TCX
TUTOR CONNEXXIONS

OUM
OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

GOING BIG ON E-LEARNING WITH MYINSPIRE

TCX returns with the forty-third issue to cover fresh news of Open University Malaysia (OUM)'s strategic plans spearheaded by the new President and Vice Chancellor, YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil. TCX43 features a short introduction to myINSPIRE by Dato' Mansor, a conversation with Dato' on OUM's future direction, and a piece on the University's reintroduction of the multiple-choice assessment format.

REGULARS
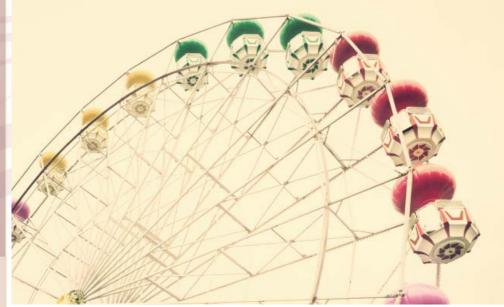
FEATURES

http://tcx.oum.edu.my

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Many of our readers would have noticed that TCX went silently dormant for a while as we were all caught up with other university work. Many enquiries were received from our tutors, asking when they'd get to see the next issues. Thank you for all the enquiries, kind words, and appreciation of TCX as a medium through which you keep abreast with teaching-learning developments at OUM. We're glad to now be able to say that TCX is back with Issue 43 and plenty of updates to share!

Since the previous issue of TCX was published, OUM's second President and Vice Chancellor, YBhg Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Anuwar Ali, has completed his tenure and moved on to helm other projects. Tan Sri Anuwar was and continues to be an avid reader of TCX and we would like to record our appreciation here for his indelible support and to wish him the very best in his future undertakings. At the same time, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil for his recent appointment as the third President and Vice Chancellor of OUM. Formerly Senior Vice President of OUM, Dato' Mansor has been the backbone and driver of TCX since its inception. It was Dato' in fact who through his gentle encouragement and persuasion brought about the present reactivation of TCX, having impressed upon us all that a dedicated platform for news-sharing was vital to keep our tutors up to speed.

TCX43 picks up from where it left off with updates on the strategic direction that OUM will be taking under the leadership of Dato' Mansor as the new President and Vice Chancellor. We hope, as always, that you will be informed and entertained. Happy reading!

Best
Dr David CL Lim

TUTOR INFO

IMPORTANT DATES		
	ORIENTATION	New Learners: 27-29 May 2016
	TUTORIAL 1	Existing Learners: 13-15 May 2016 New Learners: 3-5 June 2016
	TUTORIAL 2	Existing Learners: 3-5 June 2016 New Learners: 17-19 June 2016
	TUTORIAL 3	Existing Learners: 17-19 June 2016 New Learners: 1-3 July 2016
	TUTORIAL 4	Existing Learners: 1-3 July 2016 New Learners: 22-24 July 2016
	ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES	Existing Learners: 27 June - 17 July 2016 New Learners: 25-31 July 2016
	TUTORIAL 5 (SMP)	Existing Learners: 22-24 July 2016
	FINAL EXAMS	6-25 August 2016

TEACHING PERMIT

All OUM tutors are mandated by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to obtain a Teaching Permit.

If you have not applied for a Teaching Permit, or if you have obtained a Teaching Permit but have not submitted a copy of it to OUM, please apply and/or submit it to us as soon as possible.

The forms required to apply for a Teaching Permit are:

(a) *'Borang A - Permohonan Bagi Permit Mengajar'*

(b) Medical Examination for Teaching Permit

The forms can be found at:

OUM Home Portal > Online Community > Community List > F2F Tutors or ETutors > Announcement > Teaching Permit.

To apply, complete the forms and submit them with the necessary supporting documents before **30 June 2016** to the Institute for Teaching and Learning Advancement (ITLA).

FOR F2F TUTORS

REMINDERS

1. Always come prepared for all your tutorials.

2. Be punctual and refrain from ending your tutorials early.

3. Be honest when signing in and out on the attendance register.

4. Do not reschedule or cancel the tutorial timeslots allocated to you.

5. Avoid reading directly from the module.

6. Strive to initiate higher-order thinking during discussions.

7. Maximise the tutorial hours by focusing solely on academic matters.

FOR E-TUTORS

1. Download the myINSPIRE app (available on the Google Play Store and Apple AppStore) and make full use of its features.

2. Be visible in your respective forums.

3. Check on your forum often (at least 4 times a week).

4. Respond to learners' postings promptly.

5. Never ignore learners' requests for help.

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

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

8. Inform ITLA of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate forum discussions.

9. All e-tutors are required to use their assigned OUM email accounts as official OUM communication will be sent there.

10. When learners post in the forum, email notifications will be sent to your OUM mailbox. You can directly reply to the post via email as your response will appear in the forum.

e-Tutor Facebook Group

If you have a Facebook account, please request to join the e-tutor group on Facebook. Contact any ITLA staff for further information.

Mobile Support for e-Tutors (MoST)

Mobile Support for Tutors (MoST), which is accessible on WhatsApp, is now in service. We will be using this channel to post announcements, reminders, and tips from time to time.

Please join us on WhatsApp by adding our mobile phone number to your contact list. The number is **019-3204899**.

On Assignments

For courses with assignments:

1. Assignments and Assignment Rubrics have been uploaded to myINSPIRE.

2. With regards to online submission of assignments, please note that there are different deadlines for existing learners and new learners.

3. Encourage learners to refer to and use the Guide to Writing Assignment. This guide can be found on the OUM portal.

4. 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.

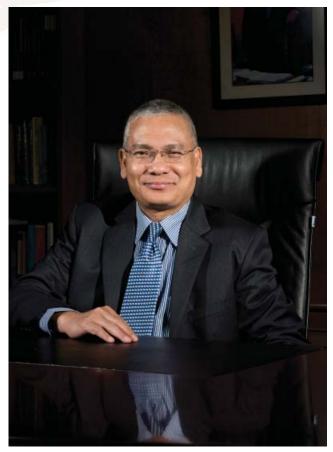## ON THE F2F TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA & e-TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA

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.

CONTACT INFO

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	Shahrizan Sukirman	03-27732226	shahrizan_sukirman@oum.edu.my
F2F TUTOR ISSUES & CONCERNS	All Learning Centre Directors	Refer to your respective learning centres	
	Mohd Izral Mohd Nazir	03-27732301	izral@oum.edu.my
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Going Big On E-Learning With myINSPIRE

By YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil (mansor@oum.edu.my)

YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil

We live in an era where technology permeates our everyday life. In the field of higher education, more and more institutions of higher learning are turning to technology to help learners move beyond the traditional instruction-led environments to experiential learning that is more engaging.

OUM is no exception as we have been leveraging on technology from the early days of our operation. Technology has been the backbone of the University since opening our doors in 2001, from managing daily operations to delivering programmes.

The use of technology has enabled the University to constantly innovate and this helps our learners to engage in flexible learning, anytime, anywhere, anyhow and, most conveniently, at their own pace.

Our first learning management system, myLMS, was initially developed in 2003 to enable the University deliver content and learning resources online. The system was upgraded in 2012 and renamed myVirtual Learning Environment or myVLE with improved features, where learners can register their courses, manage their studies and perform other study-related tasks from their home, office or the outdoors using their mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

myVLE has served the University well but with the advancements in technology and to accommodate new learning styles, OUM is introducing a totally new learning management system – myINSPIRE. It is customised from Moodle, which is an open source course management system that provides an organised interface for e-learning.

"OUM is introducing a totally new learning management system – myINSPIRE."

With the majority of our learners being working people, OUM is going big on e-learning. With myINSPIRE, the University hopes to promote better learner engagement by providing a learning platform that is user-friendly and easily accessible. myINSPIRE supports learning on the go as contents can be accessed on all mobile devices including smartphones.

Other features of myINSPIRE include gamification, e-modules, access links to other web resources like Google Drive as well as powerful learning analytics that enable learners to keep track of their learning, and tutors to keep track of learners' progress.

We encourage all our tutors to try out the new myINSPIRE, especially those who are directly involved in e-tutoring this May 2016 semester. We trust you will find the new platform conducive for teaching and learning. TCX

OUM'S STRATEGIC PLANS (2016-2020), PART 1:

A Conversation With YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil, President and Vice Chancellor, OUM

By Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)

YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil

Dr David Lim (DL): First off, congratulations, YBhg Prof Dato' Mansor, on your recent promotion to President and Vice Chancellor of Open University Malaysia [OUM].

Since taking over in January 2016, you have initiated a number of key changes to take OUM to the next level. Please could you tell us more about these changes and how they figure within your overall vision for OUM?

YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil (DM): Thank you, Dr David, for the kind words and the opportunity to share with our tutors the changes they can expect to see in the near term.

In a sentence, OUM is forging ahead with its e-learning ambitions. We will be increasingly leveraging on e-learning technologies to deliver quality higher education to our learners.

We expect that, by the end of 2019, or 2020 at the latest, at least 80 percent of our courses will be delivered fully online.

The remaining 20 percent will run in blended mode, that is, in a combination of online and live tutorial modes.

DL: What's the rationale behind the 80-20 split?

DM: There's an interesting story behind this.

We have examined learner preference and activity in relation to learning modes. What we've found,

instructively, is that an overwhelming majority of our learners do not, or are unable to, attend face-to-face tutorials even if they were of the opinion that face-to-face tutorials are generally helpful.

Many are unable to attend even a single tutorial, either because they are geographically removed from the nearest learning centre, or because their work or life commitments compel them to forego the tutorials.

DL: So the pattern is consistently witnessed?

DM: Yes, the pattern is consistent, which raises the question of how we should thus best restructure the way we facilitate teaching and learning for the benefit of our learners.

It is clear to us that face-to-face tutorials which occur at fixed times are not the best way to facilitate learning for our learners, most of whom are working adults with hectic schedules. So, instead of organising teaching-learning around face-to-face tutorials which our learners are unable to make full use of, anyway, we are now reorganising it around their personal schedules.

DL: OUM is seeking to re-position its learners back at the centre of their learning experience?

DM: That's a good way of putting it. We are moving away from the practice of putting the tutorial dates at the centre and expecting learners to fit their lives around them almost in vain.

Learners are now re-centred. To put learners back at the centre of their learning experience is to empower them to learn at their convenience, by their schedule, at their own pace, from wherever they may be located at the time.

This is where a big part of OUM's e-learning initiative comes into play. In the first instance, our mission is to ensure that whenever our learners are able to make time to learn, they will be able to do so even if they do not have their physical learning materials with them.

They could be on a train, or sitting in the departure lounge waiting to board a plane. They could be in a car waiting to pick up their children from school. They could be anywhere for that matter and they will still be able to learn – why?

Because they can access all their learning materials and more online, via OUM's new learning platform,

> ### "We expect that, by the end of 2019, or 2020 at the latest, at least 80 percent of our courses will be delivered fully online."

myINSPIRE. All they need is a device like their smartphone, which is something most of us almost always have on us or in close proximity.

DL: Most people would agree that devices such as our smartphones and tablets have become almost if not already an extension of ourselves. Already we do so many things with them, learning included.

DM: The idea that our devices have become an extension of ourselves is not necessarily a negative one. I see it positively instead as part of the unfolding of our modern existence, where the mind is not just 'in our head', as it were, but is spread out and partly constituted by the devices that help us manage our daily lives.

DL: Given the low tutorial attendance and the extension of the mind to devices, it seems logical that OUM should place its bet on e-learning.

DM: OUM's new myINSPIRE learning platform is a key initiative that follows from these two patterns we're observing. We want to ensure that whenever our learners are ready to learn within the pockets of time they are able to create, they'd be able to do so conveniently via myINSPIRE.

This means several things, essentially. First, instead of lugging hardcopies of their modules and textbooks everywhere they go, learners need only use a device such as their smartphones to log in to myINSPIRE and access e-versions of their modules, textbooks, and other learning materials.

Second, using the same device or any device convenient to them, learners will be able to view a set of video lectures specially commissioned to help them follow the course.

As well, on the same myINSPIRE platform, learners will be able to access dedicated FAQs that help them map the course they are following, and e-quizzes to test their understanding of the topics they have covered.

Additionally, all from within myINSPIRE, learners will be able to access a curated list of external website

links that are relevant to the topics under study, as well as links to e-materials such as e-books and journal articles parked under OUM's Digital Library.

Lastly, and just as crucially, learners will be able to participate in asynchronous online discussions with their peers and e-tutors.

DL: For many years now, all OUM courses offered in blended mode come with the online forum as a staple feature. Would it be correct to say that OUM's present e-initiative is to ensure that all courses will have, above and beyond the online forum, the rest of the components you've just mentioned?

DM: That's right. By 2020, at the latest, all OUM courses will have the complete set of digital components in place, all accessible via myINSPIRE.

That means each course will have, at the minimum, e-content, video lectures, quizzes, FAQs, supporting external web links, and links to learning materials offered by our Digital Library.

Asynchronous online forum, which has long been in place, will be offered too, of course.

We are working to deliver this in phases. The plan between now and the terminal date is to ensure that, each semester, 200 courses are upgraded with these digital components.

Once each batch of 200 courses is successfully upgraded, it will be offered entirely online.

By 2019 or 2020, only 20 percent of the total number of OUM courses will run with live tutorials conducted in person or via virtual classrooms.

DL: On what basis will OUM decide which courses will fall under the category of the 20 percent that will have a live tutorial component?

DM: Courses that qualify would be those that are relatively more complicated in nature, including those with low passing rates, the so-called 'killer' courses. The faculties – specifically, the programme coordinators – will be the best parties to decide.

DL: The e-initiative you've just shared is but one part – albeit a large part – of the overall plan, isn't it?

DM: A large part, yes – one that mainly covers learner self-instruction.

> **"By way of giving our learners the option of expanding their horizon, we are seeking to create opportunities for them to collaborate with their peers and tutors in a supportive virtual environment – to co-construct knowledge, in the parlance of social constructivism."**

The e-components mentioned earlier are meant to be always-on for our learners to engage with by way of learning within the pockets of time they're able to create.

These e-components are essentially there for our learners to self-instruct before proceeding to discuss the course content online with their peers and e-tutors.

DL: Can you tell us about the other part or parts that go beyond learner self-instruction?

DM: Other than learner self-instruction, we are also working simultaneously on enriching our learners' learning experience via social interactivity.

We are very much aware, of course, that each learner is unique, and each has his or her natural or preferred learning style. Some learn best when they learn on their own. For others, learning only takes place when they learn collaboratively.

We acknowledge our learners' preferred individual learning styles, and we encourage and support them in learning the best way they know how.

At the same time, by way of giving our learners the option of expanding their horizon, we are seeking to create opportunities for them to collaborate with their peers and tutors in a supportive virtual environment – to co-construct knowledge, in the parlance of social constructivism.

This option is precisely that: an option that learners are free to take up should they choose to.

We do hope, though, to convince our learners of the merits of partaking in collaborative learning and integrating into a knowledge community. Learners within this knowledge community could do many

things, including sharing resources, to help each other learn.

There are many ways for learners to share resources. They could post links and upload materials to the online forum in myINSPIRE.

And then there are third-party apps like Padlet. The Padlet FAQ described the online app as that which "allows people to express their thoughts on a common topic easily. It works like an online sheet of paper where people can put any content (e.g. images, videos, documents, text) anywhere on the page, together with anyone, from any device. Think of it like a multimedia friendly, free-form, real-time wiki."

Now imagine that you are a learner working on mastering a course topic to solve a problem.

You could work entirely on your own to discover some resources that might help you gain knowledge on a particular topic.

Or you could, on top of working on your own, collaborate with your peers using an app like Padlet to interact and share resources. And Padlet is highly attractive in the way it visually organises shared resources.

More often than not, you will find that collaborative learning yields the individual learner more novel resources and ideas than she would be able to gather on her own. To put it very simply, sometimes, two or more

> **"More often than not, you will find that collaborative learning yields the individual learner more novel resources and ideas than she would be able to gather on her own. To put it very simply, sometimes, two or more heads are better than one. So in the end when everyone shares, everyone wins."**

heads are better than one. So in the end when everyone shares, everyone wins.

DL: Padlet is no doubt an attractive app among a wide range of apps available that might be useful in promoting e-learning. How will OUM leverage on apps such as this to facilitate learning, especially collaborative learning? Will such apps be incorporated into myINSPIRE?

DM: At present we're encouraging all our tutors and e-tutors to experiment with a variety of tools like Padlet, instaGrok, Blendspace, Glogster, Pearltrees, and so on. The idea is for them to explore and discover which of the available apps might be useful for the particular courses they're teaching. Meanwhile, we're also exploring how existing apps may be incorporated into myINSPIRE and if we should be creating our own apps to promote collaborative learning. TCX

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs) AS A KEY ASSESSMENT FORMAT

By Dr Zainuriyah Abdul Khatab (zainuriyah@oum.edu.my)

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This May 2016 semester sees the introduction of multiple choice questions (MCQs) as a key assessment format at Open University Malaysia (OUM).

First developed in early 20th century, MCQs have been used extensively with great success by many examination boards around the world.

Consisting of stems and choices, they feature in such established tests such as the Graduate Management Admission Test, which is required for admission to most MBA programmes in American, Canadian and European business schools.

MCQs are also commonly used to measure learners' competencies in medical schools.

As an assessment tool, MCQs offer many advantages, hence their deployment at OUM:

- MCQs can be objectively scored, which leads to enhanced reliability of tests.

- MCQs are objective, so variations in marking due to subjective factors are eliminated. This will help to reduce remarking of the examination answers, which occurs when learners are dissatisfied with results from essay-type assessment.

- MCQs are efficient because they take relatively less time to answer.

- MCQs offer ample scope to test the learning outcomes related to both lower- and higher-order thinking, making them useful for both formative and summative assessment purposes.

- MCQs enable better coverage of content to test compared to essay-type assessment, thus broadening the scope and contributing to the content validity of the test.

- MCQs yield reliable and quick results. This helps learners to obtain timely feedback on their learning progress and to be better prepared in planning their studies for the subsequent semesters. The quick turnaround also enables OUM to be more efficient in planning learner course diet and appointing tutors.

- MCQ-based assessment provides reliable results for the University to gauge learner performance and the effectiveness of its facilitation of learning.

- MCQs open up the potential for web-based formative assessment so that learners can get instant feedback. Online exercises are a valuable way to transform web resources from handout graveyards to something more engaging.

For the May 2016 semester, approximately 131 courses offered across all faculties will employ MCQs as an assessment tool.

The weightage for MCQs against other assessment formats, which ranges from 40 percent to 60 percent, will be determined by the respective faculties.

This means that if MCQs constitute 40 percent as final examination, the other 60 percent will be in the form of assignments.

By having at least two formats – MCQs and written assignments in this case – the validity and reliability of the overall assessment are enhanced.

The introduction of MCQs in the OUM assessment system is a positive step towards realising the University's vision to be a "leader and innovator in open learning". Coupled with excellent teaching and effective learning, MCQs will no doubt soon bear out their promise. TCX

"For the May 2016 semester, approximately 131 courses offered across all faculties will employ MCQs as an assessment tool."