

FP Jareeda

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New Opportunities

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

Welcome to issue 20 of the Foundation Program's quarterly newsletter, FP Jareeda.

The Fall 2020 semester was unique for the Foundation Program as all classes and events were delivered online.

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane's article on the Foundation Program Department of English's (FPDE) 5th Annual International Conference on English Lan-

guage Teaching highlights how delivering content online can create new opportunities.

In addition, issue 20 contains a thoughtful and reflective article by the very first editor of the Foundation Program's (FP) newsletter, Dr. Abdelmuniem Hussein.

I hope that you enjoy reading issue 20.



James Scotland: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

QU 5th Annual International Conference on English Language Teaching

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The Qatar University (QU) Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), under the Deanship of General Studies and in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), held its 5th Annual International Language Teaching Conference, *English Language Teaching and 21st Century Skills – Communicate, Collaborate, Create*, from 7th to 8th of November, 2020. For the first time ever, the FPDE annual conference was held virtually, via the online platform WebEx. Participants were able to join in from all four corners of the globe and listen to world-renowned plenary speakers, as

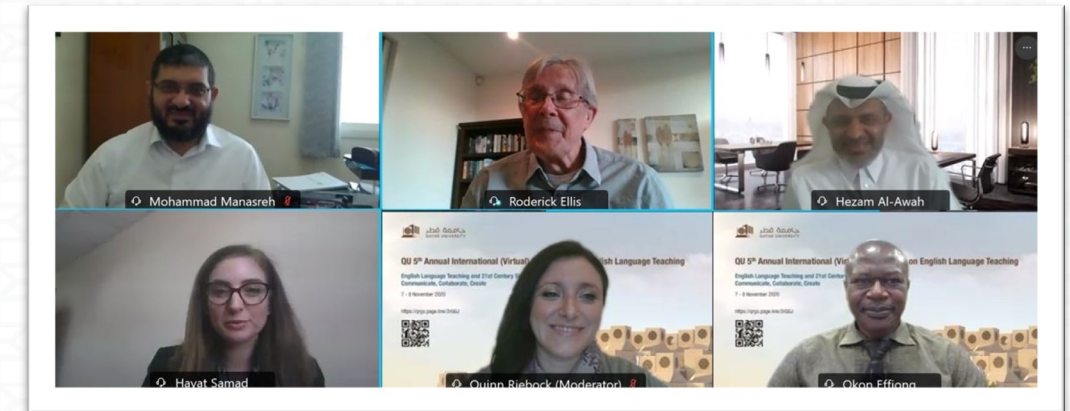
well as participate in various seminars, panel discussions and workshops in order to learn from, discuss, and share ideas with fellow English language instructors, educators, and linguists.

A wide variety of pertinent and interesting topics were on offer, ranging from collaborative learning, project-based learning, student engagement, learning-creativity, critical thinking as well as very relevant topics such as distance-learning and instruction, digital literacy, alternative assessment, and cheating.

The virtual conference focused on helping teachers assist students to develop their language and critical thinking skills by offering a number of novel cutting-edge skills, tips, ideas, theories, and practices in foreign language acquisition. Residing in over forty countries, over 8000 people registered online for the conference. Owing to the collaboration with the MoEHE, more than 500 government teachers participated in the event.

The FPDE Conference Committee, under the Conference Chair, Dr. Okon Effiong, and Director of the Foundation Program, Dr. Hezam Al Awah, accepted seventy-six proposals from presenters from all over the globe: Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, South America, Europe, and the Middle East.

Qatar University President, Dr. Hassan Rashid Al-Derham, gave the opening address, saying, "Today, we are very proud to host the fifth edition of this international conference, which brings together a large number of teachers, educators and language experts in TESOL. The conference title reflects the current reality, as learners need these skills to integrate into the global labor market effectively." This was followed by a warm welcome by Dr. Ibrahim Al Kabbi, Dean of General Studies. "The conference we are about to have is the first online international conference hosted by the Foundation Program at Qatar University. As we welcome



Dr. Mohammad Manasreh, Department Head of English, Foundation Program, Dr. Rod Ellis, Presenter, Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Director of the Foundation Program, Foundation Program, Hayat Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program, Quinn Riebock, Teaching Assistant of English, Foundation Program, Okon Effiong, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program and Conference Chair: Visual courtesy of Sara Salmeh

everyone, I am pleased to have among us in this conference colleagues from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the State of Qatar in particular. We will continue to work together to promote best practices in ELT and learning."

Numerous speakers from countries such as Pakistan, Poland, Iran, Japan, Nigeria, South Korea, Oman, Colombia, Kuwait, Australia, India, United Kingdom, Canada, Morocco, Algeria, China, and the United States of America as well as Qatar gave a wide variety of talks on subjects of great import to language educators.

Over 1,100 attendees tuned in to listen to the first day plenary speaker, Professor Steven Krashen, a world-famous specialist in language acquisition and linguistic competence development. His presentation, *Three Issues in Language*

Acquisition and Use was very thought-provoking. .

The second day plenary speaker, Professor Emeritus Rod Ellis, a staunch advocate of task-based learning, discussed the question: *Task-based language teaching (TBLT): Where are we at and where are we going?* He explained how TBLT evolved from communicative language teaching practices as well as second language acquisition research.

The two-day international event was a resounding success thanks to the untiring efforts of the conference organizing committee. Behind the organizing team, every step of the way, was the ever-supportive FPDE Head of Department, Dr. Mohammad Manasrah, who regards the conference as a prestigious academic and professional development opportunity for QU faculty and international par-

ticipants to listen to various experts in the field of language teaching.

Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, the Conference Chair and Director of the Foundation Program at QU, noted the conference was one of the largest academic conferences held at Qatar University. It provided participants with an opportunity to review and discuss modern academic skills in the educational sector as well as contribute to enabling faculty members and researchers to develop their skills in order to enhance the quality of services provided in our educational institutions.

According to Dr. Effiong, "Overall, the conference was seamless and efficient and attendees were pleased with the event. We had attendees from all corners of the globe and have received positive feedback on the quality and organization of the event."

Foundation Program Success Zone Meets Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic

Quinn Riebock, Teaching Assistant, Department of English

Effective teachers learn to adapt to the needs of the students and overcome the contextual challenges or crises that they encounter along the way. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Foundation Program Success Zone (FPSZ) have shown how teachers take what may be a challenge and find new opportunities to learn and develop.

Since its inception, the FPSZ has worked to provide support to all students registered in the Foundation Program (FP) math and English courses. The team of Teaching Assistants (TAs), are not only highly qualified with advanced degrees and years of teaching experience, but also demonstrate enthusiasm and empathy that motivate and encourage every student to improve. In particular, TAs contact at-risk students and visit virtual classrooms regularly in an effort to prioritize and reach out to students who are most in need.

Through these relationships with QU students, TAs are able to provide individual customized learning sessions using a range of multi-media supplementary materials. This allows autonomous learning to take place as students engage with the content in their courses based on their individual preference, pace, and readi-

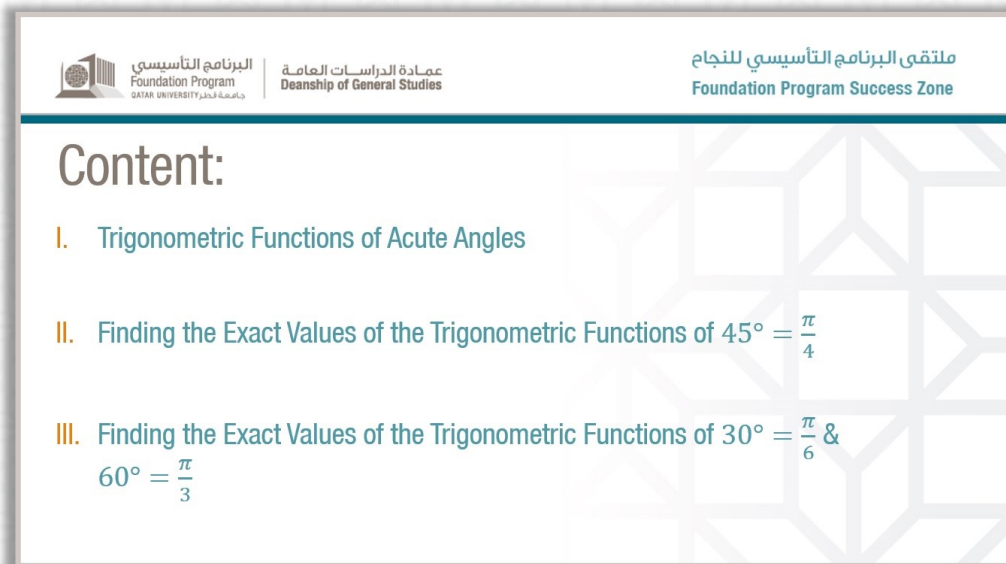
ness. In its entirety, the FPSZ fosters student skill development in both math and English, and in turn, improves outcomes and results in FP courses.

While the transition from on-site tutoring to virtual sessions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic was not without its difficulties, FPSZ TAs were able to adapt and continue serving students through online tutoring sessions on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. In fact, the FPSZ, both in math and English, has provided services to more than 600 students since online learning began in March 2020. As has

been the case for many in the educational sphere, this required TAs to attend workshops and professional development webinars on best practices in online learning methods. To this end, they have expanded access to online learning resources for students, which increased their availability 24/7. The TA team developed a series of educational videos that provide explanations and practice in the areas of math, grammar, writing elements, and reading strategies. Furthermore, practice exercises and assessments increased and underwent improvements to be

available to students through a comprehensive OneNote resource bank, based on the content and sequence of each course supported by the team. Math workshops and weekly revision sessions were recorded and made available to students on Blackboard.

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have served to broaden the scope of the FPSZ in terms of the variety and accessibility of their services. The team of FPSZ TAs continues to take on and provide support services despite current obstacles.



Math FPSZ video showing how to compute the values of trigonometric functions: Visual courtesy of Sara Salmeh

The FP 2nd Entrepreneurial Panel Discussion for English for Business Communication Students

Jerry Brewington, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

An on-line Entrepreneurial Panel Discussion was recently held by Qatar University's Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) and the Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Development in Qatar. This event was part of an entrepreneurial project, which in turn is part of the English for Business Communication (ENGL 252) course.

Mr. Conan Kmiecik, Course Lead of the English for Business Communication (ENGL 252), explained that, "The aims of this panel discussion is to give students the opportunity to interact with young Qatari entrepreneurs and learn from their experiences, and to help students acquire an entrepreneurial mindset. In addition,

the panel discussion is intended to further the development of student's language learning and transferable skills."

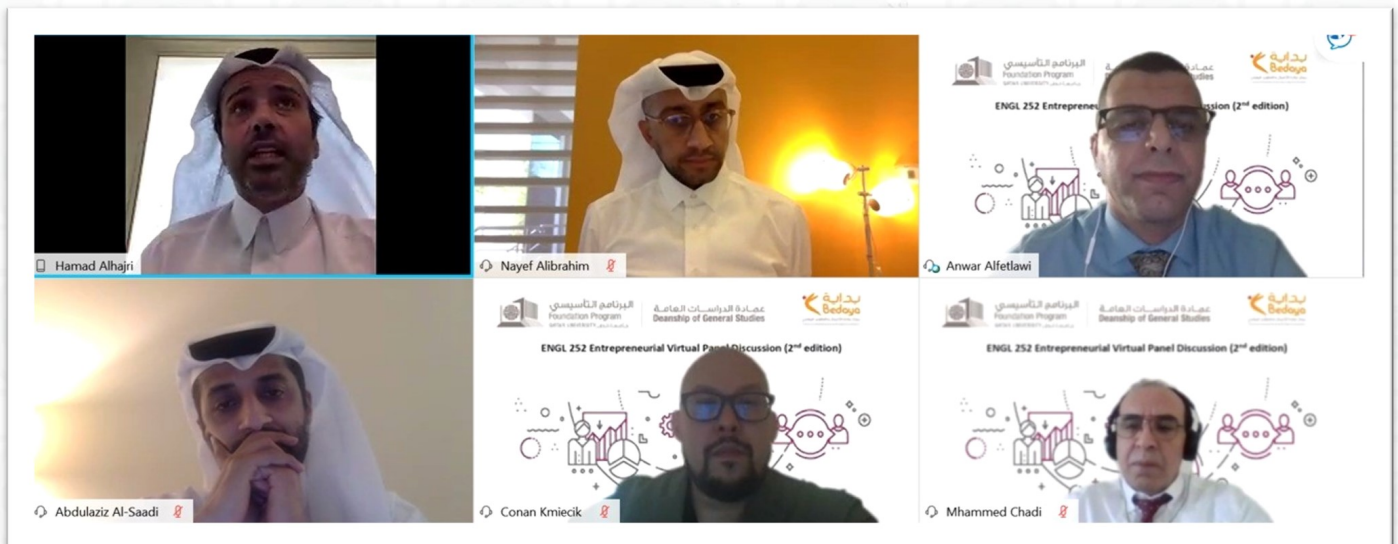
The panel discussion included six Qatari entrepreneurs, three men and three women, who discussed a range of issues with panelists and students alike. The Women's panel included Ms. Al Jazi Al-Thani, the owner of ASH designs, a design consultancy services and interior design solutions business, Ms. Laila Al-Qaedi, owner of MEDAD (Arabic for 'ink') a stationery shop, and Ms. Noor Bahzad, who operates her own graphic design business. The men's panel included Mr. Hamad Al-hajari, owner of various businesses in Qatar, Mr. Nayef Al-ibrahim of ibTECHar Digital Solutions, a

company providing transformational educational experience and Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Saadi, Founder of YallaClass.com, an online platform with the aim of motivating people to embrace an active lifestyle.

Entrepreneurs related how they had become business owners, and the challenges they had faced. They also offered advice to students on starting their own businesses. Students were eager to discuss their own business ideas with the panel, in addition to learning how to overcome obstacles and obtain funding for their ideas. The entrepreneurs discussed real-world steps on how to start a business, including obtaining business licenses, hiring the right

employees, and creating the right digital advertising.

Mr. Kmiecik said the event's success was due in large part to the support of the Foundation Program's management team, Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Dr. Nadeem Hashem, and Dr. Mohammed Manasreh. In addition, Mr. Kmiecik recognized the very important support of Mr. Ahmad Sayegh, the Entrepreneurship Manager of Bedaya Center, who was responsible for arranging the outstanding panelists. Lastly, this event was the continuation of the planning and hard work of Mr. Mhammed Chadi and Mr. Ben Kohler (former Course Lead).



Mr. Hamad Alhajri, owner of various businesses in Qatar, Mr. Nayef Alibrahim of ibTECHar Digital Solutions, Mr. Anwar Alfetlawi, Qatar University Foundation Program Lecturer, Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Saadi, Founder of YallaClass.com, Mr. Conan Kmiecik, Qatar University Foundation Program Lecturer and Mr. Mhammed Chadi, Qatar University Foundation Program Lecturer: Visual courtesy of Mr. Conan Kmiecik

Ms. Rabab Ismael: Winner of QU Distinguished Employee Award

Jerry Brewington, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: First, congratulations Rabab Ismael on being chosen as this year's recipient of the Qatar University (QU) Distinguished Employee Award.

Ms. Rabab: Thank you. In order to qualify for the award, the Foundation Program (FP) management must nominate a staff member whom they view as exceptional to compete for the award. I am honored that the FP chose me to represent the program in the competition. This is the second time I have been nominated by the FP to compete for the award. Receiving such an award at the university level gave me self-confidence as well as a sense of accomplishment, especially that all my efforts during my years working for the FP were recognized.

Interviewer: You are a Student Support Specialist in the FP, an obviously outstanding one. Can you tell us a little bit about your background, how long have you been in this position?

Ms. Rabab: I hold a Master of Arts (MA) in Comparative Religions from Hamad bin Khalifa University, and I am currently pursuing my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at University Technology Malaysia. I have been working at QU since 2007 and have occupied different posi-

tions in the FP Student Affairs Office. I first worked in testing and student admission management, then I worked as an Academic Advisor for students registered in the FP. Subsequently, my title was changed to Student Services Coordinator, and currently I am a student support specialist.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about your job as a Student Support Specialist? What skills, personal qualities or philosophy does one need to excel in your position?

Ms. Rabab: A student support specialist should be a good listener who can listen to students and calm them down, especially when they present their complaints or problems. In addition, the Student Support Specialist should be up to date in terms of Qatar University's and the FP's regulations, rules and policies so s/he can raise awareness among students and provide accurate advice to students. A Student Support Specialist must also have strong organizational and IT skills and prioritize daily tasks according to their importance. Working well under pressure and time constraints are two other skills that a Student Support Specialist should have in order to be successful and to maintain positivity in his/her workplace, especially



Ms. Rabab receiving her award: Photograph courtesy of QU photographer Mohammad Sharif

when dealing with students. Many unplanned issues might occur during the day, such as course override or timetable issues, complaints about classes, teachers, registration, especially at the beginning of the semester when we work long hours. There might be logistical issues with student events right before or during an event. Therefore, the Student Support Specialist should be prepared for all eventualities and be ready to provide support and guidance.

Interviewer: Finally, what advice can you give to current and future foundation students on reaching their education and career goals?

Ms. Rabab: They should take

their studies seriously as this is the start of their academic journey. They are not only gaining the knowledge, they are also developing their personalities, skills, and ethics. They should benefit from all the facilities and services provided by the university as university life should be memorable. Finally, they should be role models in their society.

Interviewer: Ms. Rabab, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us about the vital, wonderful work you and the FP Student Affairs Office are doing in FP and QU. Once again, congratulations on your achievement.

Ms. Rabab: Thank you very much.

Spot the Mistake Math Competition

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

Participating in competitions can help students learn how to prepare for future assignments and meet challenges. Competitions are also enjoyable activities for students. The Extra Curricular Committee and the Success Zone, under the FP Student Affairs Office, regularly organizes math competitions, like the *Spot the Mistake Math Competition*, to stimulate student interest in mathematics and foster greater engagement.

This year, due to the current circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Spot the Mistake Math Competition* had to be conducted virtually. The competition was held during the common hour on Wednesday Oct 14th, 2020 as students and teachers had no scheduled classes during this time.

The Extra Curricular team asked teachers to nominate student participants. Nominees had to meet specific criteria, such as having good

Spot the Mistake Questions

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
Question 9	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12
Question 13		Question 14	

The online competition platform: Visual courtesy of Muneer Al Wadi

presentation skills and the confidence to express themselves appropriately in front of others. Additionally, candidates were required to have good scores on their midterm exam. In total, there were 25 student participants from both the Elementary Algebra course and the Pre-calculus course.

Students were divided into three teams; each group was required to analyze a mathematical problem, find the mistake, and discuss its solution. Students had to answer and analyze the mathematical equations and justify their reasoning. Students also had the chance to correct each other and come up with the appropriate solutions.

At the end of the competition, the winning group was announced: Lulwah Alajmi, Sheema Bakash, Hajira Afreen, Maha Al-Shaiba, Duha Ahmed, and Moza Al-Kuwari.

Maha Al-Hajri commented, "I was nominated to participate in the *Spot the Mistake Math Competition*. The experience


was very interesting and a remarkable initiative. It definitely added a unique and competitive advantage to my knowledge in a creative way. It also had the spirit of cooperation and competition within all teams. I would like to congratulate all winners and wish them luck."

Throughout the competition, the students were given an opportunity to challenge themselves and apply their critical thinking skills to come up with the correct solution. Feedback was very positive and students asked to have another competition in the future. In brief, hosting this event was exciting and useful for both students and teachers.

Spot and correct the mistake in the following mathematical sentence

4

$$\frac{\sqrt{125} \pi}{\frac{3}{4} \pi \sqrt{5}} \text{ is an irrational number}$$



A question from the competition: Visual courtesy of Ahmed Abdelaziz

On-line Health October 3³


Keith Drummond, FP Health and Safety Committee Chair and Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

This past year it's been my pleasure to be involved with the Foundation Program (FP) Health & Safety (H&S) Committee. Combining H&S with community building, this committee complements the university-wide H&S group with a particular focus on FP teachers' and learners' concerns. This year the H&S committee has been keen to provide helpful ideas and information in an accessible and efficient way. We launched our annual campaign, *On-line health October 3³*.

For our initiative, the H&S team wanted to raise awareness of Information Technology (IT) related health concerns for teachers and learners and foster physical and emotional well-being during on-line instruction.

Offering an extravagant three-kilogram fruit prize, the H&S Committee circulated a link to a three-question on-line health quiz. In a 'task-teach-task' approach, multiple attempts were allowed and over the following month, the three questions were answered in three e-poster broadcasts. We found that nearly all of our instructors who did the quiz got one or two questions wrong. Most of them missed that exposure to sunlight is good for sleep and that blue light from computers is implicated in poor sleep. The majority also incorrectly identified the best hand-wrist keyboard position for preventing carpal tunnel syndrome.


We hoped that respondents would also be interested in our three e-posters. They were fun to produce, and I was fortunate and quite humbled to work with our valued FP colleague and QU graduate Sara Salmeh. She designed all visual materials, with excellent attention to color and shape. A big thank you also goes to Dr.


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عمادة الدراسات العامة
 Deanship of General Studies

لجنة الأمن والسلامة في البرنامج التأسيسي
 FP Health and Safety Committee


On-line Health October 3³ ✓



-Lots of blue light from computer screens can disrupt your 'circadian rhythm' and mess up your sleep.

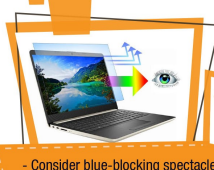



-Sleep makes you stronger & more emotionally stable. -it also aids recall for exams.




Grade point average by amount of sleep


Hours of sleep per week	Mean GPA
Under 5	~3.1
5 to 6	~3.25
7 or more	~3.35




- Consider blue-blocking spectacle lenses & screen protectors. - You can also alter screen settings on your PC and download blue-blocking apps for your phone.




- Harvard Medical School says exposing yourself to lots of bright natural light during the day will boost your ability to sleep at night. No problem in Qatar!



- A final strategy is a timer to remind you when you've been staring at the screen long enough.



Take an online quiz and win
 3kg of exotic fruit!
 Entries close 26 October.
<https://forms.gle/RdmtBJmi7Fqnu1v8>



Visual designed by Sara Salmeh

Hezam Al-Awah, Director of the Foundation Program, for his leadership and support.

We're looking forward to next year's awareness campaign which will be about, well, wait and see!

Running Labs Online in the Foundation Program

Department of Math

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

Math Foundation Program Success Zone (FPSZ) runs a Math Lab. The Math Lab offers tutoring (in individual and group sessions), review sessions for exams, coaching sessions, and much more. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, the FPSZ moved the Math Lab to online sessions.

During the first two weeks of the semester, instructors split their classes into two groups and sent students a list of Teaching Assistants (TAs) they could work with during the lab hours. The student list changes periodically based on the performance of students during quizzes and the midterm.

During the online sessions, the TAs use different approaches and techniques to engage students and meet their needs as well as various worksheet activities. Some tasks can be solved with the help of online software, for instance, Desmos Graphs, which helps to really understand concepts through visual examples.

The TAs provide class instructors with

2. Perform the indicated operations. Choose the simplest and factored form of the answer.

$$\frac{x}{x-1} - \frac{3}{x^2+x-2}$$

50% of respondents answered this question correctly.

- $\frac{x^2+2x-3}{(x-1)(x+2)}$
- $\frac{x+3}{x+2}$ ✓
- $\frac{x-3}{(x-1)(x+2)}$
- $\frac{x-3}{x-1}$

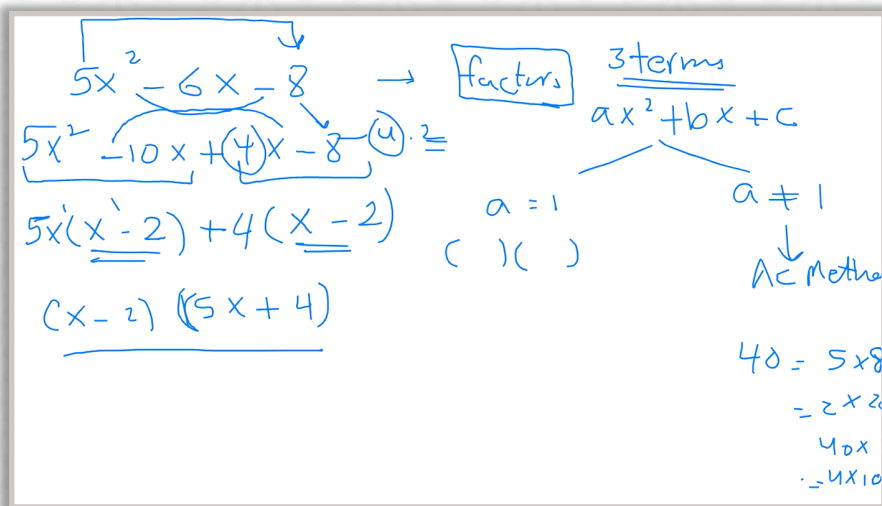


Using Microsoft Forms in Math labs: Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh

weekly feedback regarding the activities and time spent with students. Based on this feedback, lessons are constantly modified to match students' current level of performance and understanding. TAs also inform instructors about student attendance and participation as well as their contribution level. Student engagement and participation makes these online lab hours lively and interesting.

Different online platforms are used for the tutorial labs, such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and Microsoft Teams. The TAs regularly coordinate with the instructors about suitable delivery methods. Students are expected to send their work to their instructor by the set deadline. They receive the worksheet 24 hours before the lab session to enable them to prepare and have a better chance of participating and answering.

The TAs register student progress on SharePoint, check their attendance record, and urge them to attend sessions via SMS messages and emails. Students who perform poorly in Math Lab sessions are requested to attend more tutorial sessions by the FP Success Zone for further explanation and extra practice. Overall, this interactive approach has proved to be very effective and helpful to students.



$5x^2 - 6x - 8 \rightarrow$ Factors 3 terms
 $ax^2 + bx + c$
 $a = 1$ $a \neq 1$
 $(\quad) (\quad)$ \downarrow
 $AC \text{ Method}$
 $40 = 5 \times 8$
 $= -2 \times -2$
 $40x$
 $= -4x + 0$

Solving algebra questions in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra: Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh

Roundtable Discussions on Covid-19

Jeffrey Maggard, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On October 12th and 14th, the Foundation Program Student Affairs (FPSA) Extracurricular Committee held two Roundtable Discussions on Covid-19. The female session had twenty-four student participants and the male session had eleven. Each discussion was centered around the effects of Covid-19 on students' families and their education. The discussions also gave students a chance to use English to explain their anxieties and ways of coping with stress. The participants were given Certificates of Participation by the FPSA Extracurricular Committee.

As one of the primary aims of the FPSA Extracurricular Committee is to foster language skills by providing students with opportunities to express themselves in English outside of the classroom, these discussions gave students a safe space to do this. What is more, these roundtable discussions not only provided positive experiences for students, they also gave teachers and administrators valuable insights.

The event supervisor, Shamsa Alrushaidi said, "Some students who might be reluctant to participate in class were

readily open to sharing their experiences because the relaxed atmosphere allowed them to open up and share their views." Importantly, students who may have been reluctant to speak in English had the opportunity to share their ideas in writing. For instance, one student revealed she struggled with not having strong time management skills at the beginning of the pandemic. Then she explained how she discovered her inner strengths as a result of seeing her weakness and that she has been able to develop the time management skills which are needed to be an independent learner.

Hearing students freely express themselves gave teachers a chance to learn about what students want, how they feel, and how well they can express themselves in English outside the classroom. Moreover, students benefited because they could use English for authentic purposes and talk freely about personal experiences, anxieties and ways of coping with them.

Both sessions were supervised by the FPSA Extracurricular Committee Chair, Shamsa Alrushaidi, moderated by Hamid Delfi, and attended by



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Come and Join us!

Foundation Program

Roundtable Discussion on COVID - 19

Be ready to immerse yourself in an amazing discussion around COVID 19.

Areas of Discussion:

1. The pandemic effects on my family
2. My education during Covid-19
3. Stress and anxiety
4. Ways I found to cope with the new situation

**Females: Monday, 12 October, 2020
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm**

On the BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra:
<https://qrqo.page.link/Qua35>




For inquiries: fpstudent@qu.edu.qa

FPSA Extracurricular Committee members: Muhieddin Badour and Joseph Cruise. The Foundation Program Department of English Head of Department, Dr. Mohammad Masneh and Foundation Program Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Hayat Samad, also attended and engaged with students in these discussions.

The FPSA Extracurricular

Committee would like to see more faculty participation in future events because the opportunities to learn from students in this atmosphere are substantial. Students have a lot of hidden language potential and the classroom is not enough to display it.



Farewells from Our Departing Faculty

Noureddine Cherif, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program; Benjamin Kohler, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Noureddine Cherif

I joined Qatar University in Fall 2013 as an English Lecturer in the Foundation Program. Since then, I have held numerous leadership positions. I have worked hard throughout the past seven years to help the Foundation Program achieve its goals. I have worked closely with students to make their learning experience unique, fruitful, and enjoyable. I was responsible for the Fun Learning Zone, inaugurating FP Jareeda, and the ENGL 110 course. I also worked with a team of leaders

on a number of projects to help the program grow and create curricula that meet the program and students' needs in the best possible way. In this position, I enjoyed a great sense of collegiality, the leadership spirit, and the inspiration I received from both the students and the teams I worked so closely with. After 15 semesters of hard work and commitment, I am moving to Canada, but I will definitely miss every single person in our Foundation Program.



Noureddine Cherif: Photo courtesy of Hayat El Samad



Benjamin Kohler: Photo courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

Benjamin Kohler

Goodbye Qatar and Qatar University! My family and I are moving to Spain, my wife's country, to raise our young family there. I will certainly remember the six years I spent here as a won-

derful learning experience, and I will miss my colleagues and the friends that I have made here during this time. I wish everyone in the Foundation Program all the best.



Reminiscences

Dr. Abdelmuniem Hussein, Editor of the Foundation Program Newsletter, 2004 – 2010

I was recently delighted to learn that the Foundation Program (FP) has reintroduced the Foundation newsletter after such a long time. The new newsletter, *FP Jareeda*, is commendable: it is well-designed, beautifully written, concise and informative. I remember, as the first editor of *The English Department Newsletter*, as it was then called, how much time, effort and relentless determination it takes to produce such a publication.

It was a nice surprise when Elisa, as I used to call Elisabeth, suggested I write about my experiences as the Editor of *The English Department Newsletter* from 2004 – 2010. This request sparked a nostalgic reverie. I would like to state that there has never been a short supply of 'brains' in the contributions of FP staff and faculty to the various issues of the newsletter. This is due to the amazing collaborative efforts of the many colleagues in the department who enthusiastically contributed to make every issue a good read, as well as the staff of the Math and Computer Department who later joined us, starting with Issue No. 8. At that point, the name of the newsletter changed to *The Foundation Program Newsletter* to reflect all three programs and activities in the FP.

I remember that day, far in the past, when the newsletter first started. Journalism has always been a passion of mine. When I was a middle school student, I used to write articles for our school magazine. Shortly after the FP was inaugurated, I thought a newsletter would be a wonderful way to let colleagues know what was happening, provide suggestions and teaching ideas, and give teachers an opportunity to write articles, tips, or reviews. Our English Department Di-

rector, Shaika Amna Saud Al-Thani, gave her instant backing after I discussed the initiative with her. I was thrilled with her positive response and quickly sent an email message to my colleagues in the English Department in which the mission of the newsletter was stated:

The overriding purpose of the newsletter is to reflect the image of the English Department; its programs, events, activities and news, and as a forum for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences, as well as to facilitate discussion of issues pertaining to ELT in general and TESOL in particular. As such, it is a unique blend of the formal and informal, ranging from professional articles to quotations and humor, with plenty of miscellanea along the continuum.

Throughout the years I helmed the newsletter as editor, four of my colleagues assisted me as Co-Editors: Mrs. Bino Sarah Paul (Issues 1, 2 & 3), Ms. Mary Lanaghan (Issues 4, 5, and 6), Ms. Eileen Plumb (Issues 7, 8, 9, and 10) and Mr. James FitzGibbon (Issues 11 & 12). These twelve issues witnessed the tenure of three Heads of the Department in the English Program: Shaika Amna Saud Al-Thani (Issues 1 & 2), Dr. Madani Othman (Issue 3) and the late Mr. Robert Kennedy (Issues 4 – 12). It was Shaika Amna Saud Al-Thani who got the newsletter going; she helped us in so many ways, always caring and encouraging, determined to see the newsletter materialize and become a reality. A special thank you must go to her.

It is worth describing the production of the first issue, which was a major enterprise and not easy to accomplish. It involved many steps: collecting and editing



Abdelmuniem Hussein: Photograph courtesy of Abdelmuniem Hussein

the articles and submissions, obtaining or taking photographs, and then the printing and the binding. There was no digital option in those days. We had to employ the services of a publication specialist and designer for the first issue. Although we eventually got publication software, there were no facilities in the FP for printing a 52-page illustrated newsletter. At this point, Shaika Amna came to our rescue and arranged for us to have the first newsletter printed and bound at the Qatar University College of Technology. We had to use the only colored printing machine available at the time, which was not meant for mass production. It was very problematic. The machine frequently got overheated and threatened to stall, so we had to wait for it to cool down and finally splutter into life. Due to these interminable delays, we got only a few pages printed at a time; it took us ages to finally finish the job. As for the binding, I had to go to the old Qatar University (QU) campus in Madinat Khalifa North where the

Binding Office was located. This was another hassle, especially as the binding had to be done manually.

At last, we got about ninety copies to distribute in the FP and the University. The first issue was published at the end of the fall semester 2004; however, we were worried that the first issue might turn out to be a flop. Fortunately, we were wrong. Of course, it came out not quite as we had expected, but it was very nice all the same and very well received. What a relief! Due to the trials and tribulations we had gone through to publish the first issue, I finally learned how to design a newsletter and things started to run somewhat more smoothly. This time, thanks to the arrangements made by Shaika Amna, the printing and binding of the second issue was done by the External Relations Department. From the third

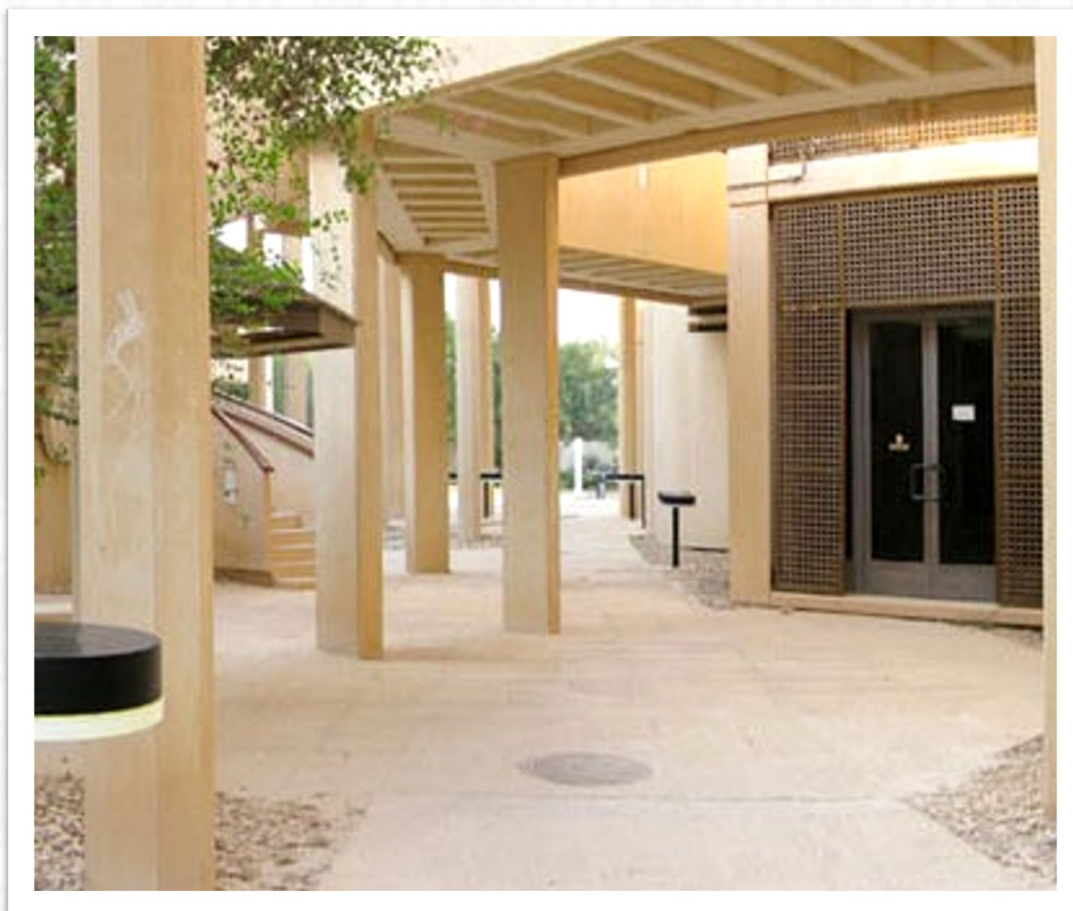
issue onwards, the Director of the FP, Dr. Khaled Al-Ali, made it possible for us to outsource the printing by getting a budget approved by the University for the publication of our newsletters.

The funds enabled us to take our drafts to a printing press to get the newsletter professionally designed, printed and properly bound. This took a lot of patience, as we had to sit with the designer for hours on end to see that every page was laid out according to our draft design specifications. That was difficult and time-consuming, and I even had to spend part of my annual leave in Qatar to get 500 copies ready to meet the distribution deadline.

Finally, reflecting on the entire journey of the *Foundation Program Newsletter*, I would like to thank my hardworking edi-

torial team and colleagues in the FP who continued enthusiastically and diligently to contribute their invaluable input and submitted selected student writings. The team and editorial board worked together as a close-knit family, producing this bi-annual publication for six years. We culminated our endeavors by producing Issue No.12, our final issue, which showcased the celebration of a very proud moment for the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE): the 5-year accreditation awarded to the FPDE by the Commission on English Language Accreditation (CEA).

Thank you Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane and James Scotland for giving me this opportunity to reminisce about the good old days in the FP at QU through recollections of my experiences as Editor of *The Foundation Program Newsletter*.



Photograph courtesy of
Mike Richards



A Post-Foundation Student's Essay: The Effects of Gene Editing Technology for Individuals and Society

Aaron Monroe, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

English Language I (ENGL 202) is a first-year academic writing skills and composition course in the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE). In the course, students learn to write two different genres of academic writing, the Cause/Effect and Argumentative essays.

Students choose from a list of challenging topics, and engage in critical thinking through topic discussion, mind-mapping and planning, and write multiple drafts over several weeks while receiving feedback. Students also peer review each other's work, learn to incorporate differ-

ent sources of feedback, and reflect on their writing in order to improve their essays. The final draft below is an essay written by a student, Nassima Zerouali, who wrote about potential positive and negative effects of gene editing technology on individuals and societies.

The Effects of Gene Editing Technology for Individuals and Society

by Nassima Zerouali

Could our DNA become as editable as a simple piece of text to make a better you? DNA is like an instruction manual for organisms allowing them to develop and function accurately. Through the latest developments of gene-editing (GE) technologies, scientists can insert, delete, and edit targeted genes from the human genome. The breakthrough of CRISPER, a GE tool has made it faster, cheaper, and more precise to modify the genome. There are many effects of GE technology for individuals and society, such as increasing food production, treating numerous diseases, and raising ethical issues.

To begin with, one of the major effects of GE technology for society is its ability to produce more food. Through CRISPER, scientists have been able to edit the plant's genome to exhibit characteristics such as increased crop yield. For example, scientists can double the number of branches resulting in twice the yield of tomatoes. This discovery can be implemented in other fruits and vegetables. With the global population estimated to increase over the coming years, this technology provides an effective solution to the world's food insecurity.

Furthermore, another positive effect of GE technology for individuals is its potential to treat diseases that are detrimental to human health. CRISPER can search through the DNA to find mutations causing the disease. CRISPER can then delete or replace the damaged region leaving the rest of the DNA unaltered. This helps to alleviate the symptoms and cure hereditary diseases, such as Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and Cystic Fibrosis. Additionally, CRISPER can be used to treat patients with HIV. It can do this by removing the virus's DNA out of the patient's infected cells. Hence, GE technology can benefit individuals suffering from incurable conditions as it is an efficient treatment delivering successful results.

Despite the benefits of GE technology, it does have negative effects on society such as giving rise to ethical issues. One of the prominent ethical issues is the dilemma of creating designer babies by altering their DNA. This allows them to inherit favourable characteristics such as enhanced intelligence and physique. As a result, in the future, they will have better jobs and life opportunities. The way this impacts society is that it can lead to discrimination against those who are genetically weak. Also, this technology would only be accessible to those who are rich, causing further inequality in society.

To conclude, the main effects of GE technology for individuals and society are its ability in increasing food production, treating various diseases, and creating ethical issues. GE technology holds a great power to improve human health and provides aid to increased demand for food. However, GE technology forces researchers to deal with the perplexing question of where to draw the line when manipulating the human genome. This is due to the ethical issues that it causes. Accordingly, for individuals and society to fully benefit from this technology it should be closely regulated on its applications; otherwise, it can prove to be ruinous to humans.

Faculty Profile: Ahmad Hazratzad, A Man Who Wears Many Hats

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program



Ahmad Hazratzad: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself and your educational background.

Ahmad: I come from Iran. Despite the difficult political situation after the revolution when schools were often closed, I was able to start my university studies in 1984. Getting a place at university was very competitive; there were over 20 million students applying for admission. We had to do a very difficult entrance exam, the Concours, which required two years of preparation. I was one of the fortunate ones to be admitted to the Medical School of Tabriz.

Interviewer: How did you end up becoming an English teacher?

Ahmad: I was inspired by a wonderful

English teacher, the late Mr. Mansouri, who was a role model for me. I decided to study English language and literature instead of becoming a surgeon. I was accepted at Azad University, Karaj Campus where I completed my Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in 1988. However, I had also been working as a peripatetic English teacher. In 1989, I started my Master of Arts (M.A.) in Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), not an easy thing to do at the time, particularly as I continued to work 60 hours a week as a teacher.

Interviewer: What did you specialize in?

Ahmad: I studied English Literature and Applied Linguistics at Azad University, Central Branch in Tehran for my M.A. My

thesis was based on my research on the relationships of lexical items in vocabulary pedagogy. I was also interested in testing as well as contrastive and error analysis. I graduated in 1992 and began teaching English Literature and Language at three different universities on a part-time basis. My passion was literature, so I wrote poetry in addition to running literary clubs on campus for my students. Eventually, in 2000, I was promoted to a management position in one of the branches of The Applied Scientific University in Tehran.

Interviewer: How did you come to work at Qatar University (QU)?

Ahmad: In Fall 2005, I had a great telephone interview with Dr. Madani Othman and Dr. Khalid Al Ali. I joined the English Department in the Foundation Unit in January 2006. Because of my testing background, I was assigned to the Testing Committee with Justin Richards and helped his team create a test bank. I was also responsible for checking test reliability and validity.

Interviewer: What did you teach?

Ahmad: I taught all four levels in the Foundation Program (FP). In 2012, I started teaching in the Embedded Program where I still teach today. I have also attended over 50 International conferences and given more than 18 presentations, including one in Harvard University in June 2010.

Interviewer: You also did a number of things for the Foundation Program Student Services.

Ahmad: Yes, photography is another one of my interests. I ran a very successful and popular Foundation Photography Club for several years, and in fact, we had three external photography exhibitions, most notably at 51 East in Lagoona Mall and at Blue Salon. These events brought a lot of public attention to the FP and were an opportunity for our students to display their outstanding photographic skills; most of the photos on the

walls of D05 (Women's Foundation Building) are photographs taken by my students.

Interviewer: In the Spring 2020 semester, you were responsible for a very special online event.

Ahmad: Yes, I am involved in Professional Development as part of the Academic Excellence committee. Because of the quarantine situation, I suggested we organize the first ever-online teaching confer-

ence hosted by the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE). It was a challenging experience; we had a lot to do and severe time constraints. Thanks to the support of Naima Sarfraz, Chair of the FPDE Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee, and Dr. Mohamad Manasreh, Department Head of English, FP, and the untiring efforts of my wonderful and very dedicated team, we succeeded in pulling it off.

We got a very big name in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Scott Thornbury, to give a presentation, in addition to some other fantastic international presenters. We attracted over four thousand participants; the event was a major success.

Interviewer: On that high note, I'd like to thank you very much indeed for granting me this interview.



Ahmad Hazratzad: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

Collective Efforts During the Pandemic of COVID-19: English II (ENGL 111) Team Lead David Coupland

Sara Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program

Interviewer: As a course lead of English II (ENGL 111) course in the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), did you encounter any challenges when transitioning to distance learning?

Mr. Coupland: This crisis presented us with a unique challenge in that we had to transform teaching on campus to teaching remotely. We no longer had the opportunity to interact with students face-to-face but needed to create opportunities to learn remotely. The FPDE came together as a team to develop new modes of content delivery using various communication applications. Elements of the course were quickly divided among faculty teams to discuss how we could adapt the course while still meeting its objectives. The technology and assessment teams put in a lot of time and effort to ensure that the courses' integrity would be consistent in the transition to remote learning. They also provided instructions and training to all teachers in the course. The biggest challenge was the learning curve that all teachers faced when implementing a fully online course. Previously, we were using technology to support in-class activities. We were, however,

unfamiliar with delivery tools such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and Microsoft Teams.

Interviewer: How did ENGL 111 faculty support the students?

Mr. Coupland: The most important thing I discovered in this process was that we needed to maintain the support of all student learning styles. One way to do this was to triangulate information and materials across platforms. This meant that the same material needed to be conveyed to students through multiple online learning opportunities. We had to rely more heavily on communicational platforms like Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, Microsoft Teams, Remind, Kahoot as well as other educational applications such as Microsoft OneNote and Socrative, etc.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr. Coupland: I believe that effort, perseverance and participation are key elements in online learning. We are all in this together and learning together. The bottom line is simply to do our best.

Interviewer: Thank you David for your time.

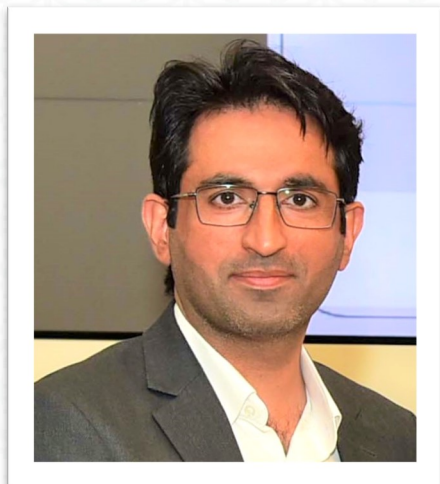


David Coupland: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad



Collective Efforts During the Pandemic of COVID-19: English for Communication II (ENGL 251) Co-Lead Kashif Raza

Sara Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program



Kashif Raza: Photograph courtesy of Kashif Raza

Interviewer: Mr. Raza, as a course co-lead of the English for Communication II course (ENGL 251), how have you and your team been managing the new transition to 100% remote learning?

Mr. Raza: The decision to shift to distant education was unexpected and required a lot of planning, training, and implementation of new platforms to carry out teaching and learning activities. Through collective effort and dedication, our team has been successful at delivering ENGL 251 online and maintaining student motivation and interest in the course. As a Course Co-lead, my main priority was to ensure that our distant learning plan reflects the guidelines provided by the university administration and matches with our course Student Learning Outcomes

(SLOs) and previous assessments. In addition, it was necessary to echo this new plan through comprehensive guidelines and sample assessments for faculty as well as students.

Interviewer: How have you made the ENGL 251 curriculum fit the new learning context?

Mr. Raza: Since our course is writing and speaking intensive, although we cover all four skills, it was convenient for us to break down longer written and spoken assignments to shorter but interactive tasks that involve the development of problem-solution, critical thinking, and argumentation skills through learner-centered teaching strategies. Students develop their language skills as well as an understanding of course assessments during lectures, and through supplementary materials to demonstrate course appropriate language abilities using multiple digital tools. This has allowed faculty and students to engage in the learning process smoothly and successfully.

Interviewer: How have you managed faculty stress in terms of the transition to online learning, and what have you done in order to facilitate the learning process for faculty and students alike?

Mr. Raza: Our faculty have been very active and responsive throughout this phase. To support faculty in this transition, I have been sharing all the necessary updates with them and reflecting on

their constructive feedback in the modified curriculum and assessment plan. Although we work as a team where everyone contributes to the successful delivery of our course, I have been taking the lead in creating supplementary materials and assessments, and training faculty to set up online tests through live and recorded demonstrations. This has allowed our faculty to concentrate more on their teaching assignments and their students' learning needs and less on course management and material creation.

Interviewer: What about our students?

Mr. Raza: To facilitate students' learning process, faculty have been supportive and encouraging. Realizing that students have to balance family life and education, especially now that majority of us are home quarantined, we have been assigning manageable tasks and modifying assessments according to student convenience, training students for online assessments, and ensuring availability for student support during and beyond office hours (through Padlet, Remind, etc.) to provide assistance in their learning process. Furthermore, we have also been providing Arabic translations of important curriculum changes to keep students informed of any recent updates.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Mr. Raza.

The Foundation Program Provides Conversation Station and Reading Hour Sessions

David Pearson, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Despite the challenges posed by the current pandemic, Qatar University (QU) is working hard to provide students with meaningful and stimulating educational opportunities. Two such opportunities, offered by the Foundation Program English Success Zone (FPSZ), are the Reading Hour sessions and the Conversation Station sessions.

Starting in September 2020, the sessions ran for nine weeks and were conducted via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. In the event of connection problems, the sessions

switched to Microsoft Teams. Links for both the Reading Hour and the Conversation Station were sent to students via email and were additionally posted on Social Media. Faculty members were encouraged to direct their students to the sessions.

The Reading Hour initiative focused on inculcating reading as a hobby among Foundation Program (FP) students in an informal and fun way. Students were encouraged to read for pleasure and were provided with stories, as well as a variety of other types of

texts. The Reading Hour strove to develop critical thinking, improve fluency, increase comprehension, expand vocabulary, and develop the students' own storytelling skills.

The Conversation Station focused on the production of spoken language. The aim of each session was to improve the students' communication skills, using interactive and collaborative activities to generate meaningful language. In an attempt to reduce the anxiety associated with speaking, students were directed to

work, sometimes in pairs or small groups, before returning to the whole group discussion. In each session, students were encouraged to interact actively with one another to brainstorm ideas and to discuss these ideas. Oral presentations, TED Talks, and questions posed by the instructor were used to initiate conversations. The topics chosen for discussion were drawn from current events or from the students' courses. The role of the instructor in each session was to initiate a conversation and then to moderate the discussion via scaffolding and clarification.

As well as developing students' reading and speaking fluency, the session participants were also awarded a certificate of participation.



البرنامج التأسيسي
Foundation Program
جامعة قطر QATAR UNIVERSITY

انضم إلى ساعة القراءة في ملتقى البرنامج التأسيسي للنجاح في اللغة الإنجليزية
(English FP Success Zone) لتقوية مهارة القراءة والفهم باللغة الإنجليزية

وقت ساعة القراءة:
أيام الأحد من كل أسبوع
11:50 - 11:00 صباحاً

على منصة بلاك بورد ألترا:
برجاء الاطلاع على البريد الإلكتروني للحصول على الرابط
#FPSuccessZone



Qatar University Library: A Vital Resource for Foundation Students

Jerry Brewington, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

An integral part of the success of any educational institution is a central library that can provide high-quality informational services and training to students, faculty and the community at large. *FP Jareeda* had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Hussein Adam, a librarian in the men's branch of Qatar University (QU) library. We wanted to learn more about the specific support and services the library provides to students who take foundation and post-foundation courses.

Mr. Adam met me on the second floor of the men's library, a spacious, light-filled space conducive to study and research. As we strolled through the rows of stacked bookshelves, Mr. Adam explained that the library mission is to

provide academic support to the QU community. "Part of that is, of course, assisting Foundation students." He pointed out the stacks of English-language texts used primarily for extensive reading practice in Reading Workshop Elementary (R001) and Reading Workshop Intermediate (R002). "We have English language books from beginner to advanced level, including fiction and non-fiction titles. Course lecturers often assign students a specific level or genre. We are more than happy to assist students in choosing the right text for the course when they come to pick up their books."

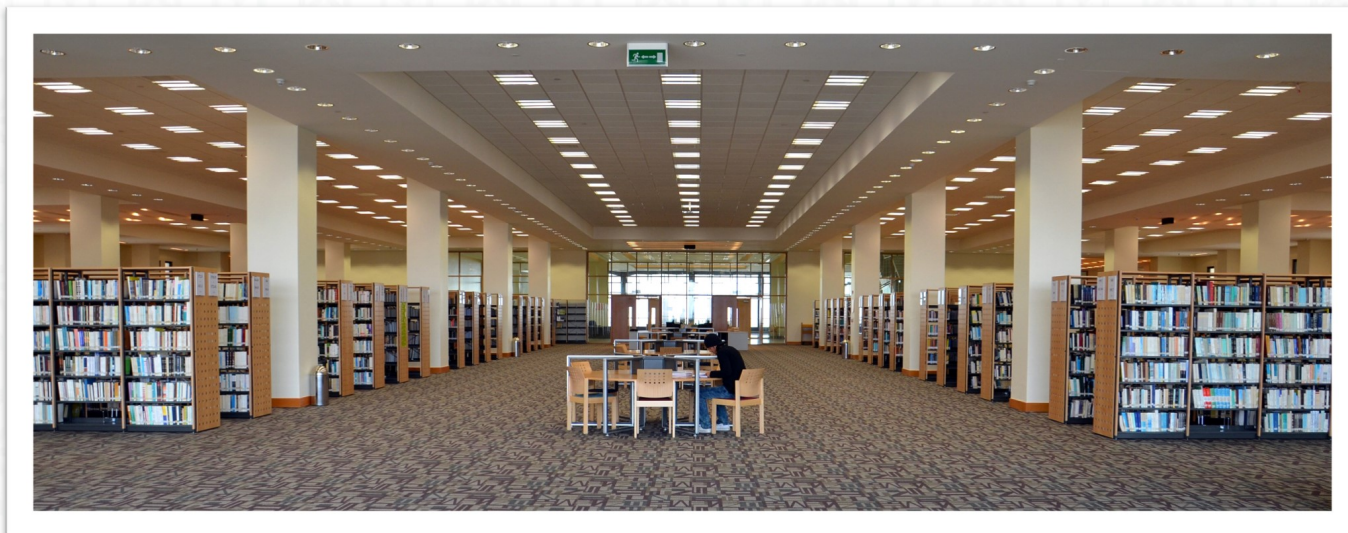
I asked Mr. Adam how the library and staff support post-foundation students, who re-

quire advanced access to academic resources in English Language I (ENGL202) and English Language II (ENGL203). "We have hard copies and digital resources for students writing research papers or term papers. These include texts, papers, journals and many other types of media. Post-Foundation students can physically come here for personal face-to-face assistance or access our vast digital archives online from the comfort of their home".

We inquired about computer labs or resources for students to use, including printing of research papers or other multi-media projects. "The library provides computer labs and access to printers or projectors for students and faculty

alike. They can speak with a librarian to reserve a room and time in the computer labs for individual or group work", Mr. Adam replied.

In closing, Mr. Adam emphasized that the library is currently open from 7:00 am to 2:30 pm due to the pandemic. He reiterated that students can access all holdings 24/4 online. "Qatar University Library is so much more than just a place for books. We host events, conferences, evening classes, awards ceremonies, the list goes on. It is part of our mission to serve all students, faculty and the wider community in a professional and friendly manner. Please visit us", he added with a smile.



Qatar University Library: Photograph courtesy of Qatar University Library Website

FP Student Affairs Video Competition

Jeffrey Maggard, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

To enhance the development of students' English language and digital skills, the Foundation Program Student Affairs (FPSA) Extracurricular Committee launched a video competition in October entitled, *Life in the Shadow of Covid-19*. Video topics included the effects of Covid-19 on social life, education, home life and society. There were seven entries.

Through the production of these videos, it was hoped that students would use English in an authentic way. In doing so, this gave students the opportunity to correct their English and edit their videos prior to sharing them. Thus, it also gave shy students who are unwilling to participate in live events the opportunity to express themselves.

This low risk approach resulted in one student producing a video in which she opened up about her father working at a hospital in Doha with Covid-19 patients, in the Spring of 2020, when the number of infected patients was at its peak. The video centers on the challenges her family faced because they could not see him for an extended period of time, even during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. It speaks powerfully of the sacrifices made by a front-line family member who could not

come home after work in order to keep his family safe.

Another video submission talks about the ways the student has realized she can comfort herself and take care of her family. She talks about the smaller things in life that she might have neglected to notice prior to Covid-19 forcing her to study online at home. She speaks about how she has made her personal environment or physical space as conducive to learning as possible. She speaks about the need to be well-prepared before class and the importance of excellent coffee. She talks about the difficulties in helping her mother take care of her siblings and how challenging it is to study at home during Covid-19.

All submissions were evaluated on content, language and video production skills. The winners received gift vouchers. The first place male entry was by Asa Qadir, and the first place female entry was by Manar Al-Reyashi.

Manar Al-Reyashi commented that, "I was glad to be able to participate in the video-making competition *Life in the Shadow of COVID-19* and I enjoyed being a part of this competition. I was able to show my digital and speaking skills. In fact, this kind of competition

helps students to learn how to create successful content that can attract the audience's attention in terms of production and editing. From this experience, I have learned the basics of creating videos and now I aspire to develop myself in how to use the editing tools efficiently. Ultimately, special thanks to the Foundation Program for organizing some activities that reflect students' talents and help them to achieve practical life skills in a purposeful way. I really en-

courage foundation students to leave their comfort zone and be ready to participate in these activities that sharpen and enhance their skills."

Shamsa Al Rushaidi, FPSA-EC Committee Chair, remarked, "It has been a great opportunity for students with video making talents to showcase their skills, and it has been nice to see that male students are also participating in the Foundation Program's virtual events."

Better Times Are Ahead!

Come and Join Us

Foundation Program - Best Video Competition

Life in the Shadow of COVID-19!

Present your experiences of life in Doha after Covid-19!

Produce a 3-5 minute video with your own commentary using English language focusing on recent experiences of studies, home life and/or society in general.

Competition closes on 31 October 2020

Submission is via the link below:

<https://qr.go.page.link/XoKik>



Your Video and own commentary will be judged on **content** and **production**.

Prizes for the winners.

For inquiries: PStudent@qu.edu.qa



Faculty Focus: Ahlem Tabib

Tiffany Tillman, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Ahlem Tabib has been a lecturer in the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) since Fall 2019. She has previously taught in Tunisia, UAE, and Canada. Ahlem holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in British and American Linguistics, Literature and Civilization from Tunis University, a Master's Degree (MA) in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies from Carleton University in Ottawa, and she is in the process of completing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education at Western University in London, Ontario on Aligning Assessment to Digitized Curriculum.

Along with teaching English language courses, she has been involved in training 1500 teachers and 360 school leaders through the Educational Reform in Qatar initiative, led by the Supreme Education Council. Notably, her efforts and work have been recognized with the Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashed Al-Maktoom International Award for Distinguished Academic Performance in 2005, as well as the Teacher's Assistant Excellence Award from the School of Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies in Carleton University in 2013.

Having taught numerous Foundation Program (FP) courses in her time at Qatar

University (QU), Ahlem recognizes that while there is room for growth in all of the skill areas, writing and grammar appear to be the most challenging for many students. She builds writing activities that scaffold writing by using a variety of visual organizers and mind-maps, modeling writing by providing model examples, incorporating process-based writing strategies, and facilitating peer review with constant and reiterative feedback from the teacher. Additionally, she finds grammar to be best instructed by contextualizing it, using video skits to teach the different tenses and prepositional phrases, and by instilling how to use the language.

Although teaching online has not changed Ahlem's teaching philosophy, it has shifted her emphasis in certain areas. She now incorporates the basic tenets of "Maslow Over Bloom," which places an emphasis on the teacher's role in creating classrooms as 'safe spaces.' Ahlem notes, "I think we need to reshuffle our cards and prioritize the most important things: creating a safe, tension-free virtual space conducive to learning and transforming our assessment practices through creating assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning."

In order to ensure student



Ahlem Tabib: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

preparation for the course and beyond, Ahlem designed a planning tool based on the Constructive Alignment Model (Biggs & Tang, 2007). This model highlights the significance of aligning the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning activities and the assessment tasks. She finds that this model helps her better prepare the students for life at the university and beyond, equipping them with high order thinking skills such as: problem-posing, problem-solving, creative thinking, and calculated risk taking. Moreo-

ver, it places the learners at the center of the learning approach; it taps into their learning styles, preferences and expectations, and allows differentiated instruction and assessment. Therefore, these will improve the students' learning outcomes.

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The History of the Foundation Program Department of English - Part 7: 2005 – 2006

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Many significant changes occurred during the 2005-2007 academic year, both at Qatar University (QU) and in the new Foundation Program English Department (FPDE). One visible change was the attractive new university logo, which incorporated a wind-tower façade, surmounted by symbolic parallel lines. QU's wind-tower structures had been shortlisted for the Aga Khan Award in Architecture in 1986. The QU reforms were to focus on autonomy, decentralization, and accountability as the university was now an independent tertiary education entity.

In the FDPE, Dr. Madani Othman was appointed Head of Department while Robert Kennedy was assigned the newly created post of Assistant-Coordinator, Administration. Thirty new full-time instructors from a wide variety of countries joined the department after massive recruitment drives held at conferences sponsored by TESOL-Arabia, TESOL International, and IATEFL. In total, by fall 2005, there were eighty-nine full-time instructors as well as several part-time teachers and two QU graduates in English Linguistics. One of the new teachers, the late Mrs. Linda Wettlaufer, was appointed by Dr. Khalid to put together a team to organize and implement the procedures and policies requisite for CEA accreditation. Dr. Madani, in his drive for faculty inclusion, set up a new administrative structure to involve all faculty members in the decision-making process.

Another major change was an American-style curriculum, which included observable performance-based objectives. North Star, a series of American textbooks, was



Qatar University: Photograph courtesy of Mike Richards

introduced to implement the new curriculum. Students in each foundation level were issued two North Star textbooks and one workbook. Plans were made to establish a Teachers' Resource Centre and a Foundation Program (FP) Writing Centre to help students improve their writing skills. One of the biggest innovations was the introduction of assigned QU email addresses for faculty. The late Bob Kennedy, wearing his hat as Assistant Coordinator, was in charge of day-to-day office operational activities, staff scheduling, and e-communication procedures as well as being a member of the newly established Academic Board along with all other Assistant Coordinators.

Dr. Madani created a number of Assistant Coordinator positions to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the pro-

gram. Dr. Muawia Abdulmajid was appointed as the Assistant Coordinator, Curriculum Development. Four levels were offered: L1, L2, L3, and, L4. Foundation students met for 20 hours a week with two co-teachers who shared the same group: a Reading/Writing teacher and a Listening/Speaking teacher. Students also had a weekly lab session in the Al Bida'a Building using Focus on Grammar and English Planet software. Each course was administered by a Level Supervisor who consulted with assigned teachers as to syllabus changes and implementation. Supervisors included the following: Level 1, David Ingels, Level 2, Mumu Winn, Level 3, the late Salwa El Gamal, and Level 4, Claire Conroy.

Justin Richards, as the Testing Assistant Coordinator, was in charge of a team, which developed and wrote common tests and exams. He also organized exam implementation procedures for each level, in addition to compiling a Testing and Assessment Handbook for teachers. Mrs. Fatma Alyan continued as the Assistant Coordinator for the Humanities program. Two compulsory credit courses (091120 and 811202) were on offer to the residual students, exempted from the FP courses as they were still in Humanities or Sharia courses. Dr. Mohammed Fawzi also remained as Coordinator of the two Post-foundation university requirement courses. These offered advanced academic skills in speaking and writing; the latter course also included a term paper. Post-foundation students met only three hours a week. Students who scored 550 on the Paper-based TOEFL exam could register for the Post-foundation courses. However, in spring 2006, a decision was taken to discontinue teaching TOEFL skills to students in Level 3 and Level 4. Plans were made to introduce IELTS as a Foun-

ation English placement and exemption test.

Mrs. Wafaa Ammar had a dual role; she was Assistant Coordinator for Student Support as well as Professional Development (PD). Under her leadership, the PD committee began to offer professional development opportunities for instructors in the form of seminars, presentations, and workshops. Additionally, with the help of an able team of over thirty-two teachers, she established two Student Learning Independence Centres (SLIC) as part of student support services. These offered comfortable, well-appointed spaces, one in the Women's Activity Building with an attached computer lab, and one in the Main Men's Building, for students to meet with teachers, attend TOEFL clinics, read or borrow books or listen to audio tapes, use the computer lab, or just hang out. Teachers could also reserve a class session in the SLIC; this was very popular with students.

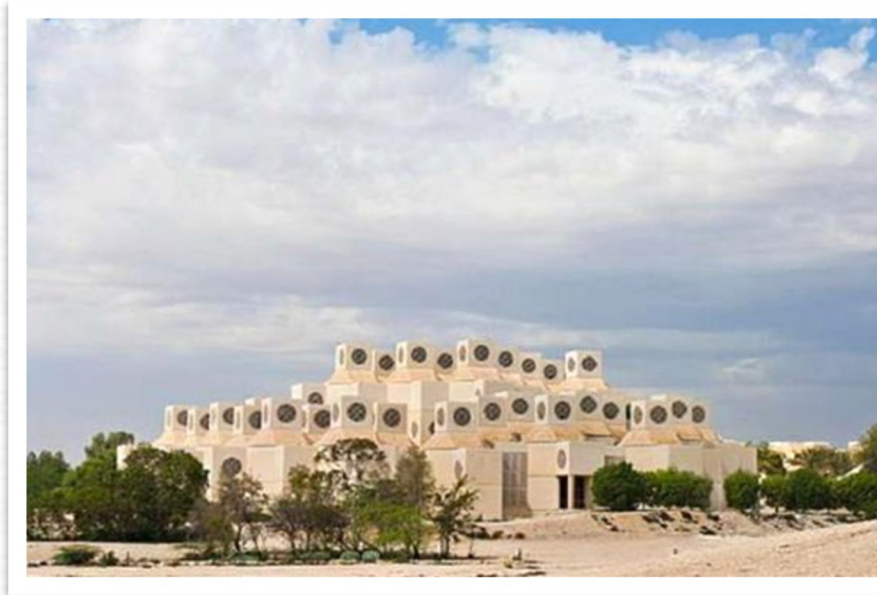
One highlight of the spring semester was the inauguration ceremony of the Wom-

en's SLIC. This ribbon-cutting event was attended by special guest, Dr. Daniel Chai, the director of the Floating Book Boat, the MV Doulos, which was docked in Doha port for one week. The MV Doulos donated dozens of books to the FPDE. The event also offered fun and entertainment as students recited poems, performed skits, and introduced the new SLIC clubs, such as the Book Club, the Debate Club, the Drama Club, the Movie Club, the Music Club, the Poetry Club, the Public Speaking Club, and the Scrabble Club.

A Foundation Department Outreach program was also established, in which English and math teachers would visit Supreme Education Council (SEC) independent secondary schools to promote the FP activities and courses as well as advise math and English-language teachers. Sadly, at the end of an extraordinary and very successful academic year, Dr. Madani Othman resigned as Head of Department in order to take up a tenured position at the University of Bahrain. Once again, for the second consecutive year, the English Department had to adjust to new leadership and was to undergo even more changes.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dr. Madani Osman, Mrs. Wafaa Ammar, Mrs. Fatma Alyan, and David Ingels for sharing their memories.



Qatar University: Photograph courtesy of Mike Richards

Research on Active Learning

Charles Fullerton, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

In this article, the results of an action research study carried out at Qatar University (QU) will be presented along with practical recommendations for implementing active learning in the classroom. Please see Issue 19 of the *FP Jareeda* for an overview of active learning.

Participants

The idea of standing activities was introduced to a class of eight foundation students at QU. The students, all male native speakers of Arabic in their late teens to early 20s and with a low-intermediate level of English, agreed to participate in the research by completing at least one standing activity every week of the semester along with a survey in the final week of class.

Activities

The three specific activities that were included in the class were *Last Man Standing*, *Active Vocabulary Introduction* and *Running Dictations*. In *Last Man Standing*, students began by standing at their desks. When asked a question, they had to answer correctly to stay standing, and the last man standing won. In *Active Vocabulary Introduction*, a type of gallery walk, pictures of words students needed to learn were posted around the classroom. Students walked around the room matching their word list to the pictures.

Finally, for *Running Dictations*, a short story was taped on the wall outside the classroom. Students were paired up; one student became the 'runner'; the other was the 'writer'. The runner ran outside, read part of the story, ran back inside and dictated it to the writer, who wrote down what he heard. This continued until the entire story had been written correctly.

Results

In the survey, students unanimously said that they enjoyed the standing activities in their class. They also indicated that they preferred them to sitting activities and would like to do more. All students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that standing activities made them more interested in class, allowed them to think more

creatively, and helped them stay awake and focused. Only one student responded to the request for further comments by saying: "I hope the rest of my classes make standing activities in class."

Activity permissive learning environments can have a positive impact on student health and academic performance. The current study suggests that active learning also improves students' attitudes toward class. Students enjoy being able to move in class. They want more movement in class, so how can active learning be incorporated into the classroom?

Implications

Teachers can, and should, plan lessons with the idea of encouraging movement in

their classes. This can be done by something as simple as pairing up students on opposite sides of the room, forcing them to stand up and move to meet their partner. Instructions can easily be changed from asking students to 'sit together' to asking them to 'stand together.' Nearly any in-class activity can be made active. Reading, for example, can be done while meandering around the room rather than sitting at a desk. Other possibilities include having students come up to the board to write answers, posting the answers to quizzes on walls around the room or even taking a class outside.

QU-IRB 717-E/16



Photograph courtesy of Pikwizard

COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: Sharing Positive Experiences, Learned Skills, and Lessons

Nafisa Halane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On Saturday, 25th September 2020, the Foundation Program (FP) Social Committee, led by Mondher Chaabane, organized its first virtual event under the title COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: Sharing Positive Experiences, Learned Skills, and Lessons.

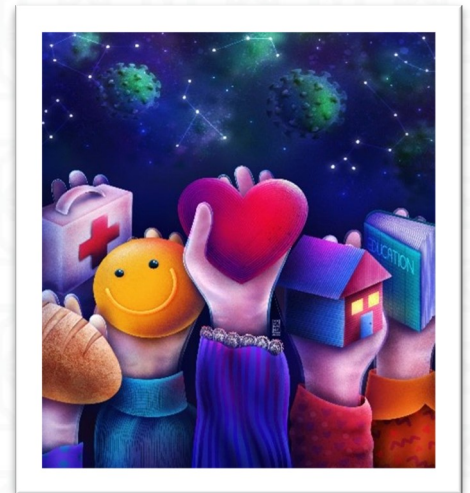
This virtual event aimed to exchange positive experiences between FP faculty members and emphasize the skills they developed, both in their professional and personal lives. Many themes were discussed.

The webinar began at 16:00 via Microsoft Teams. The chair of the Special Needs Committee and English Lecturer, Dr. Enita Barrett, shared her positive experience while presenting her online talk during the Academic Excellence Days in May. She praised the professionalism and diligence of the Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee.

English Lecturer, Yasmin Motasim, said, “Being on lockdown provided the opportunity to experience different things. One of those things was bonding with my daughter, as I had more time to spend with her once we went online.” At a time like this, essentially, family relationships were strengthened.

Participants noted how the sudden move from on-campus to online teaching continues to develop their resilience and computer skills. They are becoming more skilled in using different learning platforms to facilitate students’ learning. Amongst the themes discussed were the importance of mental health for those with or without family in Doha, and the importance of physical activity, such as an evening stroll.

The webinar concluded with final thoughts from participants, who all expressed how



Visual Courtesy of Sarah Nash

the FP staff and faculty team remained remarkably sanguine and supportive during these times.

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Photograph courtesy of David Bartsch