

Proposal to Reactive the Diploma Program

Overview

On the recommendation of the Vice President of Academic Affairs of the university, Diploma Programs in College of Education were frozen (no new candidates accepted) for the academic year (2012-2013).

In the frame of revision and assessment, the 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 the admission in the programs and made recommendations to overcome the challenges that impede candidate success and to avoid such problems in the future. These recommendations were developed in light of the vision, mission, and objectives of the college. Documentation of the problems and proposed solutions appeared in many records, such as the Spring 2013 Diploma Programs self-study. Meetings were held with the Heads of Departments and faculty members to get their feedback and input on how to develop the programs in the different concentrations to meet the requirements for the preparation of teachers.

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. 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.

After a one-year freeze on admitting new students, we seek to reactive the Diploma programs, based on our plan to develop it. The Diploma Program committee recommends reactivation of the Diploma Programs after the implementation of the modifications as described in the following document.

1. Allocate 24% of class time in each concentration area to 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.
2. Offer the Diploma in Primary Education in three concentrations instead of the former two concentrations, as presented in Table 1. The rationale for this change is that previously English, math, and science were all taught in English in the Independent Schools. With the new policy for language of instruction, math-science no longer requires English language proficiency.

Table 1. Concentrations for Diploma in Primary Education

Previous Concentrations	Proposed Concentrations
Arabic-Islamic- Social Studies	Arabic-Islamic- Social Studies
English-Math-Science	English Language Math-Science

3. Raise the minimum limit of test score in the paper-based TOEFL (or equivalent) from 450 to 500, in English concentration (Primary and secondary Diploma) to align with admission requirements in English track in COED
4. Restrict the TOEFL (or equivalent) test score as an admission requirement to English concentration groups only.
5. Change the language of instruction in the Diploma in Special Education and the Diploma in Early Childhood from English to Arabic, in line with the new language of instruction policy of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) and to increase the number of prospective students.
6. Change the language of instruction in the math/science concentration to Arabic, according to the SEC's new policies.
7. Scholarships for Qatari students only to increase the number of the Qatari teachers in the Educational Fields.
8. Have non-Qatari applicants who work in the independent schools to pay 50% from the tuition fees.
9. Setting conditions for students to pass a content test as a an admission requirement to any of the diploma programs, as required by our accreditation agency:
 - Student grade must not be less than 75% of the total score.
 - Students are allowed to re-test in case of achieving 65% of the total score.

A full description of the online proposal follows.

Reasons for providing some hours online

Low enrollment and high dropout rates have been an ongoing problem with the post-baccalaureate diploma program. Some of the problems expressed by candidates include the following: lack of time, lack of relevancy of some courses, lack of effective role models as mentors during the internship, and few incentives for finishing the program. The following suggestions have been put forward to better meet the needs of candidates.

Most candidates in the program are in-service teachers who thus have full time employment, thus lack of time to commit to the program is a major barrier to candidate numbers and to student success. Most also have families and other responsibilities. The intensive nature of the program makes it impractical, if not impossible, for some candidates. The following actions would help to solve this issue for most potential candidates.

1. Permission from the university to extend the length of time for completion of coursework. By allowing candidates to take as long as two years to complete course work, candidates could enter the program on a part-time basis and thus reduce the time challenges.
2. Permission from the university to re-accept candidates who have exceeded the automatic dismissal period by no more than one year. Because it is difficult for some inservice candidates

to acquire a teaching position in the field of their diploma (a requirement), the two-semester dismissal policy of the university creates a serious problem. Allowing candidates a full year to find such a placement would reduce this challenge.

3. Convert course delivery system to a blended¹ method. Less than 25% of the program will be modified to be delivered online, but by doing this, the number of days candidates must travel to the university is significantly reduced, addressing the time issue (Table 1). The section that follows further explains the plans for the online delivery system.

Table 1. Schedule of Classes with Modified Delivery

<i>First 8 weeks:</i>	Face-to-face Hours per Week	Online Hours per Week	FTF CRS	Online CRS
1. Qatari Schools and Society	0	1	0.25	0.75
2. Introduction to Special Education	2	1		1.00
3. Instructional Planning and Assessment	4	2	1.98	0.99
Total for this period	7	4	3.73	2.24
<i>Second 8 weeks:</i>				
1. Introduction to Special Education	4	2	1.98	0.99
2. Specialty Course I (Methods I)	4	2	1.98	0.99
3. Human Development and Learning	3	1	1.5	0.5
Total for this period	8	4	3.96	1.98
Spring Semester:				
1. Methods of Teaching ESL	2	1	1.98	0.99
2. Specialty Course II (Methods II)	2	1	1.98	0.99
3. Specialty Course III	2	1	1.98	0.99
Total for this period	6	3	5.94	2.97
Fall Semester				
1. Management of Ed. Environment	3	0	3	0
2. Internship	6	0	6	0
Total for this period	9	0	9	0
TOTAL			FTF CRS	Online CRS
			22.63	7.19
			% Change	24.0

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.)

Note that according to this plan, until the internship semester, candidates would be required to be on campus 6-7 hours per week (two days of 3+3 hours per week or 3+4 hours per week).

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 state (2004),

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 the content of a course, using 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. EDUC 500, which has historically been largely a lecture-based course of only one credit hour, requires less active learning activities to achieve its course objectives and learning outcomes and thus a majority of its hours will be online.

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 strictly reviewed to ensure consistency and quality throughout the program. Standards for development include the following.

1. Online classes 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 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 proctored 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. Courses will be reviewed by at least two instructional designers to ensure excellence in online pedagogy and by at least two content specialists to ensure quality in content-specific pedagogy.

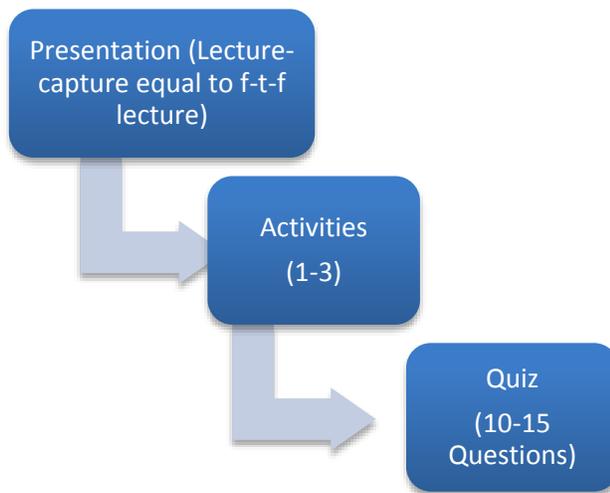


Figure 1. Structure of each online class

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. The design of individual courses will be completed by faculty members who currently teach these courses. They will be assisted by instructional designers knowledgeable in online pedagogy.
 - 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. The program will follow university standards regarding workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property, and faculty evaluation for online course delivery.
 - b. Faculty members providing online portions to their courses will be supported by current IT staff members, who are proficient in the technologies that will be used. The college also seeks to employ an instructional designer to further support participating faculty.
 - 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. 1, 2013	Revision committee will submit the modification plan to be approved through the appropriate university process.	Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah, Diploma Program Coordinator
Jan. 1, 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
Jan. 30, 2014	Registration will open for new candidates	Ms. Amal Rashed, Secretary, Diploma Program
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 and opened for review by selected instructional designers and content-specialists.	Dr. Nancy Allen (consultant) Ms. Noran Emara, Lecturer
May 1, 2014	Reviews will be returned and analyzed by the program instructors, courses modified as needed	Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah, Diploma Program Coordinator
Sept. 15, 2014	Start of new Diploma	Dr. Fatma Al-Mutawah, Diploma Program Coordinator

References

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- Williams, C. (2002). Learning on-line: A review of recent literature in a rapidly expanding field. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26 (3), 263–272.
- 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/>.