FP Jareeda Issue 30

In this Issue

Welcome to this special issue of FP Jareeda

Mondher Chaabane, Chair of the Foundation Program's Newsletter Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Welcome to issue 30 of the Foundation Program's newsletter, FP Jareeda with the new visual identity of Qatar University.

In this special edition, you will read a featured article about the history of Al-Qabas Program. You will also find various interesting articles about error correction, the use of Artificial Intelligence tools (AI) and websites in class. In addition, there are articles based on classroom experiences, which focus on topics such as collaboration and teamwork. Like previous issues, you will also enjoy reading about different events namely students' visit to Qatar University (QU) Sports Complex, the week of Entrepreneurship, the Cultural Heritage Video Competition and the Ramadan Race.

A major highlight of this issue is an article showing appreciation for one of the long-serving faculty in the Foundation Program, Mr. Musa Abu Huzaima.

Dr. Mondher Chaabane: Photograph courtesy of Mondher Chaabane

History of Al-Qabas Program 2017-2023

Hayat Al-Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

Outreach programs often guide students, helping them map and navigate their educational journey. The guidance they receive may inspire them and, in turn, lead to better academic performance in their school and university studies. Since Spring 2018, the Foundation Program (FP) has been offering Al-Qabas Program in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) to grades 10 and 11 high school students.

The program aims to raise awareness about the subjects required to succeed in university, especially Math and English, with a focus on testing to enhance students' successful enrollment in STEM and health majors. The program also aims to introduce students to the learning environment at Qatar University (QU) by conducting college and class visits to attract students to apply to QU in the future.

Originally, Al-Qabas Program was envisioned as a two-week summer camp for high school students. The Summer Camp was proposed by Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Director of the Foundation Program, and Dr. Nadeem Hashem, former Associate Director for Academic Affairs, at the start of the Academic Year 2017-2018. In April 2018, a proposal for the camp was submitted to the Academic Counseling Section at MOEHE for approval. The FP upper management team met with Mr. Ahmed Al-Balam, Head of the Academic Counseling Section, to final-ize the plan for the program. Mr. Al-Balam expressed enthusiasm, specifically about the idea about preparing students for admission requirements such as placement testing and international exams. He also identified the need to prepare students for life at university and draw their attention to the available student services. During the meeting, it was decided that Al-Qabas program would be held for one week during the schools' spring break for Qatari female stu-dents. The Academic Counseling Section would first identify the schools, and then share the contact details of the school managers and academic advisors with the FP.

The Foundation Program Student Affairs (FPSA) Office, under the leadership of Mrs. Hayat Al-Samad, enthusiastically dove into prepa-rations for the camp in the fall of 2018. The FPSA office worked tire-lessly with the Foundation Program Director's Office and the Depart-ments of English and Mathematics to prepare a comprehensive pro-gram that brought together QU colleges and offices. FP manage-ment brainstormed prospective names for the program. Mrs. Hayat Al-Samad suggested Alshu'la (The flame). FP Director, Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, proposed naming the program after the flame of the fire at the end of the stick or candle. Hence, Al-Qabas was chosen, and the slogan was "*For a Successful University Experience*."

Al-Qabas Program poster and logo: Visual courtesy of External Relations

Once the schedule and poster were finalized, the FPSA team shared Al-Qabas poster with the selected female schools under MOEHE. Registration and parent consent forms were drafted and shared with the schools. Since the program's goal was to inspire all students and equip both average and high-achieving students with the necessary skills for future studies, FP did not stipulate that the participating students be exceptional. Still, grade 11 students had to be enrolled in the science track. The FPSA admin team continuously liaised with academic advisors at the MOEHE schools to follow up on student registration and obtain parental consent forms. Subsequently, 100 students from seven schools were finally registered.

Students and school academic advisors attending Al-Qabas session: Photo-graph courtesy Hayat Al-Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

Al-Qabas Program offered a rich and comprehensive schedule cover-ing various academic and soft skills. It also successfully brought to-gether QU offices and student services departments under a unified initiative. The schedules included sessions offered by the Admissions Office and the QU Testing Center to raise awareness about entrance exams and QU admission requirements. The Colleges of Engineering, Education, Medicine and Pharmacy agreed to join the program and welcome the students. To introduce students to the available stu-dent services, FPSA joined forces with the Career Development Cen-ter, the Sports Affairs Department, QU Library, and the Counselling Center to deliver sessions. To familiarize students with the learning environment at QU, FP math and English teachers were chosen to welcome students into their classrooms and provide them with an immersive teaching experience.

FP faculty were also tasked to prepare lesson plans for English, math and soft skills sessions. Since 80 students were expected to attend, students were divided into four groups. Each group followed the same schedule, requiring four instructors for each session: one primary instructor and three secondary instructors. Mrs. Hayat Al-Samad was responsible for reviewing and approving the lesson plans. To ensure consistency in session delivery, demo lessons were conducted for each session, with the primary instructor leading and mentoring the secondary instructors. Occasionally, secondary instructors requested to conduct practice sessions themselves to ensure their thorough preparedness. Mrs. Hayat attended all the demo and practice sessions to check for timing, pace, level of difficulty, and engagement. All the sessions consisted of various activities and ICT tools to ensure maximum student engagement and reflect the teaching practices and learning environment in the FP. Similarly, each student group was assigned an admin member to chaperone and provide assistance. A total of 17 FP faculty and seven admin staff were working around the clock preparing for the students' visits from March 7 to 11, 2019 during the spring school break.

After much anticipation, the first day of the Al-Qabas Program finally arrived. The Al-Qabas Program started with the "Hayakom" session where Mrs. Hayat Al-Samad welcomed the students, followed by a welcome message from Mr. Ahmad Al-Balam and Dr. Hezam Al-Awah in the presence of Dr. Ibrahim Al-Kaabi, Dean of General Studies and Rana Sobh, the Director for Core Curriculum Program. Out of the 100 students registered, 48 students attended. Throughout the week, students attended various sessions, visited colleges, and learned about the available QU student services. The program concluded on a high note with the Student Talent Showcase, where students presented posters reflecting on their experiences during Al-Qabas week to faculty and students of the Foundation Program and received certificates in recognition of their participation.

The following year, Al-Qabas team started preparing for the 2nd edition of Al-Qabas Program. The team was excited to develop the program based on student and faculty feedback. The team's plans were disrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting a shift to online mode worldwide. Nevertheless, the Al-Qabas team adjusted quickly, and Al-Qabas Virtual Program was organized and delivered online from June 7 to 11, 2020. Unlike last year, registration was available for grades 10 and 11 female students from all MOEHE schools. The schedule consisted of 10 sessions on Math and English skills, study skills, and test-taking strategies for standardized tests such as ACT and IELTS. The sessions were offered via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. Registered students received instructions on how to log in to BB Collaborate Ultra. A total of 183 students registered, and 137 students from 30 schools attended the sessions.

English test taking strategies session: Photograph courtesy Hayat Al-Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

Al-Qabas team continued to work on and develop the program in collaboration with the Academic Guidance Section in MOEHE. Fawzia Al Malki, Vice Director of the Academic and Vocational Guidance Section, was assigned to liaise with the FP and the schools. In Spring 2021, Al-Qabas Virtual program was offered to both male and female students. A total of 50 male students and 215 female students attended via Microsoft Teams.

Student talent showcase: Photograph courtesy Hayat Al-Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

Building on the program's success, a hybrid Al-Qabas Program was offered in Spring 2022. Virtual sessions were delivered separately from the 20th to the 24th of March, 2022 for male and female students. Al-Qabas Virtual Program consisted of two virtual daily sessions with 16 FP faculty and staff members participating in the program's organization and delivery. 185 students attended the sessions and the total number of views reached 400. In addition to sessions raising awareness about math, English language, and test-taking skills, the importance of math and English skills in STEM was demonstrated in "Think Like an Engineer" and "Design a Helpful Mobile App" sessions. Al-Qabas also introduced students to entrepreneurial skills through the session "Young Entrepreneurs." To enhance successful enrollment in STEM colleges in the university, QU Enrollment Outreach and Engagement Department and Qatar University Testing Center also participated in the online program. Representatives from the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Physics from the College of Arts and Science provided information about the different majors on offer and their importance in the Qatari labor market. Following the online sessions, 11 schools participated in QU on-campus visits where 145 male and female students visited labs and facilities in the Colleges of Engineering and Pharmacy. Students additionally participated in activities that simulated the work environment. Due to the alignment between Qatar University and MOEHE schools' calendar, it was not feasible to conduct Al-Qabas Program in a camp format. As a result, the 6th version of Al-Qabas Program, held on November 6 and 7, consisted of only one-day campus visits for each school. Nineteen male schools and 20 female schools participated in the event. In the end, a total of 357 students attended various sessions.
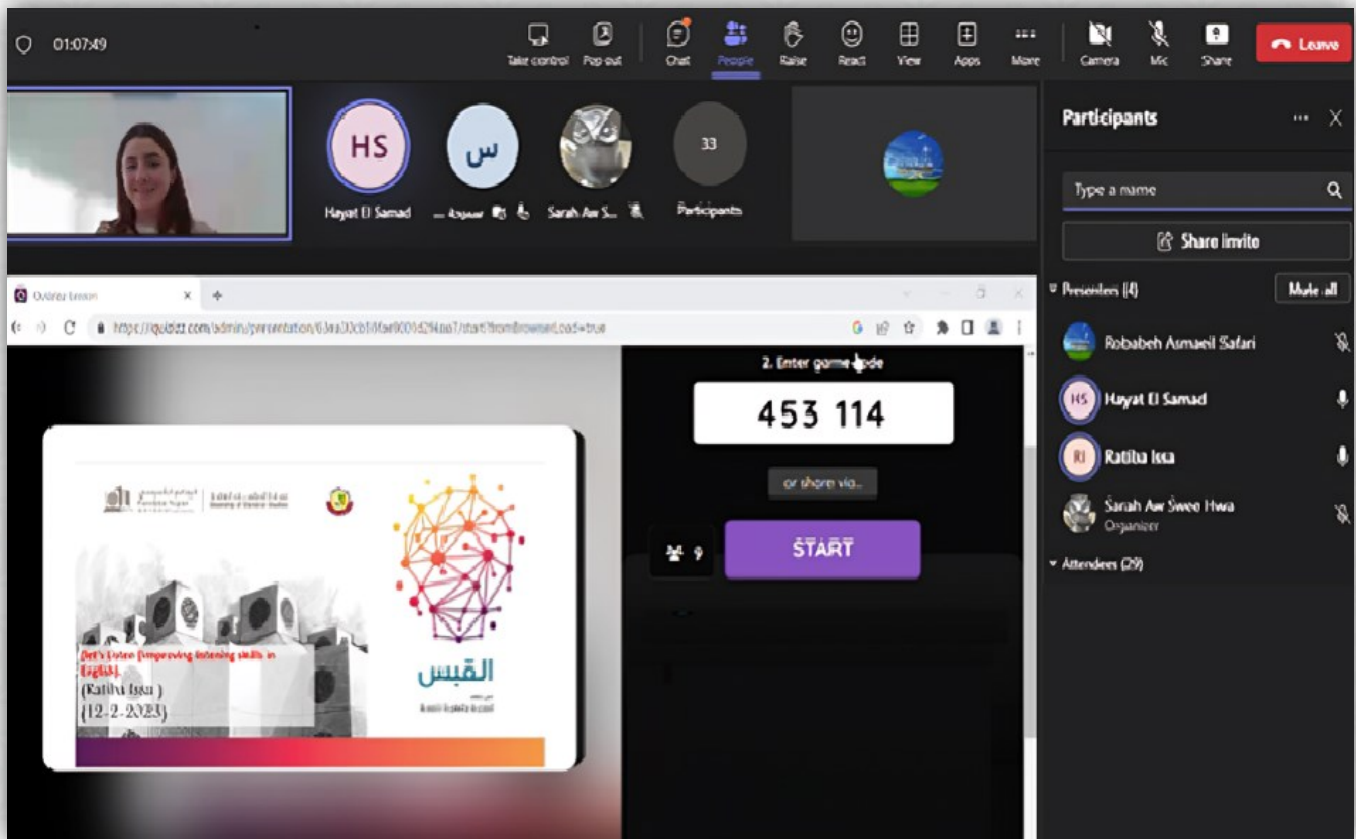
Al-Qabas virtual program: Photograph courtesy Hayat Al-Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program will continue to endeavor to provide Al-Qabas Program as part of its commitment to contributing to the community and bridging the gap between school and university.   To advance the university's objectives of attracting students to STEM disciplines and equipping them with the skills for a successful university journey, the Foundation Program will continue to offer engaging sessions highlighting the program's exemplary teaching practices, thus aiming to attract prospective students to the university.

Students' Visit to QU Sports Complex

Susan Christine Saafan, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On the 21st of May during the Spring 2023 semester, Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas, inspired by the mandated unit topic of sports and well-being, decided to take his C002 students to the Qatar University Sports Complex. Firstly, the intention was to offer the students an immersive, practical, real-world learning experience, and secondly, to give students a break from their usual classroom setting. As Mr. Al Nahas reasoned, "Given the academic pressures faced by our students, it seems that such outings offer essential psychological relief, fostering a sense of accomplishment and confidence that extends beyond the sports complex". The students were given the opportunity to engage in activities such as ping-pong, football, and circuit competition, all under the skillful guidance of the QU sports coach, Mr. Nassredine Baccouchi. This intensive athletic speed competition had the students rotate through a series of stations, each designed to address different aspects of physical fitness for 30 seconds at a time, testing their strength, endurance, agility and speed. The students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, especially as their teacher, Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas, participated alongside them throughout the activities.

Circuit competition for the students and teacher: Photograph courtesy of Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

Rope station in the circuit competition: Photograph courtesy of Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

Ping Pong battle: Photograph courtesy of Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

An additional benefit was the team spirit the activities sparked off, which is usually difficult for students to experience within a formal classroom setting. After the trip, one of the students Faisal Batis remarked, "what I liked the most about the visit was the camaraderie and team spirit we shared while engaging in various fitness activities. It fostered a sense of community and solidarity among us, contributing positively to our overall well-being". The sports trip effectively broke the classroom routine, rekindling students' learning enthusiasm and provided a refreshing break in order to boost academic engagement. This experiential learning not only enhanced the students' understanding and appreciation of sports and well-being, as outlined in their book reading and listening material, but also served as a powerful motivational tool, by practically applying theoretical knowledge in a fun and engaging manner, encouraging students to actively participate and invest in their learning process.

Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas and his Foundation C002 students: Photograph courtesy of Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

Error Correction in Speaking Tasks

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English & Co-chair of Newsletter Committee, Foundation Program

Error correction, and the way we do it, is an integral component of the language-learning process. However, regarding speaking tasks and assessments, adherence to error correction may sometimes be lacking. Various factors may contribute to this, such as the content coverage required in our lessons, meaning there is often little time nor opportunity to conduct worthwhile error correction. Also, there is the conventional pedagogical notion that in speaking tasks, the focus should be on fluency rather than accuracy, leading teachers to accept errors and relegate error correction to the sidelines. How necessary is error correction in speaking tasks? Do students perceive it or desire it as adding value to their speaking skills?

According to Suryoputro and Amaliah (2016), error correction in speaking is the rectification of errors in students' oral production by either teachers or students. Ellis (2000) suggests error correction optimizes linguistic accuracy and enhances students' motivation. Margolis (2010) states that effective oral feedback techniques promote language learning, raise student perception of instructional efficacy, boost confidence, and foster a fulfilling learning experience. The literature review generally suggests that error correction for speaking tasks is beneficial. This is provided that it does not impair the learner's self-confidence nor raise their anxiety to the point that it harms their language learning goals (Mackey et al., 2018).

Students value error correction in speaking tasks: Photograph courtesy of www.pexels.com

Students value error correction in speaking tasks: Photograph courtesy of www.pexels.com

As teachers, we may sometimes ask ourselves whether students want any error correction, or perceive it to be of any benefit to their speaking skills, or do we it because we think it is expected of us. Research by Suryoputro and Amaliah (ibid) found that students received oral corrective feedback positively. They became more mindful of their errors and reported enhanced pronunciation, grammar input and richer lexis. Lee's study (2004) revealed that both teachers and students preferred extensive error feedback, while research on oral error correction indicated that students desired more correction than their teachers (Park, 2010). Another study found that most students wanted their instructors to identify and deal with important and individual spoken errors (Saleh and Majeed, 2020).

Teachers will always favor fluency over accuracy in speaking tasks, perhaps rightly so. However, the literature strongly suggests that error correction improves students' speaking skills and is perceived positively by students, who welcome it as an inherent part of their language learning experience.

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Enhancing Team Collaboration through Structured Group Activities

Diana Reyos Malabanan, Lecturer of Math, Foundation Program

In educational settings, group activities foster collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking among students. The Group Activity model [Visual 1] presents a structured approach to engaging students in collaborative learning, ensuring they learn how to manage and contribute effectively within a team.
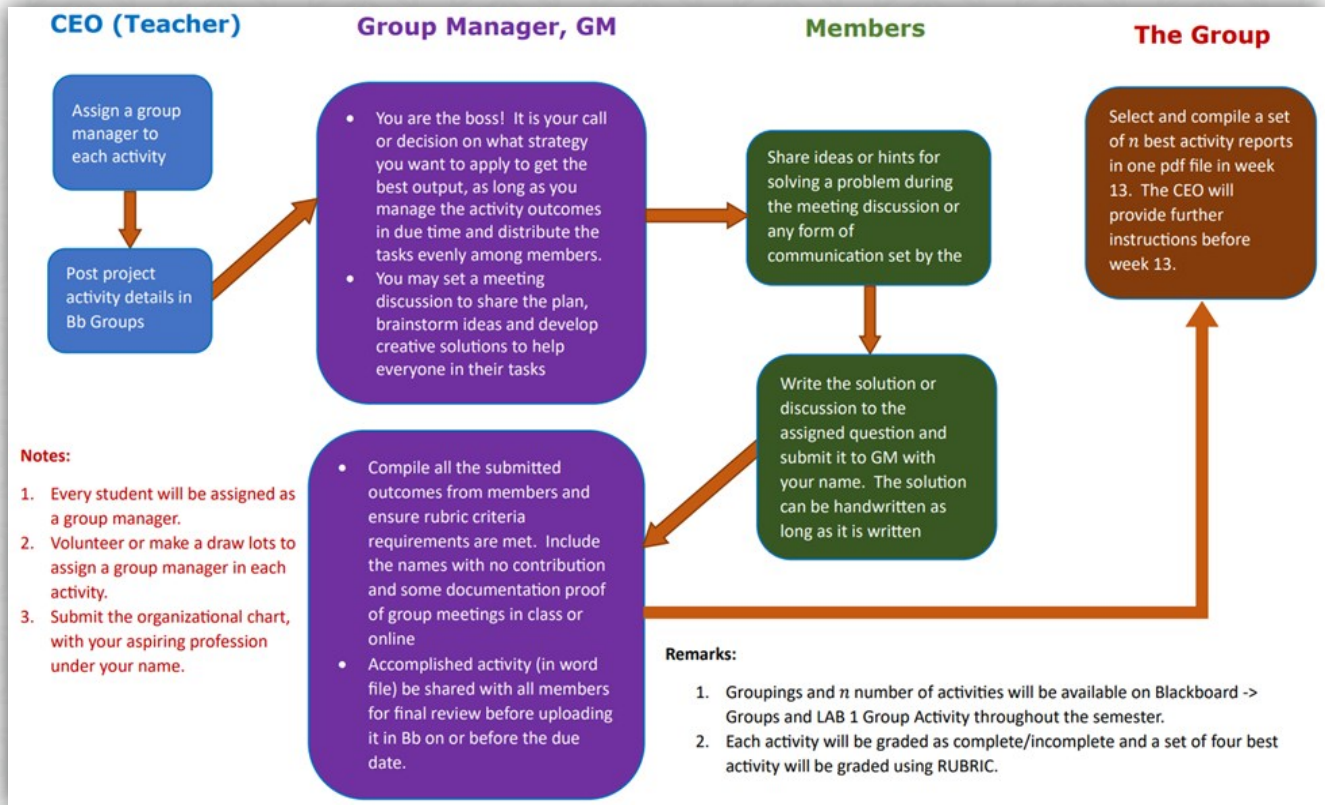
Math P100 Lab 1 – Group Activity Flowchart: Visual courtesy of Diana Reyos Malabanan

At the heart of this approach is the designation of a group manager for each activity, analogous to a project manager in a professional setting. This same individual, who rotates among students to ensure equitable leadership experience, is also responsible for planning the group's strategy to achieve optimal outcomes. They facilitate meetings, encourage brainstorming, and provide fair and reasonable task distribution.

The process begins with the group manager disseminating activity details, followed by planning and execution phases, where tasks are distributed, and solutions are developed collaboratively. Documenting participation and output is essential for assessment and holds each group member accountable for their individual contribution.

The output of the group's efforts is a compiled report of their activities, which is thoroughly reviewed and finalized before submission. This output and evidence of collaborative effort and individual contributions, are evaluated based on a rubric that assesses accuracy, work detail, teamwork, organization, neatness, and timeliness.

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Accuracy	All the answers are correct.	Most of the answers are correct.	Some of the answers are correct.	Very Few of the solutions are correct.
Work shown	All work details are thoroughly shown	Most work details are thoroughly shown.	Some work details are shown.	Very Few work details are shown.
Teamwork and Completion	All the assigned tasks in the activity are completed.	Most of the assigned tasks in the activity are completed.	Some of the assigned tasks in the activity are completed.	Very few of the assigned tasks in the activity are completed.
Organization and Neatness	All the information is presented in a neat and organized manner.	Most information is presented in a neat and organized manner.	Minimal neatness and organization.	Disorganized and messy presentation.
Timeliness	All the activities were received on time.	Most of the activities were received on time	Some of the activities were received on time.	Very Few activities were received on time.

Assessment rubric: Visual courtesy of Diana Reyos Malabanan

The rubric serves as a guideline for assessing the quality of group work and determining an overall grade or score. Accuracy is measured by the appropriateness of the group's solutions, reflecting their understanding and problem-solving abilities. The detail mentioned in 'Work shown' reflects the amount of work done in order to explain and expand on reasoning processes. Teamwork is assessed by the completion of all assigned tasks, demonstrating effective collaboration. "Organization and neatness" pertains to the clarity and presentation of findings, while "timeliness" records the submission of the activities within the given timelines.

This activity aims to enhance academic understanding through collaborative learning and helps learners develop essential soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, and time management. By structuring group activities and providing clear evaluation criteria, educators can provide a more engaging, fairer, and productive learning experience. This prepares students for collaborative work environments they will likely encounter in their future careers.

Teamwork: Visual courtesy of www.bixabay.com

Students' Reflections on Teamwork and Learning in Group Activities

Diana Reyos Malabanan, Lecturer of Math, Foundation Program

This article showcases the experiences and reflections of male students on their journey through structured group activities, based on their answers to a survey conducted in Spring 2023, which highlighted the importance of team collaboration in educational settings and the development of essential interpersonal skills.

Collaborative activity: Photograph courtesy of Diana Reyos Malabanan

The photograph shows six young men engaged in a collaborative activity, with varying levels of engagement, including focused viewing on a laptop, deep discussion, and a focus on teamwork, surrounded by paper and notebooks.

Group discussion: Photograph courtesy of Diana Reyos Malabanan

The photograph captures a lively group discussion in a modern classroom, engaged in their work using various study materials like printed guidelines, laptops, and smartphones. The scene encourages active collaboration and knowledge sharing, with some students pointing to specific items and others taking notes.

Overcoming Challenges: Collaboration and Strategy

The group faced time management challenges during busy days, but many overcame them by collaborating, reallocating tasks, and seeking teacher assistance. Online meetings were used for easier coordination, effective communication, collaborative problem-solving, and better time management.

"Team Strategies for Handling Non-Commitment in Group Projects"

The group effectively addressed uncommitted group members through direct communication, reassignment, and collective work. Communication through using reminders, WhatsApp discussions, or contacting the teacher was crucial,. Incomplete work was shared to ensure completion. The group's approach was centered on teamwork and mutual understanding, acknowledging each member's unique circumstances and willingness to help maintain group progress.

"Feedback and Ideas for Improvement for Future Group Collaborations"

Participants suggested improvements to future group collaboration activities, including tutorials on uploading solutions, early start times, task alignment with exam content, preparation before deadlines, considering smaller group sizes or having one group member in a permanent supervisory role, and clarifying answer format. Despite these suggestions, most respondents expressed satisfaction with the current setup, believing it to be near perfect or could not be significantly improved.

"Participant Insights on Group Collaboration Experience"

The participants in the group collaboration activities praised the opportunity to build friendships and enjoyed working together in person and through educational platforms. They valued the frequent changes in group managers and the pleasant atmosphere. They valued new social connections and educational experiences. Some emphasized the importance of diligence in group management. Overall, they found the collaborative activities enjoyable and beneficial for social and academic growth.

Students' experiences in group activities have highlighted the benefits and challenges of teamwork in education. Despite facing obstacles, they adapted and thrived, emphasizing the importance of collaboration for skills development . Positive feedback and suggestions for improvement reflected a commitment to enhancing the group work's effectiveness. Overall, these reflections underscored the value of teamwork in fostering educational and personal growth.

Twee: A Helpful Website for Creating Supplementary Materials

Erika Van Winden, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

As a teacher who enjoys providing supplementary materials for my classes, I habitually keep my eyes and ears open to online tools to help me create worksheets, quizzes, or interactive activities. Fortunately, a friend recently introduced me to a beneficial website called, Twee. It is a website that simplifies the process of creating classroom materials. It can help with grammar, listening, reading, speaking, vocabulary, and writing by offering a range of tools and features.

General overview of available tools on Twee: Visual courtesy of Twee

What sets Twee apart from other websites is its ability to meet specific requirements. You can ask Twee to generate a reading passage or listening transcript tailored to students' needs, including the topic, target vocabulary, genre, length, and level. As an additional step, you can copy the reading passage or transcript into other tools within Twee to create multiple-choice and open-ended questions or true-false statements.

Speaking is often overlooked in textbooks, especially in conversations and topics relevant to students' lives. I once used a textbook with lead-in discussion questions such as, "Do you like furniture?" and "How many tables do you have in your home?" which provided little stimulus for learners. Needless to say, I wrote my own questions; however, had Twee been available then, I would have used it to create speaking prompts—and in a fraction of the time. For example, Twee can generate dialogues—and the lexicon is very natural. In addition, you can provide Twee with a topic, such as "opening a start-up company in Qatar," along with target vocabulary and proficiency level. It will then generate discussion questions, debate topics, and icebreakers such as fun and interactive quizzes.

The vocabulary, grammar, and writing tools are equally exceptional, and I highly recommend you visit Twee to try them out. You will abso-tweetly love it.
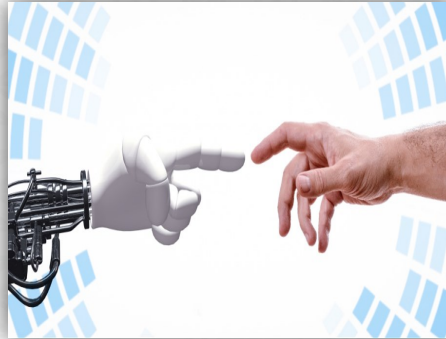

Listening, reading and speaking tools: Visual courtesy of Twee

Article Review: Using AI generative tools in the classroom[1]

Kenneth Downes, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Artificial Intelligence (AI) underlies many education tools such as chatbots, learning platforms, virtual tutors, and games. A form of AI known as Generative AI (GenAI) enables the creation of customized new content such as text, video, images and audio. Chatbots interact with users through tools such as Microsoft Copilot, Google Bard (renamed 'Gemini' in February 2024) and Open AI ChatGPT and Sora, to create such resources.

Artificial Intelligence: Visual courtesy of www.publicdomainspictures.net

Google Gemini logo (replaces Google Bard): Visual courtesy of https://commons.wikimedia.or/

OpenAI ChatGPT logo: Visual courtesy of https://commons.wikimedia.or/

Teachers and stakeholders often have misgivings about GenAI's effects on educational quality. These are mainly due to issues of safety, cheating, accuracy and a loss of real interaction. Nonetheless, GenAI is a powerful tool with great potential to enhance learning when used within institutional policy guidelines.

To foster student critical thinking about the responsible use of GenAI tools in the classroom, learners can compare information sources. For example, they can collect information points on a given topic from their peers, the internet, and a GenAI tool, then, they compare and evaluate each source's advantages and limitations.

In another classroom application, students can creatively use GenAI tools like Sora and DALL-E to make short videos or images in order to enhance their presentations. This will challenge them to be precise with their GenAI prompt wording inputs. Additionally, GenAI chatbots can help them supplement their idea generation for brainstorming or mind map activities.

From a teacher's standpoint, utilizing such digital tools effectively requires clear and specific prompt writing for the GenAI chatbot to produce the desired outcomes. Some repeated prompt writing practice and refining of wording will enable this. However, sometimes specific information such as the Common European Framework of References for Language (CEFR) levels such as 'B1' is not 'understood', so using the prompt 'Pre-intermediate' yields better results.

Teachers should also be aware that GenAI chatbots can concoct information, so the generated output material should be proofread and edited to avoid inaccuracies, falsehoods, problematic content and biases of the information sources or software developers. Users should also be careful to anonymize any specific or personal information. GenAI learns continuously and may share information with other users.
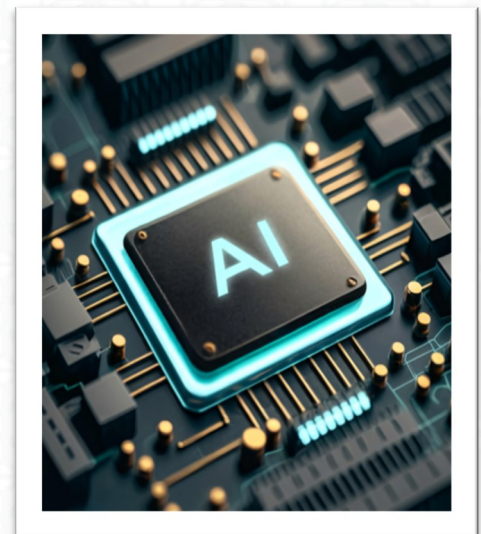
In sum, the unfamiliar terrain of GenAI tools can be mastered with some practice to achieve time efficiencies and benefits for learners both individually and collectively.

Artificial Intelligence microchip: Visual courtesy of www.publicdomainspictures.net

[1] Oliver, S. (2024, January 31). 6 tips for using generative AI tools in the ELT classroom. Cambridge English Blog. https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2024/01/31/6-tips-for-using-generative-ai-tools-in-the-elt-classroom/

Faculty Focus: Mr. Musa Abu Huzaima

Alshouq Fakhroo, Engagement and Communication Specialist, Foundation Program

Mr. Musa Abu Huzaima, is an English Lecturer in the Foundation Program at Qatar University. He obtained his Master's degree in Applied linguistics from The University of Technology, Sydney, and joined QU in 2012. Mr. Abu Huzaima has progressively advanced his career throughout his tenure, gradually holding various positions within the Foundation Program.

Mr. Musa Abu Huzaima: Photograph courtesy of Ahmed Hazratzad

Notably, he served as the Head of Department (HOD) of the Foundation Program English Department (FPDE) in 2021.

Mr. Abu Huzaima's vision to effect changes stemmed from years of observation within the department and a recognition of the necessity to implement improvements that enhance excellence and provide educational services to students and stakeholders. His inspiration arises from a desire to enact positive changes in the lives of students, faculty, and staff.

Mr. Abu Huzaima has played a pivotal role, substantially contributing to Foundation Program (FP) educational sphere within and beyond academia.

Academically speaking, Mr. Abu Huzaima has spearheaded initiatives to enhance students' learning experiences. He addressed challenges through discussion and consistently referred to best practices in the field. This included implementing QU initiative of aligning all FPDE course syllabi with QU Educational Excellence Themes, mapping assessments to course learning outcomes in adherence to best practices in teaching English as a foreign language,

and customizing textbooks to better prepare students for their future majors.

Furthermore, he led the introduction of problem-based learning, aligning it with the QU goal to equip students with academic and practical skills for their future.

Beyond academia, Mr. Abu Huzaima optimized administrative processes, including global faculty recruitment and efficient academic event organization. Moreover, he played a key role in optimizing resources, fostering streamlined workflow by introducing shared calendars and implementing meeting best practices. Through his multifaceted contributions, Mr. Abu Huzaima has made significant contributions to the Foundation Program exemplifying dedication and excellence in academic and non-academic spheres. Gratitude is also extended to the FPDE team for their unwavering support in achieving shared goals.

Mr. Abu Huzaima stated: "Leaders, should always strive to make a positive impact on the lives of subordinates, students and the university at large".

idea   planning   strategy   success
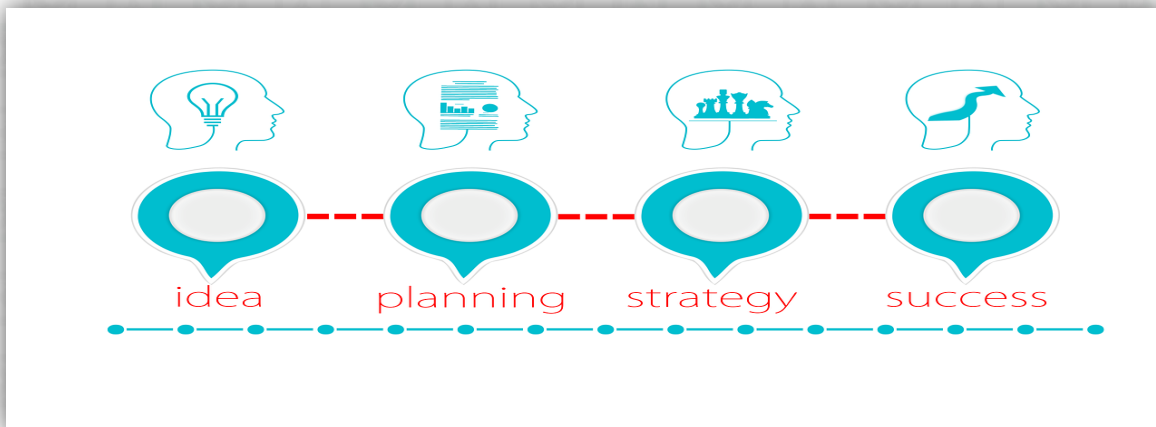
Steps to success: Visual courtesy of www.pixabay.com

Igniting the Entrepreneurial Mindset with Entrepreneur Broadcasts

Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

In ENGL 252, the Entrepreneurship Project is not just a course requirement; it's an opportunity for students to cultivate their entrepreneurial mindset. It begins with an Individual Report aimed at igniting that spirit, guiding students on the path to entrepreneurship and business ownership. Previously, students would engage in a virtual panel discussion featuring local entrepreneurs, supplementing their learning with online research. However, organizing these panels became a formidable task for the course team, diverting attention from the primary focus—the Showcase Event. Moreover, the lengthy recordings of these discussions failed to captivate all students, highlighting the need for a more dynamic approach. Seeking to innovate and enhance delivery methods, the course lead, Conan Kmiecik, proposed conducting one-on-one interviews with a network of entrepreneurs to create a bank of interviews. Then he and Mhammed Chadi, a veteran ENGL 252 course instructor, set about completing this course initiative in six weeks—a tight project deadline. The first step was reaching out to Ahmed Al-Saygh, an ally of the course, to facilitate connections with interested entrepreneurs from his network, demonstrating the power of networking, a quintessential entrepreneurial skill. The team next explored options for recording the interviews.

Initially considering External Relations for video production akin to the recorded QU president's speeches, they found ER's schedule too rigid for the project's short timeline. Subsequently, they approached IT, who suggested using Webex monitors available on campus for interview recordings, allowing for a visually engaging format with both interviewer and interviewee on-screen. The Webex monitor option showcased the importance of resourcefulness and a willingness to explore unconventional solutions in pursuit of an idea. After deciding on a recording method, the team proceeded with their first interview, led by Hamza Abbasi, a new ENGL 252 instructor, who skillfully guided the conversation in a natural, podcast-style manner. He coined the term "broadcast" to describe the podcast-style interview with its broadcast video element. The team was quite pleased with the name for these interviews. However, the first recording suffered from an echo, making the interview unusable and prompting the team to reassess their approach.

Embracing the business mantra "Fail fast, fail cheap," the team quickly pivoted to recording interviews via Teams, eliminating the need for entrepreneurs to visit campus and accommodating their schedules. This decision allowed the project to overcome self-imposed barriers and deliver better results. Thus, the two subsequent interviews, conducted by Hamza and Maimuna Aghliw, a faculty member known for her moderation skills, yielded favorable recordings with no audio issues.

Hamza Sufian Abbasi interviewing entrepreneur Mr. Saoud Al-Emadi: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik

With two videos recorded, the ENGL 252 team was able to share these interviews on Blackbord before the start of its Entrepreneurship Project. Going forward, they plan to expand their repository of interviews with both local and potentially international entrepreneurs to provide students with valuable insights and advice as they embark on their entreprenurial journeys. Despite facing setbacks during its entrepreneur interview initiative, the course team remained resilient, recognizing that perseverance in pursuing worthwhile ideas is integral to the entrepreneurial spirit.

A Week of Entrepreneurship: The Showcase Event and Ignite Competition

Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On April 29th, Qatar University's (QU) Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), in collaboration with the College of Business and Economics (CBE) Center for Entrepreneurship and Organizational Excellence (CEOE), organized the Foundation Program (FP) Showcase Event—the first of two entrepreneurial events during the week.

The showcase marked the final stage of the ENGL 252 Entrepreneurship Project, where students applied business knowledge and English communication skills to Qatari business ventures. 59 teams of female students and 16 teams of male students from the ENGL 252 course presented innovative business concepts to a diverse audience, including university members and business professionals. Faculty members from CBE and FPDE praised students for their passion and confidence during the three-hour event. Distinguished attendees included Dr. Rana Sobh, Dean of CBE; Dr. Saeed Albana, Director of the CEOE; Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, FP Director; Dr. Hala Hadba, FP Associate Director; Hayat Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs; and Dr. Abir Ahmed, Head of FPDE.

Ignite Competition award presentation: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik

Showcase event course team: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik

Then, on May 1st, the CEOE collaborated with the ENGL 252 course to host the Ignite Your Entrepreneurial Future Competition. Organized by Mohamoud Mohamed Ahmed, Senior Learning & Development Specialist at CEOE, the competition followed the FP Showcase Event. Four teams were selected from the showcase to participate, pitching their ideas to a panel of local entrepreneurs serving as judges.

The Ignite Competition allowed students to demonstrate creativity, entrepreneurial aspirations, and communication skills, providing valuable experience for their future endeavors. The CEOE and the business English course intend to continue hosting events like this competition, expanding on the Entrepreneurship Project, and offering ongoing support and challenges for students' entrepreneurial development. Distinguished attendees at the showcase included Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, FP Director; Dr. Hala Hadba, FP Associate Director Hayat Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, and Dr. Abir Ahmed, Head of FPDE.

Overall, the back-to-back entrepreneurial events at QU highlight the university's commitment to developing the next generation of Qatari entrepreneurs for the country and the Gulf region. Such initiatives also encourage collaboration between faculty and entrepreneurship stakeholders, providing multiple platforms for students to develop their entrepreneurial potential.

The Qatar Cultural Heritage Video Competition

Imad Al-Hawamdeh, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Under the Deanship of General Studies, The Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) announced the "Qatar Cultural Heritage Video Competition" for Qatar University (QU) students. The event aimed to educate students about Qatar's cultural heritage, and improve their creativity and visual art skills.

The event was organized by the Extra Curricular Committee, chaired by Hayat El Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs. The judging panel consisted of Maimuna Aghliw, a teaching assistant, Yaser Sulaiman Al-Shatnawi, another teaching assistant, and Anwar Ghanim Alfetlawi, a lecturer of English. The judges evaluated the videos based on content and design.

Specific guidelines were set for students to follow in order to participate in the competition. First, the participating videos should only focus on cultural, historical and heritage themes. The places students choose for their videos must also be related to Qatar. Second, the length of the uploaded videos should not to exceed 2 minutes (120 seconds). The third standard is that students should research and gather information about their chosen place, and provide their voiceover narration for the video. The voiceover was required to be in English only. Moreover, participants were asked to consider cultural sensitivity in their videos by respecting the cultural values of Qatar.

Four contestants participated in this competition and created authentic videos about Qatari heritage. Some places featured in the videos were the Barzan Towers, a cultural museum of old watchtowers in Umm Salal Muhammed, and Souq Waqif, a famous traditional market in Doha.

Al Corniche Street, the famous waterfront road in Doha: Photograph courtesy of first place winner, Mohamad Abdein

The Barzan Towers video: Photograph courtesy of second place winner, Ahmad Al-Henzab

Dallah, a traditional Arabic coffee pot: Photograph courtesy of third place winner, Layaly Al-Marri

The traditional architecture style of Souq Waqif: Photograph courtesy of contestant Amna Tharamal

Mohamad Abdein came first. Ahmad Al-Henzab ranked second. Third in rank was Layaly Al-Marri. The first three winners received certificates and prizes for winning in the contest. The fourth contestant, Amna Tharamal, received a certificate of participation.

Overall, the video competition effectively educated students about Qatar's heritage. The videos also showcased students' creativity and visual design skills. This competition may also help students in their future school or work projects. Such competitions can also inspire students who see the video, and may encourage them to visit the cultural places in the videos and appreciate their significance.

Ramadan Race

Charles Fullerton, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On Saturday, March 23, Qatar University Alumni Association along with the Sports Affairs Department held its third annual Qatar University Ramadan Cross Country Race. The race allowed competitors to choose between three and five kilometer runs, and was open to both Qatar University (QU) students and faculty, and the wider community. Over 400 participants took part in the run, which included a mix of serious runners, weekend warriors and people of all ages. According to Mohamed Damak, the lead trainer at the university gym, the race aims to "have a positive impact on the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being of the university community."

As with any extracurricular activity, the Ramadan Race was a good chance to meet new people and see those you already know in a new context. Before the race, many people took pictures with their friends, teachers and competitors. There were plenty of questions about training and expected finish times and, of course, some good-natured boasts as to who would beat who. Dr. Mehmet Orkun Canbay from the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) said "The Ramadan Race was another amazing sport event from Qatar University. The race brought us together to raise awareness of a healthy life. It was great to see my co-workers and students on campus during a sport activity. I really enjoyed participating in the event." The winner of the 5 km race crossed the finish line in just 16 minutes while the winner of the 3 km race needed only 10 minutes. Slightly older and less-in-shape runners were still crossing the finish line half an hour later, to even greater applause.

Dr. Mehmet Orkun Canbay & Charles Fullerton at the race finish line: Photograph courtesy of Charles Fullerton

Everyone enjoyed a sense of accomplishment and comradery at the end of the race, along with free drinks and healthy snacks. The Ramadan race is held every year. Online sign up is free and easy. Why not participate next year?

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