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23

PRODUCING QUALITY GRADUATES

Everyone agrees that universities should always strive to produce quality graduates. What is not always so clear cut, however, is what constitutes quality and how best to produce it. So, what is this sought-after thing called quality? Is it equivalent to marketability? Is it adaptability, high literacy, a critical mind, civic consciousness, verbal and written eloquence, entrepreneurial skills, or more? Within the context of OUM, this issue interrogates the qualities of quality graduates, examining at the same time how tutors can contribute to the production of quality graduates.

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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is an OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

TCX is published electronically twice every semester.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue brings a couple of significant changes to TCX.

First off, we've decided that the PDF and web versions of TCX should be friendlier to each other. So gone are the days when we e-mail out the full PDF with the publication of each new issue. In other words, the web version is no longer the stepchild. From now on, we'll be sending out an e-announcement instead. You would have noticed that by the time you read this.

In case you haven't, the new e-announcement is more 360-degrees and more reader-friendly, too. At one glance, readers will get a full picture of all that the issue has to offer.

Each feature is now accompanied by a short summary. If you want to read more, simply click on the "Read more ..." link and you'll be taken to the full version on the web. The full version in PDF will still be available for download.

In the coming issue, the web version will be upgraded to enable you to rate the articles you read. There will also be a comment box next to the rating option so you can share your thoughts with us on the spot.

On top of that, we've refreshed the editorial board after one year. A few members have left us for now to concentrate on other challenges, while a few have come on board to inject new ideas to continue making your reading of TCX worthwhile. To both, a big thanks for being part of TCX.

This issue of TCX focuses on the ifs and buts of quality graduates – timely too, for OUM is in the midst of redoubling its efforts in ensuring quality in all its deliverables. TCX23 interrogates the multiple dimensions of quality, sharing with you insights gathered from multiple stakeholders so that you may in turn critically self-retrospect on your own standards and understanding of quality.

We hope you'll derive maximum benefits and (dare we hope) pleasure from consuming this issue. Perhaps you will come to the conclusion, like many of us have, that quality is not an 'in' thing or a trendy topic to discuss, but a matter of serious consequence that can make or break a nation.

Best

Dr David C.L. Lim

Chief Editor





IMPORTANT DATES

I have read TCX22 and the articles provided are very beneficial for readers. However, the important dates in the Tutor Reminder are a bit confusing. As far I know, there will be no assignments and quizzes for this semester (correct me if I'm wrong). So, what are the important dates for?

*Noor Syahida Bt Md Soh
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

Assignments and quizzes are only exempted for the seven MCQ subjects.

CTMD

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

For me, the most impressive part in TCX22 is the adapted write-up, "Motivation: Choosing to be Positive." "Effective Tutoring: Catering To Learners' Diverse Needs" by Richard Ng is another article that I find very interesting. The other sections are also very informative and provide added value for reading.

For the forthcoming issue, I would appreciate it if TCX provides further information about the newly implemented assessment method for certain courses like OUMH1103 and OUMM2103, where all the questions are in the form of multiple choices. Other issues to include are the removal of the 5% OLP as well as essay questions and written assignments. Perhaps OUM has specific reasons for these; it will be good if tutors could know more about them.

I would say that this issue is exemplary.

*Aw Yoke Cheng
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

MY TUTORING STYLE

I conduct tutorials by relating and linking them with real situations. This means not only do they get ideas from the module but must be prepared with many materials including journals. I believe in sharing views and ideas as well as creating awareness among adult learners. A tutor must make tutorials meaningful and relevant for them. Before I start a tutorial, I usually try to get an idea of the students' profile, especially about their background, job and experience. Then, I will try to convince them that the course will be useful for them especially for the exam or in real world. If tutors can build up their credibility, it will be much easier to sustain students' attention and interest in tutorials.

*Abdul Jaleel Abdul Hakeem
Perak Learning Centre*

PRAISE FOR ARTICLE

From the Dean's Office (TCX22) is a very good and inspiring article. It motivates tutors to excel in their job. Please bear in mind that most of us become tutors not for the sake of getting a tutor's allowance. We can make much more money outside during the weekend instead of tutoring the students. Articles of this nature inspire us to gain the three good quality traits of compassion, passion and patience (as mentioned by Prof Dr Yusoff) in order to develop our students.

*Dr Baharuddin Mat Asek
Serdang Raya Learning Centre*

We welcome letters from our readers on any issue that may be of concern to you. You may use a pseudonym if you wish but please mention which learning centre you are from. Please e-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.



IMPORTANT DATES

OMES Deadlines

PROGRAMME	ACTIVITY	DATE (2009)
Undergraduate	Key in marks for assignment and quizzes*	12 – 26 July
	Key in marks for online participation*	3 – 9 August
<i>*Except for seven MCQ-format subjects</i>		
Postgraduate	Key in marks for Assignment 1	15 – 28 June
	Key in marks for Assignment 2	13 – 26 July
	Key in marks for online participation	1 – 15 August

Upcoming Activities

ACTIVITY	DATE (2009)	REMARKS
Malaysian Qualifications Agency Visit/ Interview	11 – 12 July	Perak Learning Centre: Bachelor of Mathematics with Information Technology with Honours (BMIT) Shah Alam (Section 7) Learning Centre: Bachelor of Mathematics and Management with Honours (BMM)
Regional Colloquium for Tutors (Southern Region)	1 – 2 August (Melaka <i>Learning Centre & Mahkota Hotel Melaka</i>)	Selected tutors and facilitators from the Southern Region (Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Johor and Batu Pahat), subject matter experts, learning centre administrators, academicians, management and administrative staff.
Regional Colloquium for Tutors (East Coast)	14 – 15 August (Permai <i>Park Inn Resort, Kuala Terengganu</i>)	Selected tutors and facilitators from the East Coast (Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang), subject matter experts, learning centre administrators, academicians, management and administrative staff.
Monitoring of New/Senior Tutors and Facilitators	Tutorials/ Seminars 1 – 5	Observation during tutorials/ seminars will be conducted by Lead Tutors and academic staff.
International Conference on Information (ICI9) – Learning Innovations in Higher Education	12 – 13 August 2009 (<i>The Legend Hotel Kuala Lumpur</i>)	This conference aims to bring together innovations and ideas in higher education onto one common platform. Innovators and practitioners will be able to share findings and experiences as well as explore the many technologies that have shaped, and will continue to influence, higher education and ODL.

ENVISIONING QUALITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF MANSOR

By Dr Janet Woo Tai Kwan

PROF DR MANSOR FADZIL obtained his BSc (Mechanical Engineering) from Birmingham University (1981), and Masters (1982) and PhD in Control System Engineering (1985) from Sheffield University in the United Kingdom. He served at University Malaya before leaving to join OUM. He is now OUM's Senior Vice-President. He sheds light on how OUM strives to produce quality graduates.

Dr Woo: How would you define "quality graduate"?

Prof Mansor: A quality graduate is someone who has undergone total, wholesome development. This person is mature, not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually and emotionally. The person has a good grasp of the subject matter he or she specialises in.

More importantly, he or she is very much in sync with current events in the world as well as the immediate surroundings. A quality graduate is open to change, new ideas and innovations.

He or she is a team player and an independent worker. A quality graduate is also both a good leader and a good follower – able to assume any position and rise to the occasion.

Dr Woo: Are there any special characteristics that an OUM graduate must have in order to be considered a quality graduate?

Prof Mansor: Essentially, a quality OUM graduate should have all the attributes I described earlier. Of course, he or she may not immediately possess all these qualities. That is where OUM plays its role.

Through education, we can mould our learners and raise them to a higher level. But most definitely, a quality OUM graduate must be an all-rounder – confident, knowledgeable as well as IT- and technologically-savvy. He or she must also be able to manage time well, communicate effectively and be persuasive when making presentations.



“Through education, we can mould our learners and raise them to a higher level”

Dr Woo: In what ways are ODL graduates different from traditional university graduates?

Prof Mansor: Most ODL university students are working adults whereas most traditional university students are fresh school-leavers studying full time. Many OUM learners, for example, hold full-time jobs and are pursuing higher qualifications to advance in their careers. They are very focused and their priority is to acquire relevant skills for their workplace.

This means they are clear about what they want and are all out to achieve specific goals. Consequently, our graduates are definitely on par with, if not better than, those from traditional universities. A quality OUM graduate is not only competent, determined and ambitious but also has staying power without which he or she will not succeed.

(Continued on next page)

Dr Woo: What are OUM's strategies or efforts to produce quality graduates?

Prof Mansor: To answer this, we must look at what learners need in order to become quality graduates. Firstly, we try to provide our learners with a good study environment. We have well-equipped learning centres all over the country. Our tutors are carefully selected and regularly monitored to ensure that they give their best to help learners.

Quality tutors pave the way for quality learning. Of course, quality graduates can only come about when learners are provided with quality learning material. This is why OUM is upgrading its print modules and is constantly exploring ways to make teaching and learning more effective and engaging.

We also have in place a quality assessment system. In May this year, we introduced an alternative mode of assessment – MCQ (multiple-choice questions). We hope to eventually migrate to this mode of assessment for 80% of our courses.

We do not just focus on academia. OUM prides itself on being a caring organisation. Our Centre for Student Management regularly checks on the progress of learners and organises activities to help them, for instance, by holding workshops on study skills for those who require such guidance.

Seminars and colloquiums are held several times a year to expose learners, tutors and facilitators to best practices from all over the world so that they, too, can strive to be world-class. In the pipeline is the setting up of a professional chair for e-learning. We hope to appoint a professor by next year.

We are now also looking into ways to encourage more research to advance teaching and learning. All these efforts are ongoing and geared towards ensuring that OUM produces top-notch, quality graduates.

Dr Woo: To what extent has OUM successfully produced quality graduates?

Prof Mansor: Based on feedback from tracer studies, the majority of our students are very happy with OUM. About 95% have said they would definitely recommend OUM to their friends. This is a sign that we are doing something right.

I would say that we have been very successful in producing quality graduates. The feedback that we get indicates most of our graduates perform on the job and are able to meet the expectations of employers. Many were promoted after completing their courses at OUM.

Dr Woo: As OUM continues to expand, can it hope to maintain quality as well? What are the checks and balances put in place to ensure sustainability?

Prof Mansor: OUM is thinking all the time about enhancing and sustaining its rapid expansion as well as maintaining the quality of its services. It is constantly exploring options to stay abreast of changes and move ahead with the times. Our advent into mobile learning is one example of this. In the final analysis, I would say that our quality graduates are our best advertisements. Our alumni can serve as OUM ambassadors and speak volumes as to the quality of our programmes.

Of course, certain checks and balances have been put in place by the institution. These include tracer studies conducted regularly to give us new input on ways to improve services, ongoing training to ensure that academic staff upgrade their skills, and open channels of communication between learners, academic staff and the top management of OUM.

Dr Woo: What message do you have for our tutors on the university's vision to produce quality graduates?

Prof Mansor: First of all, I would like to thank all tutors who have worked hard to help OUM reach the stage it is at today. We have done much and we have done well but more remains to be done. I would also like to remind them that our aim at OUM is to provide quality education for the people of this country.

To do this, we ourselves must be of quality – this means we should constantly strive to upgrade ourselves. Truly, learning never stops. Also, our salaries are paid by our learners, so we have to put them first. Make sure they have a wonderful experience at OUM and support them as much as you can in achieving their goals. **TCX**

TOWARDS BES QUALITY

SELF-INTERVIEW ON OUM'S NEWLY LAUNCHED BACHELOR OF ENGLISH STUDIES (BES) PROGRAMME BY DR DAVID C.L. LIM

Tell us about BES and your role as the Programme Coordinator.

First of all, I should explain what 'English' is. Most people imagine it to be the study of English language, which is partially correct. What is not always realized, however, is 'English' is more than that. Yes, it includes grammar, linguistics and similar courses. And yes, it includes 'literature' which, incidentally, has evolved beyond aesthetic concerns, so much so that 'literature' now overlaps a great deal with cultural studies. In short, 'English' is a versatile discipline which, unfortunately, has been reduced to one thing or the other and offered as such in Malaysia.

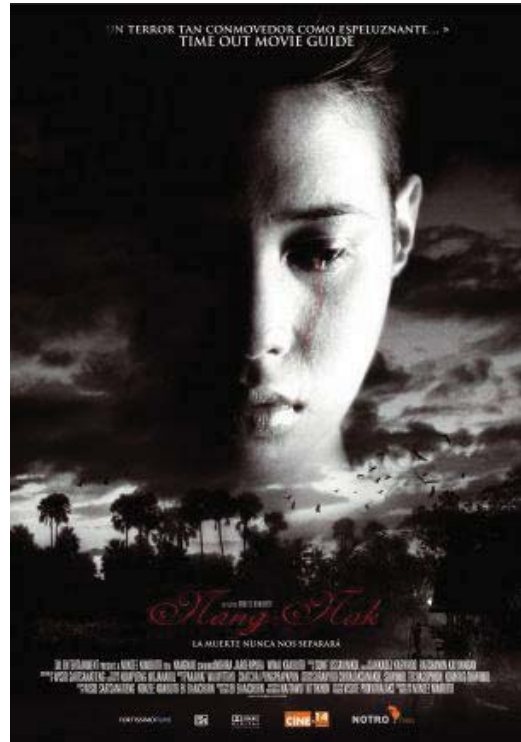
My role as Programme Coordinator is to break down the divisions of 'English' and to ensure that learners following the programme get to experience the discipline as a whole. OUM'S BES is also unique in the sense that it is designed to equip learners with a range of graduate skills and knowledge, and to train them to apply these in the real world.

Here, then, is where quality lies. In my mind, it is simply insufficient for 'English' graduates to know that "car" is a noun, "the" is a definite article, or "red" is an adjective. What is more important for me is whether these graduates are able to put knowledge to work. There's no point telling me "the" is an article if you don't know how to use it properly to construct a sentence. You'll be surprised to know how often "the" is wrongly used.

So what kind of skills do you envision graduates of BES will possess?

BES is holistic in the sense that it brings together in one place all the 'subfields' of English. So learners will get to master advanced literacy skills. They'll be exposed to the fundamentals of linguistics, as well as new trends in language and literature. They'll be trained in communication in theory and practice. And there's a strong emphasis on production – the ability to produce quality professional output in thought and writing in any situation.

The key word here is transferable skills – being able to write and speak persuasively, cogently, coherently in professional contexts; being able to analyze diverse forms of discourse; being able to acquire complex information in a structured and systematic way; and so on. These are skills which learners will hone over the duration of the programme.



“Learners will be exposed to literature and film from the Southeast Asian region, including the Thai classic horror film, *Nang Nak*”

They will definitely be valued in any graduate employment, especially in Malaysia, where there's a dearth of productive graduates.

Sounds good, but will BES be fun to follow? Or will it be tough all the way?

The programme will be rigorous, that's for sure. It will be rewarding, if learners put in the work. And it will be fun too. For me, personally, the highlights of the programme are Contemporary Fiction and Film (which trains learners to examine what is gained and lost in the act of 'translating' fiction to film), and Southeast Asian Cultural Production, which is a research project I'm working on. Learners will be exposed to literature and film from the Southeast Asian region, including the Thai classic horror film, *Nang Nak*. I'd kill to be able to study these courses, if I were an undergraduate! **tcx**

REVISITING EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

By Harvinder Kaur Dharam Singh

Educational philosophies are about the purpose, process, nature and ideals of education one would like to disseminate to learners. The philosophies of education may vary from one educator to another but their grander purpose remains the same, which is, educating them. The focus of this article is not to argue which philosophy is better than the other but to highlight some philosophies that are indeed different than others and to reflect upon our educational philosophies at OUM.

Socrates focused on questioning his learners to bring out their own ideas. The inquiry method pivoted student-centred learning by building what the learners do not know on to what they already know.

On the other hand, Aristotle believed that repetitive drill would be able to reinforce knowledge. Through the process of education, individuals could learn by nature, habit and reason to arrive at virtue, happiness and political harmony. Everyone should be given the opportunity to learn to manage their roles in society.

John Dewey was the father of the experiential movement. He contended that learners should be involved in real-life tasks and challenges to learn a subject. Teachers should have good insight of learners' past experiences which then enables them to provide quality education which is relevant and meaningful for their learners.

Maria Montessori introduced an empirical discipline known as Montessori, which focused on the development of the individual through all stages of childhood. Montessori teaching emphasised on the child's experience, where the child is self-directed in a learning activity. The teacher's role is more observational.

John Caldwell Holt was the leading advocate for home-schooling. He believed that learning could not be forced to occur in a classroom but rather, children should be taught and enabled to learn through life experiences.

While some of the above philosophies became the basis of the current education system, they have their pros and cons. A blended approach and bits of the best would probably answer the common dilemmas faced by present

society. At OUM, there are basically three main educational philosophies which are set to embrace numerous issues faced by today's Malaysians.

First, democratising education by providing open and distance learning where learners can learn as they earn and manage their other social responsibilities in their home and community. In addition, through open entry, learners are given education opportunities which they had missed out on earlier due to economical or social reasons. Had this not been put into place, many individuals would not have had the chance to develop themselves.

Second, the blended learning approach, which leverages on learning technologies and traditional teaching methods and is incorporated with various assessments methods, is put into service to address the various learning preferences and needs of adult learners. As commonly known, there is no one way that fits all learners' needs.

Third, OUM has immensely emphasised on quality graduates who should not only have knowledge and skills but who can also communicate well in English. OUM has laboriously made all efforts in producing quality curriculums, modules, tutors and assessments and did not shun advocating English as the medium for education at OUM.

Certainly, these philosophies mean well for our learners and the society as a whole. However, the success of OUM's educational philosophies is dictated by the extent to which philosophical values are demonstrated by its learners. So, have OUM learners acquired them?

We have seen the outcomes and contributions of OUM's education system through our graduates. Undeniably, OUM has made some difference but a little more improvement will make tremendous impact in realising OUM's philosophies. A good start will be to revisit the processes and implementation strategies of these philosophies. Examine whether an education philosophy being discharged is as desired and if it meets the expectations of our learners. We tutors can also play a vital part by being quality tutors and using OUM's philosophies to groom quality graduates. **TCX**

TRANSFORMING LEARNERS INTO SKILLED GRADS

Interview by Danny Chng Loi Peng

SIOW HING SIONG has been tutoring at the Negeri Sembilan Learning Centre since January 2003. He mainly tutors for engineering and education courses. He also shared his knowledge in five OUM modules and was appointed as a subject matter expert. He is currently serving as a technical teacher at Sekolah Menengah Teknik Ampangan in Seremban, which is about 20 minutes' drive from the Negeri Sembilan Learning Centre.

Chng: *What is your definition of a quality graduate?*

Siow: A quality graduate has excellent interpersonal and communication skills, which include oral and written skills. The graduate should also be resourceful.

Chng: *What are the requirements to produce quality graduates?*

Siow: Firstly, the curriculum must be solid and suit the current and future needs of the society. The modules or textbooks must be able to support it. The execution of the curriculum by tutors is also important. Practical or laboratory work is necessary as well. In addition, learners and tutors should be encouraged to conduct research as this helps them to become more knowledgeable in a field.

Chng: *Do you think the programmes in OUM are designed to produce quality graduates?*

Siow: The programmes are of high quality and standard, able to produce good quality graduates. With stringent examination regulations, constant updating of reading materials (modules), and implementation of suggestions by tutors and learners, the process of producing quality graduates becomes easier.

I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that OUM include at least one case study for certain courses as case studies will enable learners to critically review a particular

case, suggest concrete solutions, and further sharpen their oral and written skills.

Chng: *What is the role of a tutor in OUM?*

Siow: It is similar to the role of a lecturer in a conventional university setting. However, it goes beyond tutoring and discussion in the MyLMS forum. At times, I coach learners who face difficulty in preparing their final-year project proposal, getting approval to conduct their project and analysing the results. I also assist the learning centre when required.

Chng: *How could a tutor contribute to the development of quality graduates?*

Siow: As a tutor myself, I prepare before every tutorial. I keep a notebook to list the names of learners who consult me as I will contact them in the following weeks or tutorials. I also provide additional materials to my learners and ask questions to stimulate their interest.

Chng: *What are the issues in the efforts to produce quality graduates?*

Siow: Many learners are too dependent on the modules. They do not use reference books available in the Digital Library.

Chng: *What is the best way to handle this issue?*

Siow: Perhaps OUM could devise the modules in such a way as to require learners to retrieve information from the Digital Library. OUM could capitalise on experienced module writers. The writers then need to communicate with instructional designers. The latter should have relevant academic background to the modules. This will ensure that the instructional designers understand the content and can help to enhance the modules' presentation.

(Continued on next page)

“I believe a confident learner will become an independent learner”

Chng: Can you share with us your experience in helping to produce quality graduates?

Siow: Active learning, independence and motivation are three elements which I work on during my tutorials. Let me explain these:

- Active Learning – I prepare structured activities to help build interest among learners. I also ask questions and involve learners in answering questions.
- Independence – I believe a confident learner will become an independent learner. I often help learners to develop ideas and discuss these with them even if the ideas are not directly related to the course. By doing so, my learners often become more vocal and their confidence level increases.
- Motivation – Some of my learners come to tutorials unmotivated. They become unmotivated after failing to

find certain information online or do not grasp certain parts of the module. I usually hold a short discussion with them after tutorials. Most of them just need motivation, guidance and someone to listen to their problems.

Chng: What can OUM do to further improve its efforts to produce quality graduates?

Siow: As I have suggested earlier, the use of case studies would enable OUM to produce graduates who can critically analyse and express themselves, both in written and oral forms.

Chng: What advice would you like to give to new tutors?

Siow: Keep abreast of developments in your field. Prepare for tutorials and modify your tutoring method if you do not get the desired response. One very important thing is to not read from the modules. And encourage your learners to hold discussions during tutorials.



WRITE FOR TCX AND WIN RM50!

Are you currently a tutor at OUM? Looking for an outlet to share your thoughts about any aspect of teaching and learning?

If so, we'd love to hear from you.

Send us your completed articles. Or, if you prefer, chat with the Editors about story ideas you're thinking of developing. E-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.

If your article is published, you'll receive a token sum of RM50. (Internal and full-time staff are not eligible).

WHAT LEARNERS WANT

By Richard Ng

Since 2001, OUM has enrolled over 85,000 students to date, of whom over 95 percent are working adults. In line with its vision to be the leading provider of flexible learning, OUM is continuously making efforts to produce quality graduates.

Among others, it developed a state-of-the-art learning management system (MyLMS), which is rated as one of the best online learning support tools available for learners. OUM also set up the Centre of Instructional Design and Technology to produce quality learning materials.

The definition of “quality graduate” differs among the different stakeholders – OUM, employers and the learners themselves. According to a random survey, most OUM learners believe tutors play a very significant role in helping them to transform into quality graduates. The quality of lesson delivery is just as important, if not more, than the modules and MyLMS.

So, what do our learners expect from our tutors? They expect them to always be one step ahead of the learners in terms of knowledge in the subject matter. And this knowledge needs to be imparted to the learners in a simple way, taking into consideration their diverse learning styles.

Learners also want tutors who could capture their attention and attract their participation in tutorials. In addition, tutors need to be considerate towards learners, as many of them are working adults who need to adjust to the reality of going back to school after a hiatus of many years.

Learners also want tutors to respond to their questions and comments in the online forum. They need special attention in difficult subjects such as Maths, Science, Accounting and Engineering.

They would like tutors to help them by regularly assessing their progress as well as providing feedback and reinforcement. They do not want to feel intimidated by their tutors.

More specifically, they do not want to feel afraid to ask questions or voice opinion whether in tutorials or in online discussions. Therefore, they want their tutors to be more patient, understanding and supportive.



Learners also want tutors who could capture their attention and attract their participation in tutorials

OUM has come up with various tools and infrastructure in order to assist tutors in educating their learners. It also provides guidelines and training for tutors, through the Centre for Tutor Management and Development. So, it is now up to tutors to carry out their roles and responsibilities to the utmost of their ability. Only then could tutors help OUM reach its goal of producing graduates of quality. **TCX**

VIEWS FROM THE OUTSIDE

Compiled by Teo Hui Thian

The corporate sector has its own views about what makes a person a quality graduate. These are views we need to consider seriously if we want our graduates to not only be marketable and employable, but also worthy of getting headhunted by the best companies. So, what makes a quality graduate? Read on and find out what three leaders in the corporate sector think.

A quality graduate, to Motorola, means a graduate who demonstrates the ability to learn, maturity in thinking and good leadership skills. Briefly, the ability to learn is measured through the grade obtained by the graduate at the end of his study. A graduate who can share his thoughts and knowledge not only among his peers but also with other people or colleagues in different regions shows maturity in thinking.

Finally, his involvement in extra-curricular activities in college is used as initial measurement of his leadership skills. Being a multinational company and also an American-based company, proficiency in English is not only important but a must for us.

*Kamaldin Nordin
Director*

Motorola University for the Asia Pacific Region

A quality graduate is one who is self-initiated, is able to apply what he has learnt in university to solve problems effectively at the workplace, communicates effectively and can work well with others. He is able to maintain a good balance between his academic achievements and his extra-curricular activities. In summary, he is a balanced person who is intellectually, socially and emotionally adept.

*Cornelius Koh
General Manager*

*Human Capital Development & Engagement
Tan Chong Motor Group*



A quality graduate is moldable and has some professional experience outside academic life. He or she must have the hunger and drive for success. In addition, a quality graduate must have the right mentality upon graduation and explore all possible areas for personal development and improvement.

High-scoring graduates who think they can get a job just because they have A's on their transcripts are in for a surprise. Out here in the real world, you do not get paid to memorise some answers from a textbook and write it down on a piece of paper. You get paid for being able to solve problems, communicate and work together as a team to collectively apply your knowledge and experiences to a certain task or project.

*Izmir Mujab
Managing Director
Asiatica Intergroup*

VIEWS FROM THE INSIDE

Compiled by Abd Kadir Othman

What do our academics and tutors think about the qualities of a quality graduate? Do their thoughts resonate with yours? Here's what they have to say:

The single most important attribute of a quality graduate is the willingness to learn and to continue to learn. Independent study is not only indicative of a willingness to learn but more importantly, provides an initiation into the world of lifelong learning.

*Yuzery Yusoff
Bangi Learning Centre*

A quality graduate should possess a range of core skills. These include willingness to learn, ability to solve problems, good analytical ability and excellent communication skills. He or she must also be a team player, with the ability to adapt and be flexible.

*P. Rajesh Kumar
Politeknik Shah Alam Learning Centre*

A quality graduate is able to put into practice the academic knowledge gained and create synergy to meet the demands at the workplace. The graduate must have a positive attitude and aptitude towards continuous improvement in life and never cease to learn, unlearn and relearn. Having good communication skills and leadership traits would add value to his/her credentials.

*Lilian Kek Siew Yick
Head, Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning*

A quality graduate should possess good soft skills such as communication, self-management and language skills, besides excellent technical skills for IT graduates.

*Rohaizak Omar
Petaling Jaya Learning Centre*

A quality graduate is an active lifelong learner with a positive attitude to life. The graduate is also capable of applying the right knowledge to improve himself or herself and society in a positive and sustainable manner.

*Loo Sze Wei
OUM Main Campus*

A quality graduate is always motivated to learn, enhance his job-related skills and transform himself from a good performer to an outstanding performer.

*Dr Rosmah Mohamed
OUM Main Campus*

Quality graduates should meet the requirements of their potential employer. Employers want graduates who are flexible, adaptable and receptive to change. Employers expect graduates to exhibit a range of intellectual abilities. They want graduates who are inquisitive, innovative, logical, analytical, critical and creative as well as able to think laterally and conceptualise issues rapidly.

*Hazalina Hashim
OUM Main Campus*

ONLINE POLL

In my opinion, the most important factor in producing quality OUM graduates is:

1. Tutors who are capable and motivated
2. Quality learning materials
3. A syllabus which integrates both theoretical and practical aspects of a subject
4. All of the above

Please cast your vote online!



GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR QUALITY GRADUATES

By Nazrai Ahmad Zabidi

Is OUM generating quality graduates or just those with paper qualifications? The acid test is this: Will our graduates be recruited by reputable firms? According to the International Chamber of Commerce, significant organisations “hire people who have the potential to produce extraordinary results – and people who are at the top end of the employability scale.” So, if graduates do not display the type of quality wanted by employers and secure employment, they cannot be called quality graduates.

According to Assoc Prof Dr Abdul Wahab bin Abdul Ghani from the Faculty of Education and Languages and who is also the Chief Internal Auditor for Quality Management at OUM, there are three categories of learners at OUM: fresh school-leavers, in-service adults and senior citizens. All three have different expectations.

For fresh school-leavers, employability and acceptance of OUM qualifications are of prime importance, while for in-service or working learners, employability may not be as vital as progress in their career. In contrast, senior citizens study for the sake of studying and are more concerned about the type of knowledge offered by OUM. Dr Wahab believes tutors should be mindful of these differences and that the aspiration of producing quality graduates should be shared with them through various trainings and seminars.

Some tutors have already taken steps to develop students into excellent graduates. For example, Richard Ng introduced a technique to instil the love of maths in his students. The model, known as “The Alternative Model of Blended Pedagogy for the Learning of Mathematics,” won a silver medal for best paper at the Asian Association of Open Universities international conference in China recently. The model uses the online supplemental instruction approach whereby mentors are identified among learners who have shown potential in maths and then trained to guide other learners online. The mentors learn aspects that go beyond mathematics. Among others, they learn about IT in terms of how to compose online supplemental instructions. In addition, they learn about effective communication and organisation. At the end of the day, everyone benefits – the mentors gain new skills and the mentees begin to appreciate maths by learning from their peers.



Significant organisations “hire people who have the potential to produce extraordinary results”

Idris Ismail, an Entrepreneurship tutor from the Ipoh Learning Centre, believes knowledge acquisition is not a one-way street. If, for instance, there is a topic on creativity as a requirement to become an entrepreneur, a tutor can encourage students to refer to many sources such as books, online materials or their own work experience. Idris also inserts news clippings on issues related to entrepreneurship in MyLMS. His efforts encourage the love for reading. Students in his class are also expected to know more than what is contained in their course materials.

Extra effort by tutors can go a long way. It involves not just empowerment of learners but guided empowerment. During tutorials, learners not only learn the course materials but also new skills such as IT and communication. In the above examples, the learners even study after tutorials; they get excited because they feel like they are a part of the learning process. Hence, tutors should be innovative. They should engage learners in the learning process so that they will acquire more knowledge beyond the course materials – ultimately becoming quality graduates. **TCX**

WE ARE STILL GROWING

Sir Edmund Hillary was the first man to climb Mount Everest. On May 29, 1953, he scaled the highest mountain then known to man – 29,000 feet straight up. He was knighted for his efforts.

However, Hillary had to grow into this success. You see, in 1952 he tried to climb Mount Everest but failed. A few weeks later, a group in England asked him to address its members.

Hillary walked on stage to thunderous applause. The audience was recognising an attempt at greatness but Edmund Hillary saw himself as a failure.

He moved away from the microphone and walked to the edge of the platform. He made a fist and pointed at a picture of the mountain.

He said in a loud voice, “Mount Everest, you beat me the first time but I will beat you the next time because you have grown all you are going to grow ... but I am still growing!”

There is a lesson in this story for us at OUM: the quest for quality never ends. What is more, quality cannot be achieved overnight. We have to take the initial step, and then keep taking one step after another, until we reach the level of desired quality. There will be mountains to climb. We may falter and fumble. But it is up to us to get up and go on.

In short, like Hillary, we too can decide never to stop growing. This growth increases our quality as tutors. And by improving our quality, we can improve the quality of our learners. That leads to the achievement of our main aim in OUM – to produce quality graduates. **TCX**



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Adapted from: <http://www.motivational-messages.com>



Jalan Tun Ismail
50480 Kuala Lumpur
tcx@oum.edu.my

<http://tcx.oum.edu.my>