

BUILDING TUTORS' CAPACITY

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The year 2008 has seen a concerted effort taken by the University to enhance tutor capabilities. One of the initiatives taken is the development of a new training programme for senior tutors as well as new tutors. The initiative started off with the development of OUM's new Tutor's Handbook which was used as the foundation of the training content.

The handbook serves as a complete guide for tutors in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), particularly at OUM. It was specifically designed to provide all the information that tutors needed to know. This handbook is deemed crucial as tutoring in ODL is radically different from tutoring at conventional universities.

The handbook provides general information about OUM, expectations of tutors, the tutoring process, assessment methods and administrative matters that tutors need to deal with. It also explains how tutors could effectively carry out their duties according to the University's requirements.

Tutors were requested to read the handbook before attending the training programme. As some of the training content may already be familiar to senior tutors, this programme also serves as a refresher course.

To ensure high participation in this nationwide training, the University has strategised the implementation of the programme into three training phases: training Lead Trainers, training Lead Tutors and training



Tutors. Senior academic staff and Lead Tutors were roped in as trainers for the programme.

In the first training cycle, as many as 3106 Tutors and Lead Tutors were invited to take part in the programme. Out of this, 43.4% (1,348) tutors attended the programme, which was held at 18 learning centres.

Evaluations of the handbook and the training programme were both very encouraging. Based on a preliminary analysis, Lead Tutors who attended the programme were generally satisfied with it.

Participants said the contents of the training were practical, useful and very important especially to new tutors. Lead Tutors believed the information provided in the programme would help them to plan well for tutorials, be better in facilitating tutorials, lead quality online discussions and motivate learners better.

It was encouraging to observe that Lead Tutors had performed fairly well in the test conducted. A total

of 35 (76.1%) Lead Tutors scored at least grade B (65%) and above for the test. It is evident that the majority of the Lead Tutors were aware of the University's teaching and learning system, administrative requirements and support systems.

Analysis would later be done to gather responses from the tutors' group.

The Centre for Tutor Management and Development (CTMD) and the learning centres would be organising the next training cycle tentatively at the end of this September semester.

Tutors who have not been able to participate are strongly encouraged to attend the training programme at their respective learning centres not only because the training is important for improving their knowledge but also because OUM is in the process of setting up a Tutor Ranking System to ensure that only quality and trained tutors remain in its tutor pool.