A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

TCX42 interviews Prof Mansor Fadzil, Senior Vice President of OUM, to catch a glimpse of what all staff and tutors can expect to see in the coming year as part of the University's evolution as the premier open and distance learning provider in Malaysia.

TCX
TUTOR CONNEXXIONS

ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexxions) is a non-profit 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.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

To all tutors, welcome back to another new semester. As you will discover in this issue of TCX, OUM will be rolling out new improvements over the coming year, starting with this September semester, which witnesses the introduction of another set of full online courses and the new myVLE platform.

As usual, this issue of TCX has new announcements and reminders for all tutors, both F2F and online, so be sure to keep abreast and do not hesitate to contact the respective parties should you have queries on any aspect of your tutoring responsibility.

Enjoy reading and have a productive semester ahead!

Best

AP Dr David CL Lim
Chief Editor

TUTOR INFO

IMPORTANT DATES		
	Tutorial 1	Existing Learners: 19-21 September 2014 New Learners: 10-12 October 2014
	Tutorial 2	Existing Learners: 10-12 October 2014 New Learners: 31 October-2 November 2014
	Tutorial 3	Existing Learners: 31 October-2 November 2014 New Learners: 14-16 November 2014
	Assignment Deadlines	Existing Learners: 10-23 November 2014 New Learners: 30 November 2014 (Tutors should remind their learners to use the special assignment template and to submit their assignments online. This applies only to courses that require learners to submit their assignments online.)
	Tutorial 4	Existing Learners: 14-16 November 2014 New Learners: 28-30 November 2014
	Tutorial 5	Existing Learners: 28-30 November 2014
	Final Exams	13-31 December 2014

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FOR E-TUTORS

REMINDERS

1. All e-tutors must be visible in their respective forums.

2. Log in to the Forum at least 4 times a week.

3. Never ignore requests for help from learners.

4. Respond to learners' postings promptly.

5. Post questions and redirect questions to learners to encourage and stimulate discussions.

6. Post additional content-related resources (web links, videos, articles, etc.) to stimulate interest and spark discussion.

7. If there is an e-schedule for your course, please refer your learners to the e-schedule to help guide them with weekly activities for the course. The e-schedule appears within the course in myVLE, on the left sidebar menu.

8. Forums are monitored daily. Regular reminders will be sent by ITLA staff, e-tutor mentors and the Head of the e-Learning Unit of ITLA whenever necessary.

9. Please inform your learners of any prolonged absence and encourage learners to help one another during your absence. You must also inform the Head of the e-Learning Unit at ITLA and/or ITLA staff of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate your forum.

10. All e-tutors are required to use their OUM email account. Communication related to e-tutoring matters will be sent to e-tutors' OUM email accounts.

11. Please maintain professionalism in the forum at all times. And remember to model the proper tone when communicating with your learners.

12. Bear in mind that learners' expectations of e-tutors include visibility, timeliness, and quality feedback.

13. OUM expects e-tutors to:

    • Enter myVLE and check the forum at least once every other day.

    • Post at least eight postings a week.

    • Check OUM mailbox regularly for email notifications of forum postings

14. If you have a Facebook (FB) account, please send a request to join the e-tutor group on FB. Email AP Dr Safiah at safiah_mdyusof@oum.edu.my.

FOR F2F TUTORS

Tutors conducting F2F tutorials are reminded of the following:

DOs:

1. Prepare your teaching materials and presentation slides well before each tutorial.

2. Plan appropriate tutoring strategies that befit your teaching-learning objectives.

3. Motivate your learners with the use of relevant and interesting audio-visual materials.

4. Pose thought-provoking questions to engage your learners.

5. Organise pair or group activities where appropriate to help you learners learn better.

DON'Ts:

1. Attend tutorials unprepared.

2. Reschedule allocated tutorial dates.

3. Cancel tutorial sessions.

4. Be late for tutorials.

5. Cheat by recording an earlier sign-in time.

6. End tutorials early.

7. Read directly from the module throughout each tutorial.

8. Discuss non-academic matters during tutorials.

ON THE F2F TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA & E-TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA

Tutors are encouraged to log in to the F2F Tutor Community and e-tutor Community forums for continued support and development.

The forums also give tutors and e-tutors the opportunity to exchange and share experiences with other tutors/e-tutors.

ON ASSIGNMENTS

For courses with assignments:

1. Assignments, assignment rubrics and assignment templates for learners have been uploaded to myVLE.

2. On online submission of assignments, do note that there are different deadlines for existing learners and new learners.

3. No late submission of assignments will be accepted.

4. Do remind learners to start working on their assignments early and not wait until the last day to submit their assignments online.

5. F2F tutors and e-tutors can only provide guidance on completing the assignments based on the rubrics given. Please do not give any confirmation of marks for the assignments as the assignments will be graded by the e-graders.

E-TUTORING UPDATES

i. We are now using the new myVLE. To access the new myVLE, please use your regular OUM username and password and log in from the official OUM website at http://www.oum.edu.my/oum/v3/

ii. After you have logged in, download and go through the myVLE Learning Courseware. Click on the following myVLE Guide icon to access the download link:

iii. Starting from the September 2014 semester, there will only be one e-tutor for each postgraduate course to provide support for all learners enrolled for that course.

ix. A new e-Tutor Community site will be made available soon. All e-tutors will have automatic access to the community. Please check for access via the Communities icon. Once ready, the forum area will be used to provide support to all e-tutors.

v. e-tutors will be paid according to new rates which will soon be uploaded to the e-tutor community area.

vi. The e-tutor mentoring programme will commence again in the September 2014 semester. All e-tutors will be assigned an e-tutor mentor who will be responsible for providing guidance and support. Mentors will be contacting their e-tutors in due course via email.

vii. Several undergraduate courses are offered as fully online courses. All e-tutors for fully online courses must be active and visible in the forums. Learners registered for fully online courses do not have face-to-face tutorials. Learners can only turn to the e-tutors for learning support.

viii. The new myVLE platform has a chat function. You are encouraged to have synchronous sessions with your learners at least once or twice a week. Inform your learners of specific times when you will be online and available in the chat room.

ix. From the September 2014 semester, all e-tutors are required to submit the "e-tutor facilitation activity record form" and "self-review form" by the end of each semester. These forms will be made available in the e-tutor community area. By taking notes of your weekly forum activities and completing the self-review, you will be able to reflect on your online experience and further develop your skills as online facilitators. Email the forms directly to the Head of e-Learning at ITLA.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

INTERVIEW WITH PROF MANSOR FADZIL, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT (mansor@oum.edu.my)
By AP Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)

Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil

Open University Malaysia (OUM) is working on a series of learner-centred and technologically-driven initiatives which will be unveiled in stages in the near future. TCX interviews Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil for a glimpse of what OUM tutors and learners can expect to see in the coming year as part of OUM's evolution as the premier open and distance learning provider in Malaysia.

Dr David Lim: As covered in the previous issues of TCX, OUM has been introducing full online courses since the January 2014 semester. Can you tell us more about the rollout so far?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: The first set of eight full online courses was introduced in the January 2014 semester. Twelve courses were rolled out in the May semester, while fourteen are being introduced in this September semester on the new myVLE platform.

These courses are followed by learners entirely online, with iLecture video support, online self-tests and pre-posted forum questions serving to guide learners. There's also online progress tracking.

Learners who have taken these courses appreciate the fact that they no longer need to attend face-to-face tutorials at learning centres. Many of them were not able to attend tutorials anyway, which are usually scheduled for weekends, mainly due to work and personal commitments. So these full online courses suit them very well.

The full online courses allow learners to learn at their convenience and yet be able to interact online with their peers and e-tutors to discuss subject matter content. Learners benefit from cost savings, too, in not having to travel to their learning centres for what can be done from the convenience of their home or workplace.

> **"Our analyses show that e-learning can and does work if it is done well, if we provide all the necessary scaffolding support, and if we remain vigilant in addressing whatever shortcomings that may crop up along the way."**

Dr David Lim: You mentioned in the previous TCX issue that OUM's target for this first phase of the online initiative is a balance of 20 percent full online courses and 80 percent blended courses. Is the plan on-track?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: Yes, we are excited to say that the faculties are working successfully towards this.

We've done our analyses of the assessment results of our learners who've taken the full online courses, and we've found that they have done as well if not better than those learners who'd taken the same courses in the blended mode, that is, a combination of online and face-to-face learning.

Our analyses show that e-learning can and does work if it is done well, if we provide all the necessary scaffolding support, and if we remain vigilant in addressing whatever shortcomings that may crop up along the way.

We're encouraged by the positive outcome so far, which gives us confidence to move forward. We're prepared to invest heavily – financially and in terms of human capital – to ensure that our e-learning initiative is top notch. We're covering all angles, too, including upgrading our tutors' skills, enhancing our library resources, upgrading our learning materials, and so on.

In view of the encouraging results thus far, more full online courses will be introduced over the next few years until we achieve the desired ratio.

We are, of course, mindful of the fact that some courses are more amenable to full online delivery than others. We acknowledge also that the blended mode is useful for some of the more 'difficult' courses. Certainly, we intend to leverage on both the online and face-to-face components.

Dr David Lim: Please could you share how the initiative on full online courses fits into the overall strategic plan you have devised for OUM?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: The full online course initiative is being undertaken alongside other initiatives, such as the development of OUM'S automated Question Bank, which is a massive undertaking; as well as iFeed, which is short for Intelligent Feedback Database System. iFeed is an online smart tool that provides instant response to learner queries on course content.

The new myVLE, too, is a linked initiative which we've just launched in this September 2014 semester.

All these are critical components that must be in place before we can roll out our ambitious masterplan called OFER, or OUM Flexible Enrolment and Registration.

What can OFER offer? In essence, OFER is a move away from the semester system towards increased flexibility on top of the flexibility already offered by OUM.

OFER enables our learners to register for a number of courses from a pool of courses at any time of the year, irrespective of semester.

> **"OFER is a move away from the semester system towards increased flexibility on top of the flexibility already offered by OUM. It enables our learners to register for a number of courses from a pool of courses at any time of the year, irrespective of semester."**

Once they have registered, they can follow the course entirely online from anywhere in the world, with the guidance of e-tutors.

Learners registered for courses under OFER can also opt to join face-to-face tutorials if the tutorials happen to run at the time.

After one semester of study, they can request to sit for their exams at any time, too, on demand.

At their request for exams, exam papers will be auto-generated and quality-vetted by the faculties before they are offered to learners.

OFER, in short, offers our learners the kind of learner-centred flexibility never before seen in Malaysia.

Dr David Lim: OFER sounds very promising, indeed. When might we see it introduced?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: We're working on it right now, along with the necessary components supporting it. If all goes well, we hope to see an initial rollout in the May 2015 semester.

Dr David Lim: What other plans does OUM have in store?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: We currently have over 30 learning centres throughout the country, and we plan to increase the numbers gradually over time, up to a hundred, even.

We're looking at setting up micro learning centres in more locations, especially in places we have minimal or no visual presence. We envision these micro learning centres to be hubs of activities for our learners as well as potential learners.

They'll serve as one-stop centres where the general public can learn more about the programmes and study modes we offer, and where our learners can access learning resources and meet up for discussions.

These micro learning centres could also be utilised for community activities and for running short courses which we are looking to introduce in due course.

There's great potential in having more of these centres, which will serve also to increase our public visibility.

Dr David Lim: OUM is also building a new headquarters in Cyberjaya, isn't it?

Prof Mansor Fadzil: That's correct. We've purchased a plot of land there and we have just finalised how it should serve as our new HQ.

The first phase of construction will begin in early 2015 and we hope to be able to move there in two to three years.

Dr David Lim: Thanks, Prof, for a glimpse of OUM's future plans. TCX