



JANUARY 2021

Foundation Program Newsletter



**Dhofar
University**
Vision for the Future...

EDITORIAL TEAM

Erica Bailey

Steven Sampliner

a moment to reflect

GIVING THANKS



There really isn't anything left to be said about the last eleven months that hasn't already been said. All of us have been facing what feels to be a Sisyphean task of carrying on, coping, and adjusting to a new

normal that still doesn't quite feel "normal". The measures that we have all taken to protect ourselves and those around us is commendable to say the very least. As a community, we have been asked to be selfless, caring, and charitable, and it is because of our collective determination that we have been able to move forward.

Entering into a new year is often taken as a moment to reflect on the past. With that in mind, the Foundation

Program would like to extend our gratitude and say thank you to all of those that have supported us, our community, and those around the world. Thank you to the estimated 89 million healthcare workers around the world. Thank you to the tens of thousands of healthcare and essential workers in Oman. Thank you to the Dhofar University medical staff and security team for doing their best to continue to ensure the safety of our environment. In doing so, the FP has been able to continue to deliver a high level of academic excellence while implementing core curriculum changes.

Following on this theme of thanks and support, please join us as we take a look at how the FP is evolving its pedagogical model, the role the FP is playing in developing the future educators in Oman, and how FP staff are contributing to our community.

-Editorial Staff

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EVENTS & HIGHLIGHTS

50th National Day Reception



UPCOMING EVENTS

January

27 - 30 January

Online Registration for Colleges

February

07 February

First day of Spring

Semester for Colleges

25 February

Math Online Teaching,

Learning, and

Assessment:

Challenges and

Solutions webinar

28 February

IT Webinar - Online Teaching

and Learning with Cyber

Security

March

04 March

Al-Israa wal Meraaj (*tentative*)

09 March

End of FP Term II

21 March

Start of FP Term III

May

06 - 09 May

Eid Al-Fitr (*tentative*)

June

22 June

End of FP Term III

Neighborhood cleanup

The Community Service working group invited the Foundation Program faculty to take part in a community cleanup. With group activities on hold during the year, participants were asked to individually clean up their neighborhood and share some photos.



"Cleanups keep our planet clean. It rejuvenates our minds and makes our corner in this world a better place to live in."

-Anita Venugopal

"This snap is to make others mindful of the trash they throw on their way."

-Wesam Al Karadesheh

A New Approach



FLIPPED CLASSROOM



Even before the recent shift to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a new trend in classrooms focusing on building learner autonomy. The Flipped Classroom approach was built around the idea of getting students more involved in their own learning. Building on this idea, the Foundation Program (FP) decided to implement this approach for the 2020/2021 academic year. “We wanted to help students with all abilities to excel inside and out of the classroom,” shares Faisal Hamadi Khalifa, Director of the FP. “By putting more onus on students becoming autonomous learners, we aimed to increase student-teacher interaction.”

Part of changing the way the classroom functions, both teachers and students were given helpful information on how the flipped classroom worked. All teachers in the FP were given tutorials and guidance for setting up their classes. They helped create a bank of materials that students would access over the course of each level. Teachers would be responsible for getting students to produce more in the class to help them develop as better learners.

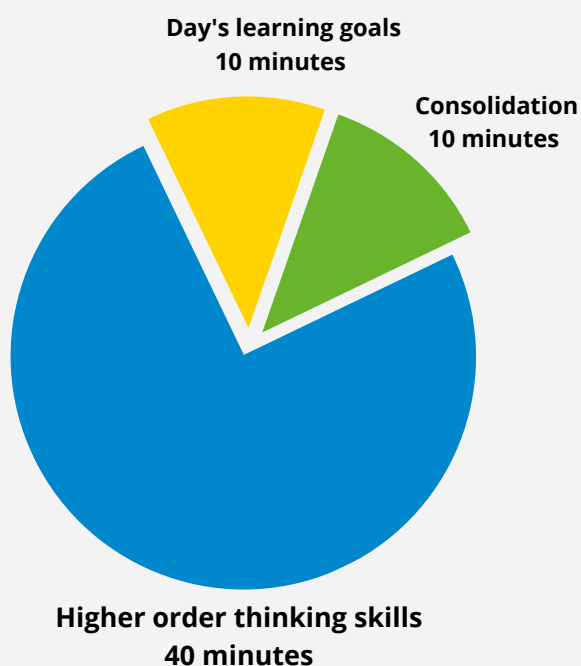
Students were also informed of their new responsibilities. As part of a simple three-step process, students prepared themselves each day by watching teaching videos, completing various activities, and then using what they learned in the “live” class. Now, students can watch videos at their own pace, take notes, and bring questions to the teacher during class time. Incentives are given for in-class participation to encourage a more active class for all students.

In the end, the goal is to take the flipped classroom idea from online to the actual classroom in the future. Enhancing the teaching and learning process is essential to the future success of students at Dhofar University.



Our Goal

AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS



CLASS STRUCTURE

To better adapt to the idea of the flipped classroom, each online class has been restructured in a way to enhance autonomous learning. Students are encouraged to learn and practice at home through the use of videos and Moodle activities. In class, the first 10 minutes are assessing each student's understanding of the material. The bulk of the time is spent with higher order thinking skills, where teachers have students discuss, think critically, work in groups or other production tasks. Finally, the teacher ends each session formatively assessing students' progress.



"Students have been very enthusiastic during class time, and very responsive to questions and activities."

-Fatima Alrawas, IT Instructor

"The flipped classroom concept might spread awareness among students to be responsible for their learning, which is in line with the values of DU, such as individual responsibility and lifelong learning."

-Dr. Umamaheswara Rao Bontha, Level 3 English Coordinator

"The biggest advantage of this learning style is that real learning takes place and it is the student who is active and participating. The teacher seems to be just facilitating learning and helping them bring out their ideas."

-Merin John, English Lecturer

"As a teacher, I love that my students come to class more prepared than ever."

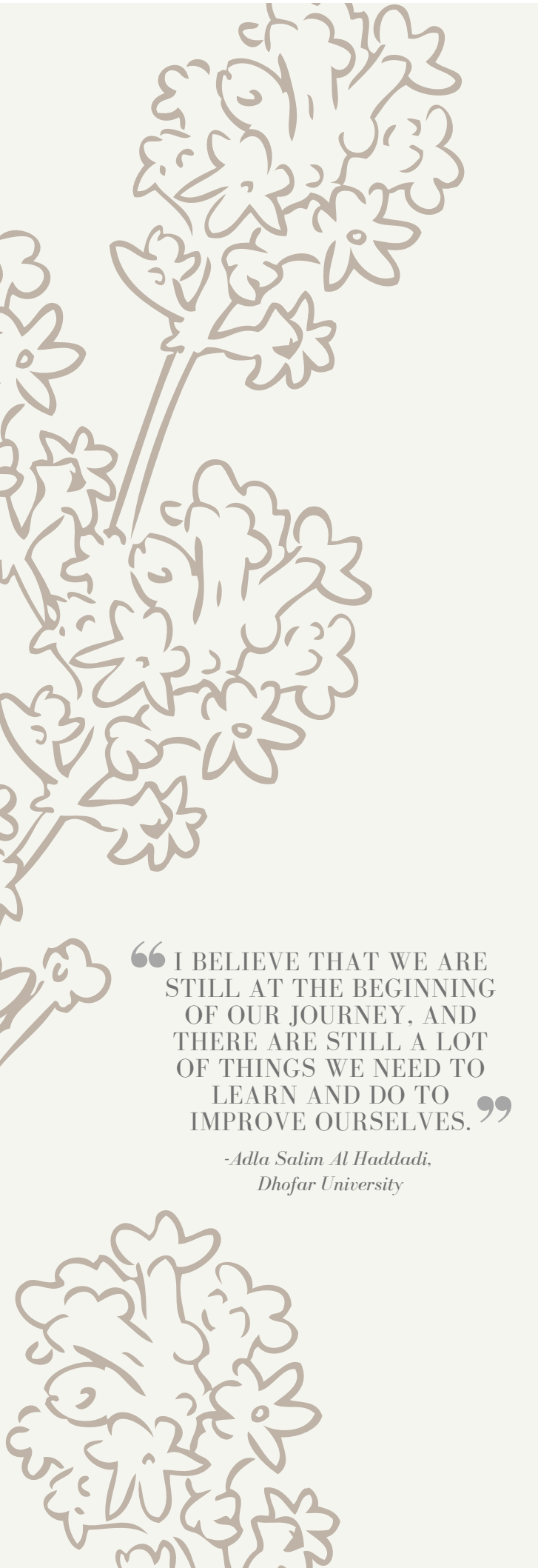
-Ebaa Refaie Qasim, English Lecturer

TEACHER TRAINING PERSPECTIVE

For Term 2, the Foundation Program (FP) proudly welcomed in four teacher trainees, Adla Salim Al Haddadi (Dhofar University), Anfal Adil Shanfari (Sultan Qaboos University), Laila Said Al Mashani (Dhofar University) and Nada Thamood Rafeet (Sultan Qaboos University) to our team. The four of them have spent the past year as part of the intensive Polygot Teacher Training Program, which is under the supervision of MoHERI. The program's mission, as stated by Laila, is to "provide fresh Omani graduates with professional training to join the education field in the private sector." The training program also includes Cambridge qualifications, like CELTA, TKT, CLIL, as well as IC3, work ethics, health and safety, communication and soft skills.

Prior to the beginning of the term, Adla, a graduate from Dhofar University, saw this opportunity as a kind of homecoming, "I'm so glad that I have the chance to work in the university that I graduated from. I think I've always wanted to go back to the university and be a member of its faculty." But all that study needs to put to use, and on-the-job experience is the best way to begin the journey. To further help each trainee's development, each were given the responsibility of teaching a Level 1 class and given the opportunity to observe FP teachers across all three levels. For Anfal, "having the opportunity to discern closely the work dynamic of Dhofar University made it even more clear and exciting that this is the path that I desire to maintain and be devoted to holistically."

But as their time here with us draws to a close, and they return to Muscat to complete the final step of the CELTA, we wish them nothing less than success. The FP is honored and proud to have played a role in supporting their path and looks forward to hearing about their future achievements. "Over the past few weeks, I have learned more than I could have imagined," shared Nada. "Overall, I am quite content with my performance so far, and I believe that in no time I will get the hang of all the different tasks I have to do as a member of the FP."



“ I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE STILL AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR JOURNEY, AND THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF THINGS WE NEED TO LEARN AND DO TO IMPROVE OURSELVES. ”

*-Adla Salim Al Haddadi,
Dhofar University*

DEPARTMENT *Updates*

ENGLISH

As educators, we are always looking to reach out to our community in positive and impactful ways. The FP Community Service Committee has arranged a Reading Day with local elementary schools. Volunteers will select a short story to share with these young learners. Sharing stories is one way help to create stories, build bonds through shared experience, foster curiosity, and hopefully awaken a love of language and learning.

MATH

Striving to continue online curriculum effectiveness and efficacy, the FP Math department will hold a virtual symposium focused on online learning and assessment: challenges and solutions. The two-hour symposium, to be held on February 25, 2021, from 12:00 - 2:00 pm, will be an international event. With keynote speakers and presenters from four countries, the FP Math symposium is sure to be a highly informative and engaging event.

IT

COVID-19 forced many educational changes, including a stronger reliance on technology. This has led to an increased awareness of data security and privacy. On February 18, 2021, from 7:00 - 9:00 pm, the FP IT department has organized an international online symposium to address these issues around cyber-security for online learning. This event will help educators consider these issues, as data security in an online teaching environment is a concern for all.

ADVANCE HE FELLOWSHIP

Teaching & Learning Committee's Professional Development Session

Dhofar University recently became a member of Advance HE, a not-for-profit organization with its main goal to improve teaching and learning, leadership and governance, and equality and diversity in higher education. Advance HE was formed in March 2018 following a merger between the Higher Education Academy, Leadership Foundation of Higher Education and Equality Challenge Unit.

categories of awards, including associate, fellow, senior, and principal. Each category has specific application requirements. The award is recognized in the United Kingdom and around the world as a qualification to teach in higher education. By applying, teachers in the Foundation Program and in the Colleges would gain professional recognition that is increasingly recognized by international institutions. It also allows

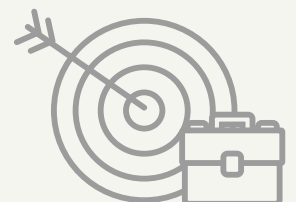


The logo for Advance HE, featuring a stylized 'A' composed of three colored dots (blue, green, and red) followed by the text 'AdvanceHE' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

"FELLOWSHIP IS A RECOGNITION FOR THOSE WHO TEACH AND/OR SUPPORT LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION."

On November 11, 2020, Dr. Israr Ul Hassan, CCHEM, FRSC, CMgr, FCMI, FHEA, a faculty member of DU and a fellow at Advance HE, provided a snapshot to the benefits of joining the fellowship for the Foundation Program team. Dr. Hassan shared valuable knowledge about the program, including reasons to apply for the fellowship and the application process. The Fellowship is a recognition for those who teach and/or support learners in higher education. Each individual receives the award for life and there are no renewal fees. While Dr. Hassan focused on the fellowship, there are different

faculty to identify and celebrate strengths and achievements through a process of reflection, where teachers can benchmark their practice against professional standards and sector expectations, and demonstrate their commitment to teaching, learning, and student engagement. In addition, faculty would have access to Advance HE Connect, with more than 18,000 active accounts in over 100 countries to better build connections in a global setting. Finally, the training reflected the Foundation Program's dedication in supporting each teacher's professional development.



THE GREEN HAND APP

VOLUNTEER INNOVATION

Call for Submissions

On December 15, 2020, in cooperation with the Department of Social Sciences, the Community Service and Continuing Education Center invited Dhofar University to participate in the celebration of International Volunteering Day. Foundation Program teachers, Rashida Iqbal and Amal Hassan Mursi, submitted a proposal as part of the competition. Their innovative idea – the Green Hand App – was chosen as the winner in the Volunteer competition!

The Green Hand App

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected all sectors of life – social, educational, economic, industrial, etc. The loss this time is not only for the working community; it has affected school children, older adults, skilled and unskilled people from all walks of life. Oman, as well, has been affected by this epidemic. Rashida Iqbal and Amal Hassan Mursi came up with the idea of promoting volunteering services that can be carried out using an app. They looked at ways to roll back the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide opportunities for those in need to carry on with life in a positive way without losing self-esteem.



App Features

The app will have the following categories:

- People interested in helping by providing money, food items, extra furniture, clothes.
- Schools ready to provide a set number of students with free education.
- Companies ready to provide training.
- Shops and grocery stores ready to provide food items.
- Hospitals and clinics for free checkups.

How businesses can help:

All companies and schools have funds allocated for community service. This app, with the help of the Ministry of Social Development, will provide a digitalized platform for these services to run smoothly and efficiently. The companies would register with a fixed budget that they want to give in charity or donation. The running authority would screen the applications and issue an e-coupon. The applicants would use these e-coupons to access services at a grocery store or register their child at a school, or get a free medical checkup or screening.

Main Message

Those in need of help can use the app to find opportunities after losing a job, give young people a chance to study, or for families to provide supplies in this difficult time. This app is designed to inculcate a spirit of giving and helping others. Also, it will help people become more active and responsible citizens in a new and modern way.

"Because of social distancing, we wanted to reach out to those in need using this online app."

-Amal Hassan Mursi