Director’s Welcome

Thanks for taking the time to read ZULAN. This is our 7th edition of our newsletter and it marks the beginning of a new and improved era for assessment at ZU. Over the past year, the assessment literature has taken a major turn towards moving beyond conducting assessment, or even using assessment results to make changes, to actually making changes which will lead to improved student learning. In our assessment program, we have completed a review of all of the actions we have implemented based on assessment results and have started to pilot a new model call PLAIR: Program Learning Assessment- Intervention- Reassessment. For programs not participating in PLAIR, adjustments have been made to the assessment plans to help units plan for use of assessment results. Over the next few years, we hope to improve our use of assessment results and expect that, if done correctly, we will see increases in students learning.

Other news within the Office of Educational Effectiveness (OEE) is that the use of Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) continues to expand with the tracking of ZU’s 2015-16 Operational Plan and its associated KPIs. Also, CurricUNET META, curriculum management software, has been launched as the replacement for the CIF (Course Inventory Form) which was our in-house tool. CurricUNET will be used within colleges and at university-level to manage the workflow and approval of course and program creations, edits, and deletions. This will improve our ability to have consistent syllabi and to create the course catalog. On a sad note, this past month OEE said farewell to Fatima Al Suwaidi, Sr Institutional Effectiveness Officer, as she has left to pursue and exciting opportunity at ACTVET. Until her position can be filled, her responsibilities are begin shared between Darrelle D’souza and Saidah Qunneis.

Kevin Schoepp
Director of Educational Effectiveness

Zayed University Learning Outcomes

- Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning
- Global Awareness
- Information Literacy
- Language
- Leadership
- Technological Literacy

Did you know?

Almost 1/3 of all of ZU’s programs have been aligned to the Qualifications Framework Emirates, and all of our programs will be QFE aligned by the end of 2015.

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

الهيئة الوطنية للمؤهلات
Publications and Presentations

We wanted to share some publications and presentations related to assessment and accreditation because these are hot topics that might interest some faculty. Because of our location in the UAE, there is often a lot of international interest in the work we do in these areas. Please let us know if you want to present on one of these topics internally and the Office of Educational Effectiveness would be happy to organize and host the event.


Meta-Assessment: Assessing the Assessment Program

This past year the Office of Educational Effectiveness conducted a meta-assessment, an assessment of the learning outcomes assessment program. Part of this assessment was done by reviewing all of the actions reported on in the annual assessment reports which are available online. There were 74 learning outcomes assessed at the undergraduate and graduate levels over the past 3 years and each of the purported actions were rated on a scale from No significant actions (16%), Actions remain recommendations (12%), Meaningful actions decided (35%), Meaningful actions taken (20%), Evidence of increased student learning (4%), and finally to, No actions required (12%). Obviously, if a program has found an increase in student learning or no actions are needed because students are achieving what we want them to achieve, good progress and learning is happening. At the other end of the spectrum, if actions are nothing but recommendations or there are no actions, then very little positive is coming out of the assessment program. It is the two ratings in the middle-where actions are either decided or taken that is of the most interest. While deciding on actions is a positive step, more should have been accomplished 1.5 years into an assessment cycle. Everything we know about assessment is that the transition to actually taking meaningful actions based on assessment results is the real challenge. The highest percentage of our actions remain at the decided stage and are yet to be implemented.

We further broke down our investigation of actions decided and actions taken by year to learn if we have been getting better over time. The table shows a slight increase over time where in 2013-14, we have 78% of all assessed learning outcomes actions being rated at least to actions decided and 50% of these having crossed the important threshold to actions taken. Our goal over the next few years is to improve both percentages, but to especially see more actions at least to the actions taken stage. Where we really want to be is either having our students meeting our targets or showing increases in learning.

Based on what we have learnt, as an assessment program we have made a few changes. First, with the assessment plan template we now ask faculty to start planning for use of results rather than just planning the assessments. Second, we are instituting assessment consultations with all programs prior to submission of the assessment plans or reports. Third, we are launching a new assessment model from James Madison University known as PLAIR-Program Learning Assessment-Intervention-Reassessment. We are fairly confident that as an institution, we will be able to make excellent progress over the next few years.
PLAIR: A New Model in Learning Outcomes Assessment

ZU’s current learning outcomes assessment program has made big strides in its less than 5 year history thanks to the participation and engagement of faculty and administration. Program level outcomes assessment provides a vehicle for continuous program improvement, with improvement of student learning as its primary focus. Over the past few years, we have become very good at systematically collecting assessment data, and looking at these data with an eye toward improving student learning. Determining and implementing the intervention which affords the best possibility to improve student learning, however, is a difficult challenge. One of the reasons why it is challenging is that, while the data may point to a problem or area of weakness, the data alone “announces” neither the cause nor the solution. In a recent publication from the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment, Dr. Keston Fulcher, of James Madison University, a three-time winner of the CHEA Award for assessment, introduced a program he dubbed PLAIR. PLAIR stands for Program Learning Assessment: Intervention- Re-assessment and provides a systematic approach to evidencing improvement in student learning. PLAIR involves an intensive focus on a single learning outcome over a longer duration than our usual learning outcome assessment cycle, in order to provide sufficient time for the intervention to yield evidence of improved student achievement. While PLAIR addresses an overall strategy for capturing evidence of increased learning, the method for determining the cause of the learning performance problem and designing the appropriate intervention in response, remained unclear.

Kevin and I saw the need for a comprehensive tool to guide the PLAIR process. We have recently developed what we are calling the PLAIR Consultation Tool, or PCT, which serves as a comprehensive framework for guiding our collaboration with program assessment teams through PLAIR. The PCT begins by focusing in on the selected learning outcome and determining what successful attainment ‘looks like’ in the discipline, followed by an examination of current assessment data, framing the performance gap, cause analysis, intervention selection and a timeline for implementation.

The College of Communication and Media Sciences and our Department of Public Health and Nutrition have stepped forward and have started the PLAIR process. Our initial meetings using the PCT have been encouraging and have brought forth a range of interesting ideas focused on the goal of improving student learning. The PCT is designed specifically for the PLAIR process but is available to any college or department interested in improving their implementation of closing the loop actions, and we invite your feedback on it. Contact us if you want to learn more about PLAIR, or if you want the PCT.

Scott Benson
Quality Assurance Coordinator
Office of Educational Effectiveness

Accreditation Update

This past year has been a busy one for accreditation—both internationally and nationally. As part of our international accreditation, in the fall we hosted a MSCHE team as part of our submission of our Monitoring Report. The team found that we remained in compliance with all of the MSCHE standards, but we have been asked to follow up with a progress report to be submitted on April 1, 2016. The progress report, which will not include a team visit, gives us an opportunity to document further steps taken to (1) strengthen collegial governance, including the establishment of processes to ensure faculty participation in governance and (2) assess the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance. Within the near future we expect to hear positive news from both NASAD and ACEJMC accrediting the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises and the College of Communication and Media Sciences (CCMS) respectively. Soon our list of international accreditations will make us a regional leader in this respect.

Nationally, we submitted our 2nd response to the CAA on March 16, so that we could achieve our institutional licensure. We had expected to have received it earlier, but there were a number of requirements that we did not meet. Because of this, we have yet to submit any of the college self-studies to the CAA. We hope to submit the College of Education, CCMS, and the College of Business prior to the summer break and to have a CAA team visit the College of Education this academic year. The rest of the colleges have been scheduled to submit over the next year. Full recognition from the CAA will prove to be an important step in the maturation of Zayed University.
The Office of Educational Effectiveness (OEE) conducted the following workshops, which were widely attended by the ZU community:

- Introduction to Rubrics and Blackboard Rubrics workshop
- Assessment Retreat: Closing the Loop & Best Practices
- Introduction to Analytic Rubrics and Backboard Rubrics: The Why and How
- CurricUNET Training Sessions (Reviewer/Approver)
- SPOL Training Sessions

For more information on upcoming workshops, look out for email announcements or call OEE at Ext. 3277

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**ZULAN – Events Spring 2015**

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Day/ Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oman Quality Network in Higher Education 3rd 2015 Conference</td>
<td>Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (24-25) February, 2015</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Oman, Muscat</td>
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<td>Using the Assessment Report Templates</td>
<td>Tuesday &amp; Wednesday, March 24 &amp; 25, 2015</td>
<td>10:30 am- 11:30am, 12:30pm- 1:30pm</td>
<td>Abu Dhabi ADM-1-137 Dubai 01-GF-042</td>
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<td>University Learning Outcomes Assessment Standing Committee</td>
<td>Wednesday, March 25, 2015</td>
<td>3:00-4:00</td>
<td>VC – CON-03-029 Al Salmi / VC L1-0-075</td>
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<td>ZU SoTLA Conference (Dubai &amp; Abu Dhabi)</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 21, 2015</td>
<td>9:00 am- 3:00 pm</td>
<td>AUH (Convention Center) DXB (Convention Center)</td>
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<td>University Learning Outcomes Assessment Standing Committee</td>
<td>Thursday, April 23, 2015</td>
<td>12:30-1:30</td>
<td>EBR (DXB)/ADM-2-057</td>
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<td>Building Effective Rubrics Workshops</td>
<td>Wednesday &amp; Thursday April 29-30, 2015</td>
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<td>QS Maple Professional Leaders in Education Conference</td>
<td>Tuesday &amp; Wednesday, May 5-6, 2015</td>
<td>2 Days</td>
<td>Qatar, Doha</td>
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<td>Writing Good Learning Outcomes Workshops</td>
<td>Wednesday &amp; Thursday 13-14, 2015</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>Assessment Report Presentations</td>
<td>Monday &amp; Tuesday 18-19 May 2015</td>
<td>3:00-4:00</td>
<td>VC - CON-03-030 Garmeda / VC R-L1-034</td>
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<td>University Learning Outcomes Assessment Standing Committee</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 27, 2015</td>
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<td>EBR (DXB)/ADM-2-057</td>
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