfaction in knowing that they have improved learning experiences.

Here is a summary of online teaching approaches which I find

useful:

- Publish a very detailed lesson plan (minute-by-minute) on Blackboard one day prior to the class or at least one hour before it begins.
- Communicate in multiple (written) modes before each lesson (e.g., via email, Blackboard Announcements, or on social media).
- Repeat and recycle instructions in synchronous (e.g., chat) and asynchronous (email) modalities as frequently as needed.
- Give students enough time to tell you when they need help (synchronously and asynchronously).
- Embed as many links as possible in each daily lesson plan.
- Include detailed instructions (with sufficient time frames around each activity) to build a smoothly flowing pace (and notice that this keeps teachers and students on time and focused on learning goals/objectives).

March 30th Lesson Plan Group 106

- 2:00- 2:05 Open Socrative ROOM NAME [JEFFMAGGARD](#)
- 2:05- 2:20 Answer 28 questions on Socrative
- 2:20- 2:25 Enter BB collaborate Ultra
- 2:25-2:45 Open your textbook to p.62 and write answers for Activity 2 (A-F) on paper
- 2:45- 3:00 Go to Chat Box and write your answers for Activity 2 (A-F)
- 3:00- 3:15 Open p.62 and answer questions A,B,C, and D using Chat
- 3:15- 3:20 Questions?

Homework:


Read p.63 Focus "identifying main idea and supporting details."

- Do not allow technical challenges to overwhelm students (or yourself) when things go wrong.
- Things will not always go as planned, so make jokes with students (especially if the technology has difficulties).
- Be keenly aware that some students are as nervous about using new technology as teachers are.
- Realize that humor not only reduces student fears, it makes students more willing to take risks and try new kinds of activities.
- Give students multiple opportunities to get materials (prior to the class, during the class, and after the class).
- Use students' social media (e.g., "class group") to facilitate the dissemination of ideas. Do not be shy about asking for this. The leaders in each class will gladly do this as it builds their rapport with the group and cements their leadership status.
- Don't be afraid to have students go outside of Collaborate or MS Teams; take advantage of the new technology but keep strict rules about participation (see #15).
- Give students a clearly defined set of expectations about attendance and participation by assigning them marks or by making participation required to be marked as present as published in your daily lesson plan.
- Require attendance three times during each lesson (beginning, middle and end). For example, their first attendance could be taken on Socrative. To do this, have students write their full names and IDs. Then take a screenshot at the end. While the Socrative session is happening, show it "live" on Blackboard Collaborate or MS Teams. The second time could be when students answer questions on Blackboard Collaborate or MS Outlook, and the third attendance could be used as an exit ticket. For example, at the end of class teachers can use Socrative, Padlet, MS Outlook or Collaborate to require students to answer one or more questions.
- Set up cycles of learning that are easy for students to learn and then repeat them. These context-embedded routines are vital to establish at the beginning for novice online teachers as well as students who have little to no experience with online learning. Create at least five learning cycles that you can use each week. The repetition reassures students as they know what to expect. Then, as the course becomes more cognitively demanding, students will have scaffolding to hold onto as they learn new linguistic forms.
- Share everything (materials, methods, workaround ideas, and challenges) with faculty teaching the same course (s) and administrative leaders.

By employing these approaches, students will be in a better position to get the most from our new and dynamic online learning environment.

1. What is the main idea of the paragraph?
2. What are the advantages of bacteria present in the colon?
3. Are bacteria found in raw food different from bacteria Present in the colon?

Bacteria are an **integral** part of a healthy life. There are 200 times as many bacteria in the colon⁶ of a single human as there are human beings who have ever lived. Most of these bacteria help with **digestion**, making vitamins, shaping the immune system, and keeping us healthy. Nearly all raw food, too, has bacteria in it. But, the bacteria that produce foodborne illness are of a different, more virulent⁵ kind.”



⁵ A **virulent** disease or poison is extremely powerful and dangerous.
⁶ If there is an **outbreak** of something unpleasant, such as violence or a disease, it suddenly starts to happen.
⁷ **Foodborne** bacteria enter people's bodies in the foods they eat.
⁸ A **compelling** reason is one that convinces you that something is true, or that something should be done.
⁹ Your **colon** is part of your intestines—the tubes in your body through which food passes when it has left your stomach.

▲ Dishes contain colonies of *Campylobacter*, a disease-causing bacteria found on retail chickens tested at the University of Arkansas, U.S.A.

Comprehension Questions: Visual courtesy of Hayat El Samad

Keeping Informed on COVID-19 in Qatar

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread rapidly across the globe. Many people are still unsure about how they can stay safe. The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) in Qatar offers residents and citizens extremely useful and essential information on COVID-19 in four languages, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, and English. This *website link* is also available on the Hamad Hospital website. The MOPH website provides a regularly updated WHO Corona Virus 2019 situation report in a downloadable PDF form. Additionally, it offers advice on self-confinement and a downloadable PDF document containing guidelines on wearing medical face masks. All residents are strongly urged to wear a face mask whenever they are in a public space. The *Tip of Today* focuses on a

different topic each day, for example, advice to the elderly or suspected cases, etc. Additionally, there are two informative videos, one on correct handwashing procedures and another entitled *How to protect yourself against Corona Virus (COVID-19)*.

The website posts a daily infographic report which states the latest cases in the past 24 hours, the number of positive cases, the number of active cases, and the number of recovered cases. This useful infographic is also posted on Instagram, so users can easily send it on to friends via other social media apps. According to the website report on 19 April, 2020, "... the noticeable increase in the number of confirmed new cases of infection is due to several reasons, including the fact that the



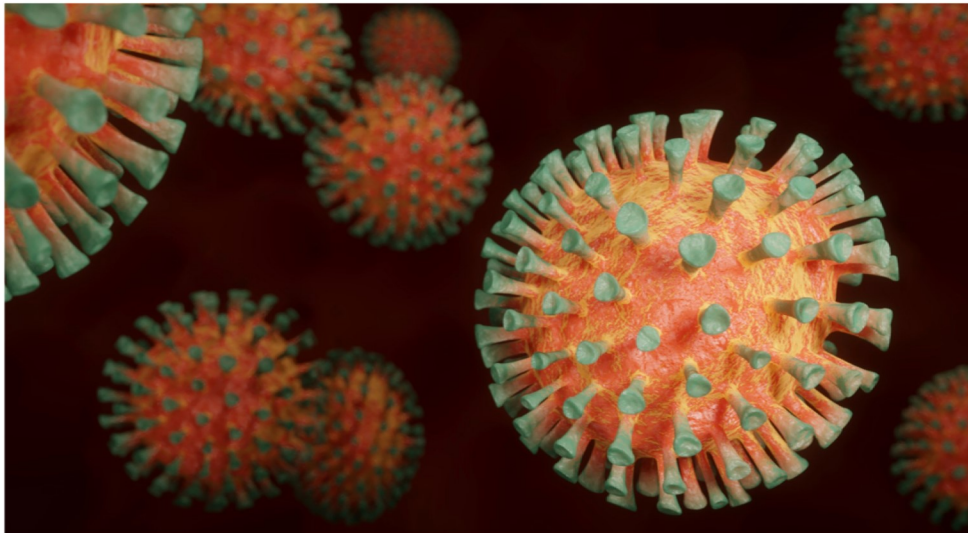
Visual courtesy of Pixabay

spread of the virus has begun to enter the peak state (i.e. the highest wave that affects the country)" (Ministry of Public Health, 2020). The report reassuringly mentions the efforts of the MOPH "... to track the transmission chains of the corona virus and expand the surveillance process, including

groups of contacts with people who were previously diagnosed with the disease"; this "... has contributed to the early detection of many cases of infection and reduced the spread of the virus" (Ministry of Public Health, 2020). Thanks to the unceasing efforts of the Qatar government and the MOPH, Qatar is effectively combatting this deadly disease to ensure that everyone receives the best possible advice, protection measures, and treatment.

References

Ministry of Public Health. (2020, April). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). *State of Qatar Ministry of Public Health*. Retrieved from <https://www.moph.gov.qa/english/Pages/Coronavirus2019.aspx>



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

Foundation Program Spring 2020 Open Days

Sara Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program

Foundation Program Student Affairs Office organized two FP Open Day sessions for foundation-level students who have been newly admitted into spring 2020 foundation-level courses. Students who attended the Open Day event were informed of Qatar University and Foundation Program policies and regulations as well as the student support services which are provided by the Foundation Program Success Zone.

The FP Open Days session for the female students took place on Monday, January 27th, 2020 while the session for male students took place on Wednesday, January 29th, 2020. The FP Open Day began with a welcome word from the Director of the Foundation Program, Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, in the presence of Dr. Nadeem Hashem, the Associate Director for Academic Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Manasreh, Head of Foundation Program Department of English, Dr. Mohamed Ben Haj Rhouma, Head of Foundation Program Department of Mathematics, and Hayat Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, along with staff from FP Student Affairs office. Dr. Al-Awah encouraged the students in their studies and emphasized the importance of utilizing the available academic support services.

As the event also aimed to introduce new students to academic opportunities, Mrs. Hayat El Samad introduced the Foundation Program's Distinguished Student Award and Student Achievement Award to the newly admitted students and explained how they could win these awards during their studies in the Foundation Program. Dr. Al-Awah recognized the winners of the fall 2019 awards, some of whom then shared their experience of FP courses and participating in these

awards.

Moslem Al-Qawasmi, a winner of the Fall 2019 Distinguished Student Award and a student in the college of Engineering, said that participating in the award is an important starting point and it motivated him to prepare for his forthcoming academic journey. Moslem told the audience that "I tried my best to get this award by doing all the course assignments accurately and submitting them on their due dates." He also added, "participating in the award has had a positive impact on my academic performance which is what I needed in order to be successful in the more advanced courses."

Khulood Al-Romi, another winner of the Fall 2019 Distinguished Student Award and a student in the College of Arts and Sciences, thanked the Foundation Program Student Affairs for offering this award, noting that it was a beneficial experience. It developed her skills and motivated her to strive to get the highest grades possible. She advised new stu-

dents to participate in the award and receive a certificate from their university. Khulood was pleased that this achievement made her parents, her teachers, and everyone who contributed to her getting this award proud of her accomplishment.

Following the awards distribution, students participated in an engaging session about attendance policies, exam rules, and the QU Code of Conduct using Kahoot, an interactive online tool for students. At the end of the event, students were introduced to the English and math academic support services provided by the Foundation Program Success Zone team members such as the daily one-on-one tutorial sessions and exam review sessions.

The Foundation Program Students Affairs office offers a wide range of student services to assist FP students in improving their math and English skills as well as creating a rich campus life for them.



Awarding Ceremony: Photograph courtesy of QU Photographer Ali El Hussein

Foundation Program Hosts Appreciation Ceremony to Honor Students and Teachers

Sara Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program

Qatar University's Foundation Program under the Deanship of General Studies, and in collaboration with the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Center (ISNSC), hosted an appreciation event. Students with special needs and disabilities honored faculty, student helpers, and peer trainers for their dedication and effort in facilitating their learning experience.

Thirteen students with special needs and disabilities demonstrated their leadership skills by organizing the event themselves and communicating with relevant stakeholders. The Foundation Program Special Needs Committee supported this event under the leadership of Dr. Enita Barrett. The students developed criteria for nominating 'bright star' teachers, planned the presentations, designed the event program, prepared a PowerPoint presentation, and set up the event venue. They also met and greeted the guests.

Seventeen lecturers from the Foundation Program Department of English were honored for their outstanding commitment and support for students with special needs and disabilities both in and out of the classroom. Certificates were awarded to students who had organized the event as well as student participants. In addition, selected students and faculty members shared their thoughts, reflections, and words of encouragement.

Dr. Hazem Al Awah, Director of the Foundation Program explained that, "The Foundation Program is committed to providing all students with necessary resources, in particular special needs and disability students, to enable students to develop their skills and achieve their full academic potential." He added, "This event creates opportunities for students to develop independence and self-advocacy, and the Foundation Program will continue

with collaborative projects with ISNSC to assist students in their university journey."

Hayat El Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs in the Foundation Program, emphasized the goal of this social event and said, "Foundation Program Student Affairs is dedicated to providing students with opportunities to contribute to the QU community, and this appreciation event is one of them. The integration of students with special needs and disabilities in the university community is achieved by enhancing communication channels among students, faculty and management, to ensure a positive university experience. Our students with special needs felt strongly about honoring their instructors and showcasing their commitment and keenness to enhance the success of all students."



Dr. Enita Barrett, Hayat El Samad, and Dr. Mohammad Manasreh: Photograph courtesy of Ali El-Hussein

FP Math Success Zone Launches ‘Audiovisual Collection’ to Boost Student Performance

Muneer Al Wadi, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

In its continuing effort to provide instructional excellence and innovative practices to promote student success, the FP Math Success Zone (MSZ) has created a user-friendly online ‘boost-up’ assessment service for students. This service, which began in the Fall of 2019, allows students to take three different quizzes throughout the semester. The content of each individual quiz is automatically selected by Blackboard from a bank of questions prepared by the MSZ, and the grades students receive are sent to the course instructor.

As part of this service, the MSZ recently developed a repository of quizzes and content related videos. Upon completion of each quiz, students will not only be able to compare their responses to the correct answer, they will also be able to visualize the creative mathematical processes via the videos. Students can simply ‘click’ on the corresponding educational video and watch the best approach to solving each question. This enhances the student learning experience on multiple levels: visual reinforcement, guided discovery and hands-on learning. Collectively, these resources should help students avoid misinterpreting the se-

quences required to reach correct mathematical solutions.

One challenge that the MSZ faced was ensuring that this online learning system does not affect the quality of tuition. Previously, students had to attend assigned tutorials in person. With the new system, students are given access to a comprehensive audiovisual collection of resources. Students now have the freedom to analyze their mistakes at any time or in any place they wish. Student responses to the digital repository have been very positive as was clearly shown in the student satisfaction survey conducted in early November.

The MSZ is committed to student success through the incorporation of technology to enrich the learning experience. As lifelong learners themselves, the team members are enthusiastic about creating new and exciting ways to keep students engaged. As such, the team’s goal is to fully develop a comprehensive digital collection of course relevant videos and to provide students with full, independent access to online assessments, instant feedback and explanatory videos.



Students taking the ‘boost-up’ assessment: Photograph courtesy of Muneer Al Wadi

Student Focus: Noora Ibrahim

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: Please tell me something about yourself.

Noora: I am Qatari; I am also an identical twin. I've just been accepted to study in the College of Medicine.

Interviewer: Well done! Let's talk about your experiences in the Foundation Program.

Noora: I was admitted directly to Foundation Program Level 2 classes in Fall 2019. I took Reading Workshop Intermediate (R002), Writing Workshop Intermediate (W002) and Integrated Core Intermediate (IC002).

Interviewer: What did you enjoy about your foundation courses?

Noora: A lot of things. I enjoyed making new friends and learning new skills. I liked all of my teachers, Mr. Muhieddin, Mrs. Elisabeth and Mr. Sanad. They were all very helpful. I found the articles in Reading Explorer very interesting. Mr. Muhieddin also advised me to do as much reading for my major as possible, so I did extra reading on Nutrition and Medicine. He's a really good teacher. This extra reading helped me with my writing course with Mr. Sanad. I learnt a lot of useful writing skills in this class. My favorite essay

was the compare/contrast essay, where I wrote about modern medicine versus traditional medicine. I also talked to my grandmother about herbal medicine, which helped give me more ideas for my essay.

Interviewer: Which class did you enjoy the most?

Noora: The IC002 class; it was so much fun. One of the best things was making new friends. The whole class really bonded together, and we still hang out together as a group. I liked every part of the class, especially speaking. Mrs. Elisabeth gave us a lot of opportunities to talk, like class discussions, group discussions, pair work and class interviews. We were able to share stories and experiences in English. I also enjoyed doing the project although at first, I was a bit lazy and slow to get started.

Interviewer: Why did you fall behind?

Noora: I was a top student at secondary school, I got over 95%, so the Ministry of Education and Higher Education nominated me for the Sheikh Tamim Scientific Excellence Award. This requires a portfolio, a lot of documents, and time-consuming preparation. The award will be next month,



Noora Ibrahim: Photo courtesy of Noora Ibrahim

so I had a lot to do, which made me delay starting the project. My teacher encouraged me to catch up, so I did and met all the later deadlines. This was important as I learnt time-management skills.

Interviewer: Do you have any special memories of your first term at Qatar University?

Noora: One of the best things was the IC002 class trip to Msheireb Museums. I learned so much about the Qatari culture at the Bin Mahmood House and about the petrole-

um industry at the Company House Museum. I didn't know how hard our ancestors had to work in difficult conditions during the first years of petroleum extraction. It was a great learning experience. We sang songs all the way home on the bus; we were so happy during the trip.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Noora. Best of luck with your nomination.

Invest in Your People: Department of Math, Foundation Program

Muneer Al Wadi, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM) at Qatar University held a professional development week for faculty from November 20th to 25th. Faculty were trained in experiential learning strategies and cutting-edge pedagogies by educational consultant, Dr. Heidi Krzywacki from the University of Helsinki. Training sessions were organized into the following themes: characteristics of a praiseworthy educationalist, innovative interactive student-centric learning strategies, active mathematics instruction, and peer learning. Faculty benefited from the clear and concise nature of the instruction and from the opportunity to engage with one another.

Prior to the professional development sessions, Dr. Krzywacki was invited to visit

classes to observe our local pedagogical practices and to offer her views on their effectiveness. She visited two classes and the math tutorial room. Following those visits, she acknowledged the uniqueness of the Qatari educational context and its particular challenges. Dr. Krzywacki also gave a workshop about the mathematics curriculum and its development in terms of meaningful learning, taking into consideration the curricula that are intertwined with personal and societal aspects. Another presentation was about learning in the Qatari educational context. This presentation discussed the development of the curriculum in terms of learner perspective in the Qatari educational context. During the session, attendees were divided into small groups to reflect on and discuss the

'concept of learning', for example, how to make learning visible and whether learning could be associated with social settings as well as individuals.

On the final day of her visit, Dr. Krzywacki praised the deep commitment, dedication and determination of the Department of Math, both faculty members and administrative staff. She also noted the importance of their efforts in creating a culture of learning and excellence. In her final session, she encouraged all faculty members to work closely together, and to share their teaching practices, in both gatherings and peer observations. She stressed that these are essential strategies for the continuous development of the program.



A discussion session between Dr. Heidi and faculty from the Foundation Program Department of Math: Photograph courtesy of Muneer Al Wadi

Testing and Assessment Training for the Faculty of the Foundation Program Department of English

Naima Sarfraz, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) invited Dr. Jessica Lewis from Marymount University to give training to faculty on testing and assessment from November 24th to November 28th. Dr. Jessica Lewis has over fifteen years of dedicated service to the educational field as a teacher, advisor, professor, and administrator. She joined Marymount University in 2013 as an adjunct professor and supervisor of student teachers. She became an assistant professor and an assessment coordinator in 2016. Dr. Lewis currently teaches graduate courses in the Education Department and also serves as an academic advisor for undergraduate students.

Dr. Lewis presented sessions on the following topics:

- Types of tests
- Test construction
- Test validity and reliability

- Giving constructive and focused feedback
- Rubric construction
- Assessing the intended learning outcomes of classroom instruction
- The role of informal classroom-based assessment
- Hands-on activities and experiential learning

Faculty were interested in discussing rubrics, constructing tests, assessing student learner outcomes, responding to student feedback, and expanding opportunities for student self-reflection. This signified their strong desire to meet university and departmental responsibilities and provide meaningful and valuable learning experiences for their students. As well as presenting to faculty, Dr. Lewis met with course leads and co-leads from the FPDE to discuss the different validity and reliability issues of the assessments



Dr. Lewis: Photograph courtesy of Alaed-din Halwani

used in their respective courses. Dr. Lewis found faculty to be highly motivated and dedicated to fulfilling their obligation to meet the needs of their students.



FPDE faculty attending a seminar by Dr. Jessica Lewis: Photograph courtesy of Ali El-Hussein

An Interview with Dr. Mohamed Chabi about the ‘Spot the Mistake’ Competition

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

In November 2019, The Foundation Program Department of Mathematics (FPDM) at Qatar University hosted a math competition called “Spot the Mistake” for Pre-calculus students. The event aimed to identify students’ most common math mistakes as well as to increase their awareness of these errors. The organizer of this competition, Dr. Mohamed Chabi, granted us an interview.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your professional career.

Dr. Chabi: I taught math in Canada for ten years, first at the University of Manitoba, and later at North British Columbia University. I joined the Foundation Program Math Department at Qatar University in 2004. I have initiated several projects such as Students at Risk, Math Student Support, Math Place-

ment Test, and Program Learning Outcomes. In addition, I was a course coordinator from 2012 to 2015. I have also participated and chaired various committees at department, foundation, and university level.

Interviewer: Let’s talk about the competition; what was the ‘Spot the Mistake’ competition about?

Dr. Chabi: In this competition, students received previously-solved questions and were asked to review the solutions and find the mistakes that had been made. The most common math errors made by students are due to perceptual or cognitive difficulties; these include lack of concept-knowledge, misunderstanding one or more of the required step(s), or being in a hurry. Some students un-

Explain the mistake (s) that is made

Find domain of $\log\left(\frac{4-x^2}{x-1}\right)$

solution: $\frac{4-x^2}{x-1} > 0$ and $x - 1 \neq 0$

$$4 - x^2 > 0 \text{ and } x \neq 1$$

$$-x^2 > -4 \text{ and } x \neq 1$$

$$x^2 < 4 \text{ and } x \neq 1$$

$$x < 2 \text{ and } x \neq 1$$

Domain: $(-\infty, 1) \cup (1, 2)$

A question from the competition: Courtesy of Raed Marabeh

wisely attempt to create their own construct when meaning is lacking. The purpose of the ‘Spot the Mistake’ math event was to engage students and encourage them to identify common mathematical errors. The competition emphasized developing mathematical flexibility in problem-solving and provided the students with an opportunity to improve their math skills.

Interviewer: How many students participated in the competition?

Dr. Chabi: A total of twenty-five students, eighteen females and seven males, participated in the event.

Interviewer: Was the event successful?

Dr. Chabi: Oh yes. The students were very enthusiastic

and gave it their full support. They also enjoyed the award presentation ceremony for the winners.

Interviewer: What was the most challenging aspect of organizing this math competition?

Dr. Chabi: Timing. It is often difficult to arrange a suitable time because of so many schedules and schedule conflicts.

Interviewer: What kinds of competitions are you planning to organize in the future?

Dr. Chabi: For the Spring 2020 semester, we are planning to organize three events: Math Application, Technology in Math, in addition to another ‘Spot the Mistake’ competition.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Chabi, for sharing your experiences with us.



Spot the mistake competition: Photo courtesy of Raed Marabeh

The History of the Foundation Program - Part 4: 1996 - 2001

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

In the fall of 1996, the advent of the five-day government working week made things a lot easier for the ELTU (English Language Teaching Unit) instructors. Their course workload did not change, however; 15 hours per week was the norm. As the number of students increased, so did the number of ELTU teachers. New recruits came from Libya, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, and India, adding to the cultural diversity of the teaching staff.

To supplement the textbooks, teachers continued to produce their own materials, particularly those in the English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) programs such as English for Business, English for Technology and English for Nursing. These latter two programs were taught at the original Teachers' College campuses in Madinat Khalifa North.

Most language classes finished by 14.00. However, the College of Business and Faculty of Technology had sponsored part-time students who worked for various government ministries or companies such as Qatar General Petroleum Corporation (QGPC); these attended late afternoon Parallel Education courses.

In 1997, the ELTU in Main

Women's Building acquired two more communal staff offices near Staircase 1, room 240 and the old audio-language lab in room 238.

Eight to twelve teachers shared these converted classrooms. Each instructor had their own desk and cabinet or filing cabinet. The first shared desktop computer had made its appearance in 1992. However, one computer was not enough to serve the needs of close to 40 teachers, so new computers were purchased for room 221 in the Men's Main Building and for the English for Engineering office. Sometime later another computer with an ink-jet printer was placed in the small hall between room 239 and room 240.

Another major improvement was the arrival of a photocopier situated just outside the secretary's office. This reduced time-consuming trips to the copy-office in the Men's Activity Building.

In the late 1990s, Qatar University began construction of the new College of Arts and Science building across the wadi, behind the Women's Activity Building. A pedestrian bridge was built to access this building. Shortly before its inauguration in 2001, all twenty-four prefabricated buildings, which

had housed the science labs and classrooms, were demolished. The College of Engineering, C07, now stands in their place.

It was at this time, the university decided to have a compulsory English for Science requirement; they had also decided to phase out the Nursing Programme and to cancel the English for the biomedical courses. All science majors were required to take the new English for Science courses run by Dr. Madani Osman. There was no textbook, only teacher-developed in-house workbooks printed by the technology department.

In Spring 2001, Sheika Muneera Al Thani announced she would be retiring at the end of the 2000-2001 academic year. Shaika Muneera had been an extraordinary leader: fair, impartial, dedicated, honest, outspoken, and always very supportive. A farewell luncheon was held to honor this wonderful woman for her decade of outstanding service.

Acknowledgements

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Main Men's Building: Photograph courtesy of Qatar University

Faculty Focus: Raghda Abu Salah

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.

Raghda: Although I was born in Saudi Arabia, I have Palestinian roots. My family then moved to Jordan for two years. When I was a teenager, we emigrated to New Zealand.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your studies.

Raghda: I did a Bachelor of Arts, in Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) at the University of Auckland. I got married and had my first two children but continued with my studies and got a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL).

Interviewer: Why did you become an ESL teacher?

Raghda: Teaching suits my personality. I had gone through the experience of learning a new language and adapting to a new country, so I could identify with second-language learners. I knew the challenges and difficulties of being an immigrant and felt I could help new immigrants feel at home in their adopted country.

Interviewer: When did you start teaching?

Raghda: I began teaching in 2006. My first job was teaching English to Arabic-speaking women at a community centre. After I graduated, I taught at The Concordia Institute and The Education Company. My students came from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Brazil, and Korea, as well as the Middle-East.

Interviewer: What was your most interesting job?

Raghda: Zayed College in Auckland. I taught ESL to immigrants, many of whom were Arabic-speaking. They came from countries like Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. I also worked in Australia as a translator-interpreter for the government; I interpreted for Arabic-speaking refugees and asylum-seekers.

Interviewer: When did you move to Qatar?

Raghda: In 2014. My first job was at an international school, the Middle-East School, where I worked as an ESL teacher and coordinator. Then I worked for the Supreme Education Council; I taught at Arwa Girls Independent Secondary School for several years. I started working at Qatar University in 2018 as a teaching assistant for the Foundation Program of English Success Zone.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you face?



Raghda Abu Salah: Photograph courtesy of Raghda Abu Salah

Raghda: There aren't too many. Perhaps the most difficult thing is being a working mum of four children ranging in age from 8 to 16. However, my kids are very supportive and help me a lot at home.

Interviewer: What do you do as a Teaching Assistant?

Raghda: Quite a lot of things. I give support in various skill areas like speaking, reading, writing, listening, and grammar. We tutor students from all three Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) sub-programs. On any given day we can tutor up to twenty different students. Some students think that we are there to do their homework or assignments; this is a popular misconception. In fact, we have to explain to them that the Teaching Assistant is basically a guide and mentor who provides them with learning tools to help improve their language skills and to help them become independent learners.

Interviewer: What are the best things about your job?

Raghda: Tutoring is not boring; every day is different. I enjoy the hands-on, one-to-one teacher-student experience; I like the challenge of helping students of varying abilities and levels. I also enjoy working with my colleagues. The FPDE has a very diverse community of instructors and staff, so it's great to know people from so many different backgrounds. I work with a wonderful and supportive team. It is very rewarding when a student comes back to say thank you.

Interviewer: Congratulations on your recent appointment as the new Lead for Success Zone and thank you for sharing your experiences.

Introducing Our New Faculty

Nisreen Karhili has 15 years of experience teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) to university students in Syria and Oman. She has two Master's degrees: the first is in TEFL from University of Essex, UK; and her second Master's is in Using Digital Technology in Language Teaching from The University of Nottingham, UK. Her interests in English as a Second Language (ESL) include pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and integrating technology in language learning.



Nisreen Karhili: Photograph courtesy of Nisreen Karhili



Paul Ames: Photograph courtesy of Paul Ames

Paul Ames is from Manchester in England. He has a Master's in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and his thesis was on the benefits of Theme-Based Learning (TBL). Paul has previously taught in the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. His passions are travelling and Manchester United.

Joseph Cruise has previously taught in Ireland, Spain, Hungary, The United Kingdom, and The United Arab Emirates. He has a Postgraduate Teaching Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and a Master's in TESOL from the University of Ulster, U.K. His areas of academic interest are in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), academic writing, and presentation skills.



Joseph Cruise: Photograph courtesy of Joseph Cruise



Leanne Wischeropp: Photograph courtesy of Leanne Wischeropp

Leanne Wischeropp is from Australia and her experience in teaching has seen her deliver English as a Second Language (ESL) across a broad range of contexts. She has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Adult Education, majoring in Language, Literacy and Numeracy. Leanne also has a Master's degree (MA) in Education (TESOL). Her educational interests include developing language learning resources based in the digital world and supporting literacy to the greater population.

Using Authentic Materials in the Math Classroom

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

Nowadays, the teaching of mathematics has become more interactive and meaningful due to the use of a variety of creative approaches, tools and methodologies. Because of the huge amount of time students and young people spend on electronic devices, educators have had to find alternative methods to keep students motivated and make mathematics more interesting and less tedious. One very effective way is to use authentic materials that can better aid educators in conveying and delivering their lessons.

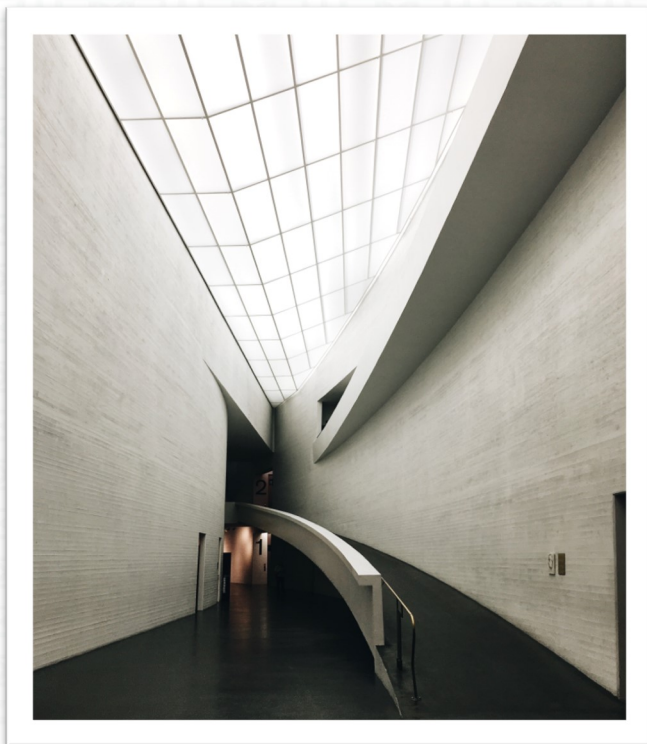
One useful way is using au-

thentic visual material such as slides, photographs, or pictures which can be taken from websites, newspapers, or magazines. In addition, documentaries, movies, or YouTube clips can be used to introduce a mathematical problem, concept, skill, or operation. For instance, a photo of a ramp at the entrance of a building where engineers are working is helpful while calculating the slope (steepness) of the ramp.

Authentic materials can be of use when teaching geometry. Geometry involves calculating the dimension, perimeter, area and volume of a geometrical



An angular building: Photograph courtesy of Pexels



A ramp within a building: Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

shape or interpreting information from graphs. Geometric concepts can be taught through the use of realia, such as 3D Geometric Solids. Realia and real objects can help students apply geometrical formulas to real-life situations. For example, in a classroom setting, students can be asked to calculate the area of a whiteboard, the perimeter of a desk, the volume of a whiteboard duster, or even the surface area of their mobile phone.

Students learn more effectively and efficiently through integrated learning: by doing, by

watching and observing, and by experimenting on their own. These strategies make learning more authentic and relatable. Today's educators are more aware of different student learning styles, so having a variety of methodologies and practices enables them to meet the needs of their students. Authentic math materials and tools can help make the class environment more stimulating, motivating, and fun, which leads to a more productive learning environment.

The Foundation Program's Math Professional Development Day

Muneer Al Wadi, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

The Department of Math in the Foundation Program at Qatar University held its semiannual Professional Development Day on December 3rd, 2019. The event was held during a non-teaching week. Faculty had the opportunity to share innovative teaching strategies and effective pedagogical practices in mathematics. During the workshops and seminars, a range of issues and faculty interventions were discussed. A total of 11 sessions were presented by the department faculty.

The presentations were characterized by two main themes. The first

was Best Practices for Teaching and Learning in the Classroom. Some presenters shared math strategies that are related to the context of local education, while others targeted specific objectives from the current curriculum. Another topic was The Use of Innovative Math Instructional Tools for a More Interactive and Engaging Learning Process. Of note were the various tips for positively changing the dynamics of lectures by using online tools to make teaching and learning more interactive and attractive for students.

This biannual professional development opportunity provided a welcoming, positive space for faculty to re-examine their approach-



An enthralled audience: Photograph courtesy of Raed Marabeh

portunity provided a welcoming, positive space for faculty to re-examine their approach-

es to teaching and consider innovative alternative strategies. This successful event highlighted

the math faculty's continuous efforts to provide student support.

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Photograph courtesy of David Bartsch