

Proposal to Reactivate the Diploma Program

Background

On the recommendation of the Vice President of Academic Affairs of the university, new admissions to the Diploma Programs in the College of Education were put on hold for the academic year 2012-2013. A Diploma Program Committee, composed of the Program Coordinator and selected faculty members and Diploma Program staff, held many meetings to study the reasons and factors for freezing admissions to the programs to propose changes to overcome the challenges that impede candidate success. This proposal was developed in light of the vision and mission of college and the program and the objectives of the program. Documentation of the problems and proposed solutions appeared in many records, including the Spring 2013 Diploma Programs self-study. Meetings were held with the Heads of Departments and faculty members to solicit their input on how to develop the program to best meet its mission to prepare teachers for Qatar's schools.

Employers' Needs and Demands

The Supreme Education Council has reported that over 30% of all teachers in Independent Schools do not have the necessary professional qualifications (Tuomi, 2011). Other reports cite that at present there is "a huge shortage of qualified educators, and the subsequent hiring inexperienced teachers" (Doha News Staff, 2013, ¶15). This is specifically the need that the Diploma Program targets. CED's partners at the Supreme Education Council support this program through providing scholarships, clearly showing that they recognize this need and support the program.

Expected Impact on Student Numbers

Based on the exponential growth CED has experienced in student numbers at the undergraduate level, the increase in applications to the two M.Ed. programs, and the number of inquiries about the Diploma Program in recent months, the college expects numbers of applicants to at least double from previous levels as a result of these proposed changes.

Faculty and Facilities

No immediate increase in faculty or facilities is anticipated. The number of current faculty and the faculty already budgeted for the two growing B.Ed. programs who can also teach in the Diploma Programs is adequate, particularly in terms of being able to teach in Arabic. No additional facilities are required as all recommended changes will use existing facilities and technology.

Recommendations

After reviewing the Qatar University Policies and Academic Accreditation Procedures for the College of Education, we suggest reactivating admission in Diploma Programs starting Fall 2014, contingent upon approval of the proposed changes. The revised program is desperately needed to fill the pressing need for qualified teachers in Qatar and to develop the teaching and professional performance of candidates in the program in different majors so that they may serve as educational experts to meet the needs of the local society. The program also offers an important option in the professional development career

paths of the country's educators. After a one-year freeze on applications from new students, we seek to reactive the Diploma programs, based on our proposed revisions:

1. Allocate 33% of class time in each concentration area to a blended¹ method of online delivery to reduce attendance hours on campus for the in-service teachers who face a serious problem with their work requirements and assignments that affects their performance and leads them to academic dismissal. By doing this, the number of days candidates must travel to the university is significantly reduced, addressing the time issue (Table 1).
2. Change the language of instruction in all programs to Arabic, with the exception of the following courses, which are focused on English language instruction: EDPR 540, EDUC 520, EDSE 559, EDSE 569. This policy would be consistent with the new language of instruction policy of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) that determines the language of instruction in early childhood, math and science to be Arabic.
3. Offer a 50% scholarship to any person, Qatari or non Qatari, who is currently teaching in an Independent School. All others pay full tuition. The rationale for this change is to increase the perceived value of the program for those who are required to pay tuition fees while encouraging inservice teachers to join the program (see section on Employers' Needs and Demands).
4. Require that students pass a content test as a an admission requirement to any of the diploma programs, as required by our accreditation agency:
 - Student score on the test must not be less than 75%.
 - Students are allowed to re-test in case of achieving a score of 65%.

Description of the Online Additions to the Program

Important points

- No course will provide more than 33% of its content online, thus no class will be considered an *online course*, thus the proposed change does not meet the SACS definition of substantive change. All other SACS requirements and recommendations for online delivery have been included in the planning of the changes.
- Online additions will use BlackBoard and Lecture Capture, technologies already in place and encouraged for use by faculty.

¹ According to Web Learning (Penn State), "A blended learning approach combines face-to-face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach." (Available from the Internet at http://weblearning.psu.edu/blended-learning-initiative/what_is_blended_learning).

Table 1. Schedule of Classes with Modified Delivery

	Total CHS for this course	% FTF	% Online
Qatari Schools and Society	1	.67	.33
Introduction to Special Education	3	.67	.33
Instructional Planning and Assessment	3	.60	.40
Introduction to Special Education	3	.67	.33
Specialty Course I (Methods I)	3	.67	.33
Human Development and Learning	2	.67	.33
Methods of Teaching ESL	3	.67	.33
Specialty Course II (Methods II)	3	.67	.33
Specialty Course III	3	.67	.33
Management of Ed. Environment	3	.67	.33
Internship	6	100	0

According to this plan, until the internship semester, candidates would be required to be on campus two days per week versus the four days per week of the previous plan.

Accessing the potential of instructional technology enables the College of Education to fulfill its vision as being a leader in education in Qatar and the region. As Garrison and Kanuka (2004) state,

Transformation of learning environments in higher education settings for an increasingly electronic world is critical to ensure that the benefits are fully realized (Williams, 2002). In agreement with Hicks, Reid, and George (2001), there are demands for universities to “provide for a larger and more diverse cross-section of the population, to cater for emerging patterns on educational involvement which facilitate lifelong learning and to include technology-based practices in the curriculum” (p. 143). (¶1).

Description of the Online Program

We propose that the courses being enriched with online components be taught through a flipped classroom model. In a flipped class model, the instructor uses Internet technologies to provide content to prepare students for the face-to-face part of the class, and then uses class time for active interaction with students in activities, discussion, student-demonstrations of knowledge and skills, and active feedback sessions. Flipped instruction has been shown to facilitate more active learning, a higher level of critical thinking, and increased life-long learning skills as compared to traditional instruction (Schell, 2012).

In these courses, much of the pedagogical content knowledge will be presented in the online portion of the course, but candidates will be expected to participate in active learning activities on campus. The online portion of these courses will deliver the content through lecture-captured presentations, plus

opportunities for application of this knowledge and skills through online activities (assignments). Accountability will be reinforced through online quizzes for each online class. The modified courses will meet all requirements and policies described in the *Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement*, including (but not limited to) the following:

1. Verification of the identity of students through secure login, pass codes, and proctored exams,
2. Ensuring that students have access to college and university services and resources,
3. Clear criteria for the evaluation of faculty,
4. Comparability in terms of educational effectiveness, assessment of student learning outcomes, and instructional rigor,
5. Faculty control of course content,
6. Adequate technological infrastructure and support, and
7. Data-collection and analysis related to student retention and student satisfaction.

Standards

Completed courses will be reviewed by the program coordinator and faculty representatives to ensure consistency and quality throughout the program. Standards for development include the following.

1. The online portion of the courses will equal or exceed current face-to-face courses in content breadth and depth and in academic rigor.
2. Each class will require approximately the same amount of time on task from the student as the original completely face-to-face class.
3. Each online lesson will include:
 - a. Instruction will be equal in length to what would be provided in the face-to-face class
 - b. 1-3 activities that require students to apply the lesson concepts will be required during the online experience of the student, and
 - c. An online quiz of from 10-15 questions will be required with each online lesson.
4. Each course will have a face-to-face, invigilated cumulative final exam representing 20-30% of the course grade.
5. Instructors will be required to answer emails from students within two days of receipt (not including Friday or Saturday).
6. Instructors are required to provide scheduled online office hours every week during the semester the course is being offered.
7. Online components of the courses will be consistent in format to increase ease-of-use by students (Figure 1).

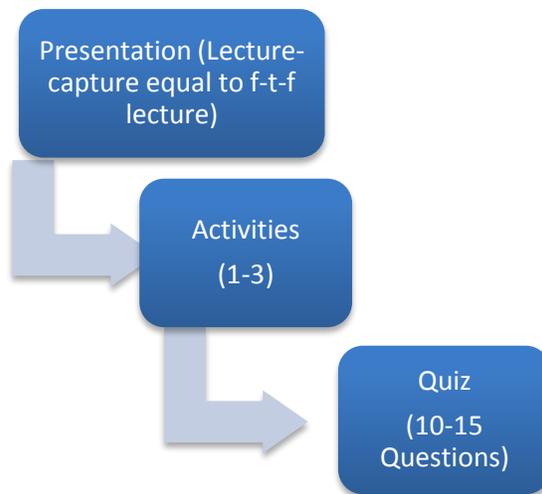


Figure 1. Structure of each online class

Although the program is only supported by technology rather than offered as an online program, the criteria described in the *Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certification Programs Overview to the Best Practices* were referenced to further ensure the quality of the program. The applicable criteria follow.

1. Institutional context and commitment.
 - a. The proposed program is consistent with the institution’s role and mission.
 - b. The change is not substantive (less than 25% of CRH affected)
 - c. The budget is adequate to support the change.
 - d. The technology infrastructure and support are available. Lecture capture and Blackboard, the two technologies that will be used, are currently supported institution-wide.
 - e. The institution has adequate support for such a program
 - f. No articulation or transfer policies will be affected.
 - g. The limited number of courses/instructors that will be affected minimizes the impact on students and faculty. Because all courses also have a face-to-face component, the impact on students will be minimized.
 - h. Blackboard use for students is currently supported for students and is thus in place for the changes proposed.
 - i. The technologies supported are appropriate for students as they are currently being used.
 - j. No legal issues are involved. Support for students with disabilities will be provided through the disabilities office.

2. Curriculum and Instruction
 - a. The courses will be reviewed by external reviewers (instructional designers and content specialists) and will be part of the quality control currently in place in the College of Education for course quality.
 - b. The design of the program emerged from extensive collaboration among Ph.D. level faculty members, the program coordinator, the head of the department, and the dean and associate dean. Faculty members who currently teach these courses will work with technology staff in the college do design the online segments of the courses.

- c. The proposal does not change the accessibility of any courses for the students. The courses will be offered as often and in the same sequence as when they were completely face-to-face.
 - d. The proposed modifications do not require additional consortial or contractual relationships.
 - e. Extensive instructor-student interaction is provided in the course standards and through the face-to-face portion of the course.
3. Faculty Support
- a. Since none of the courses will be deemed an online course, the changes will not require modifications for instructors regarding workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property, and faculty evaluation for online course delivery.
 - b. Faculty members providing online additions to their courses will be supported by current IT staff members, who are proficient in the technologies that will be used.
 - c. Training sessions for faculty in the different technologies will be provided.
 - d. The IT staff members, who will work directly with students, are proficient in these technologies.
4. Student Support
- a. Availability of courses will not be affected by these modifications; there will be no impact on the ability of students to complete the program.
 - b. Program descriptions will clearly inform students that these courses will have online components; students will also be informed during orientations and screening interviews.
 - c. Because the classes will all begin on campus, there will be no changes in advising, registration, placement, admission, enrollment, or payment for classes.
 - d. Online activities and face-to-face interaction are designed to support a sense of community among the students.
5. Evaluation and Assessment
- a. Students in these courses will receive the same rigorous examination of the extent to which they meet class objectives and learning outcomes.
 - b. All major exams will be in a proctored setting.
 - c. University policies for confidentiality in grading and reporting will be followed.
 - d. Overall program effectiveness will be measured by regular surveys of student and faculty satisfaction, student retention as compared to previous model of delivery, cost effectiveness, and student achievement.
 - e. The course and program results will be considered in program and college-wide evaluation of effectiveness and will be used to inform further plans for program improvement.
 - f. The evaluation of the program takes place in the context of regular evaluation of academic programs.

Action Plan

Date	Action	Person Responsible
Dec. 15, 2013	Revision committee will submit the modification plan to be approved through the appropriate university process.	Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah, Diploma Program Coordinator

Dec. 20, 2013	Proposal will be submitted to the APR & CE Committee for review	Dr. Clay Keller, Head of Curriculum Committee
Dec. 20, 2013	Proposal will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee of the university for review	Dr. Yahya Al-Nakeeb, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Jan. 7, 2014	Proposal will be reviewed at the APR & CE Committee meeting	Dr. Clay Keller
Jan. 7, 2014	Proposal will be reviewed at the Graduate Studies Committee meeting	Dr. Clay Keller
Jan. 15, 2014	If the proposal is approved, registration will open for new candidates	Ms. Amal Rashed, Secretary, Diploma Program
Jan. 15, 2014	Instructors who will record the online lectures and design the online activities for each course will be identified.	Dean Hissa Sadiq and Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah
Feb. 15 – March 15, 2014	Instructors will work with technical staff to develop online portion of course	Dr. Nancy Allen (consultant) Ms. Noran Emara, Lecturer
April 1, 2014	All courses will be posted to the course Blackboard sites	Dr. Nancy Allen (consultant) Ms. Noran Emara, Lecturer
Sept. 15, 2014	Begin the revised Diploma Programs	Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah, Diploma Program Coordinator

References

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- Schell, J. (2012). *Flipped classrooms: Web-based tools for facilitating in- and out-of-class engagement*. Academic Transformation Speaker Series: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Texas at Austin. Webinar available from the Internet at <http://ctl.utexas.edu/workshops-and-events/academic-transformation-speaker-series/>.