



كلية الاتصال  
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

# Teaching & Learning Strategy and Policies

College of Communication  
University of Sharjah, U.A.E



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## 1. Introduction:

In the College of Communication, we believe that Teaching and Learning go hand-in-hand. Therefore, we see them as a multi-faceted and intertwined phenomenon that brings together a diversity of elements that allow sound, comprehensive and effective delivery. Indeed, delivery is one of the most important aspects of Teaching & Learning and a fundamental aspects of the College of Communication activities. In this document, we center on deliver. Other elements such as student learning objectives (SLOs) and assessments are included in other documents of the College.

We understand that Teaching as the efforts performed by our Faculty and supported by our staff to engage students and enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts and processes. It is an effort that includes design, content selection, delivery, assessment and reflection. Consequently, teaching is fundamentally the responsibility of the teacher, who is required to comply with a set of conditions and principles in order to deliver competences and values, which are based on the transmission of knowledge and skills.

On the other hand, we have defined Learning in our college as an active engagement with knowledge through participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities. In this context, we believe that it is a process not only of acquiring information and skills, but also of creating knowledge. As a consequence, learning should lead to change and the enhancement of the individual's capabilities in order to allow these students to fulfil their potential (Settles 2012). In this case, learning is fundamentally a responsibility of both, students. This because students have the responsibility to engage, while teachers need to become also life-long learnings to make sure that they off-to-er updated, opportune and relevant knowledge when they deliver class.

Overall, central to the continuous improvement in T&L is the commitment to develop a shared language and approach, which is based on research and informed practice. The College is required to provide the necessary conditions as to permit that teaching happens in the most accommodating, inclusive and accessible manners. In so doing, it also needs to secure that learners have the best conditions to engage and overcome any obstacles or difficulties that impedes them from engaging.

## **2. Objectives of T&L:**

The key objective of T&L at the College is to create knowledge that support student success. In so doing, our strategy is directed towards providing access to an education that is relevant and appropriate for the students. One that seeks the development of capabilities. By capabilities, we mean the normative approach that aims at providing the tools so people can achieve lives they value (Gasper 1997; Jacobson 2016).

In the case of our programs in communication, mass media and journalism, this means delivering literacies that allow each one of our students to become a lifelong learner and transformative agent in society. The main goal is to deliver competences and values by means of incentivizing discovery. We promote an enduring learning community that is engage. One that seeks to promote excellence but that underpins collaborative cooperation within the learning community in our College. The function is to promote the success of our students and inspire them to be committed to a life of learning and discovery. Specific objectives include:

- Achieve excellence in delivery by making every lesson a grounded and well-prepared opportunity to lean.

- Turn every lesson into an experience that motivates students to learn and remain engaged with the subject.
- Use a wide range of methods of delivery to allow student to acquire knowledge and skills in a diverse manner.
- To make full use of blended learning, incorporating the most appropriate technologies at our reach.

### 3. Principles and Ethics:

In our College, we believe that the teachers need to be accountable to learning. In other words, the main point of teaching is to be understood and make things accessible while fostering criticality and creativity in the way students engage the with knowledge and skills. Teachers also need to make that knowledge and skills relevant and accessible. Teachers are accountable in the way they deliver and in the way they evaluate students.

Teaching should be accommodating to all students but also demanding in the sense that needs to recognize that the responsibility of learning is placed fundamentally upon the students. This because what is in place at the College is not pedagogy but andragogy since we are dealing with young adults. They should not only be taught the knowledge that is pertinent to their professional field or the skills that will secure them a job or the opportunity to start their own business. Teaching at the College also needs to be an effort to cultivate values around work ethics, collaboration, competition and above all societal responsibility. Hence, in the College we have adopted the following principles:

Accountable Teaching: delivery needs to be transparent and auditable at all levels as to make sure that is sound, comprehensive and accessible to all students. Teachers should be able to demonstrate at any stage that they follow standardize

principles but that they also make room for some degree of flexibility that can permit individual students to be included. Teachers should make all their lecture notes and material available on the Blackboard at a timely fashion. They should provide students with reading material beforehand and make sure that they understand beforehand what is being taught, what are the objectives of each specific lesson, explain why is important to learn that knowledge and skills and how it will serve them in life as well as how it will be evaluated. Lesson plans, lecture notes and all material should be made available to the students and to the College. Peer observation of the lessons should happen at some point during the academic year and Faculty should make reports that allow them to express their own reflection on what they teach. Equally important for the College is to receive feedback from the students by means of surveys and individual contribution making sure that in doing so, students feel secure and free to express those points of views.

**Inclusive teaching:** Teaching in the College of Communication is inclusive in the sense that should leave no one behind or feeling excluded. It has to make sure that the language is accessible, that materials, lecture notes and recordings are made available to all in the required formats including for those students who suffer impairments, at least to the most reasonable degree. The delivery itself needs to follow common sense elements such as showing mutual respect between teachers and students, allowing students to actively participate in class, allowing students to make respectful and grounded challenges to ideas and notions delivered in class as well as to provide feedback and their own ideas and contributions during and after the class. Teachers have to provide spaces for dialogue and exchange to make sure that each class is not just a monologue but a truly interactive experience that enhances the students' ability to think and reflect about the knowledge and skills in play.

Teachers need to consider several curricular variables that secures inclusion of all participants in the classroom. They need to make sure that there is a base line for all that is somehow met and if not seek ways to close those gaps between individuals. This by teaching the easier skills before delivering the harder skills, teaching high frequency skills that are less frequent in usage, ensuring mastery of prerequisites to a skill before teaching the skill itself, and separating skills and strategies that are similar and thus may be confusing to students. Of course, even by doing so, some students might be behind for a variety of reasons. Hence, teachers need to make sure that there is sufficient materials and resources in Blackboard for the learners to take the initiative and catch up, this in addition of providing additional support to these students during the specified office hours.

Inspirational Teaching: Faculty understands that teaching in the College is not just a matter of preparing the students to pass exams or do well in examination. Neither that teaching is constrained to preparing future media professionals and journalists. The teaching offer in the College is also, and perhaps fundamentally, a process that helps individuals to fulfil their potential, embraced the highest moral and ethical standards and be an active and committed lifelong learner that helps transform society for the best. Each lesson needs to account for an opportunity for personal growth and collective development, where learners come out hungry for more knowledge and seeking to read, explore and learn more about the subject. Teaching is also about inspiration, incentivizing students to be passionate and to engage with new knowledge and skills they learn.

The focus of our instruction should be placed on critical content that teach skills, strategies and vocabulary terms, concepts and norms that will empower students in the future and match their needs. Not all students, of course, will become a world leader or a news editor in Chief or a CEO, but they should have the knowledge and skills fulfil their potential. They need to be taught to be both

independent and at the same time team players, while being able to be competent in what they do at least to the professional level required by the industry.

Grounded research-led teaching: Teaching in the College recognizes that there are intangible values and principles that are at the core of teaching such as incentivizing love to others, care for society, ethical responsibility and a sense of commitment to professionalism in our day-to-day behavior. These notions need to be incorporated in all our classes and activities as part of the delivery. Having said that, the teaching itself of the competences and overall content needs to be grounded in strong empirical evidence and anchored in research. Indeed, at the College we believe that research-led teaching is central to good practices delivery because it underpins curriculum content in ways that makes this not only relevant to what is happening in the real world but also in tune with future trends (Deakin 2006; Rodny-Gumede 2018). This principle applies even in practice-based, where research can enhance our understanding not only of how particular skills are evolving and adapting to new demands but also provide indication about future changes in the media landscape that can determine the future of work opportunities. In addition, research-led teaching means also that students need to engage actively with the search of knowledge and that both teachers and learners need to collectively create knowledge while teaching happens. Research, in this sense, needs to be understood as broader and comprehensive process of seeking knowledge, one that recognizes and embraces its own epistemology. Consequently, our Faculty motivates students to go beyond what they are told in the classroom, to question concepts and practices and to engage with literature, observations and examples that help them ground that knowledge or understand better how and where to use the skills being acquired.



#### **4. Learning Environment:**

Since Cohen and Filipczak (1971) wrote their seminal book on the importance of the learning environment to improve behavior and learning, many have come to realize and embrace the need to develop a space, both physically and physiologically, that underpins learning and teaching. However, creating a nourishing, safe and creative learning environment is not only about physical spaces, labs and facilities. It is also about fostering a learning community that is active and engage with those spaces. In the College we are making sure that our labs are open and welcoming to students not only during class but also in extracurricular activities.

In the College of Communication, the Chairs of each department need to make sure that their Faculty is appropriately supported by allocating the most appropriate spaces and by making sure that the lessons are resources equally appropriately. Having said that, it is the responsibility of the Faculty to plan ahead and make sure that the College knows in detail what resources and support are needed to make sure that the class is supported. This includes the space, IT resources, audiovisual elements and any other technology or element that is needed.

It is crucial that students are made aware of this and other resources. For example, blended learning that requires hybridity needs to incorporate existing digital resources into the lesson plan. Hence the virtual space becomes a supportive extension of the classroom. These digital spaces require constant updating and adaptation to make sure that our students are able to fulfil their potential and enhance their employability.

## 5. Instructional design:

Break down complex skills and strategies into smaller instructional units: In the College we should segment complex skills into smaller instructional units of new material addresses concerns about cognitive overloading, processing demands, and the capacity of students' working memory. Once mastered, units are synthesized that we should provide opportunities for the students to display practice as a whole.

Instructional design should be organized and focused lessons: In the College we make sure lessons are organized and focused, in order to make optimal use of instructional time. Faculty should organize lessons around specific topics. They need to be well sequenced and avoid digressions from the central points you want to deliver. Having said that, lessons always should be flexible enough to incorporate discussions and explorations about collateral elements that might make the issues more relevant to the students.

Clarity on the purpose of the lesson: All Faculty should make sure at the begin of each class to present to the students a clear statement of the lesson's goals and expectations in relation to the relevance to their curriculum and professional aspirations. In other words, explain to them why this lesson is important. Indeed, evidence on the ground suggest that students achieve better if they understand the instructional goals and outcomes expected, as well as how the information or skills presented will help them (Enkenberg 2001; Isman 2011).

Student background and knowledge: It is important that all Faculty is aware and reviews prior skills and knowledge before beginning instruction. Provide a review of relevant information. Verify that students have the pre-requisite skills

and knowledge to learn the skill being taught in the lesson. This element also provides an opportunity to link the new skill with other related skills.

Provide step by step demonstrations: Model the skill and clarify the decision-making processes needed to complete a task or procedure by thinking aloud (self-talk) as you perform the skill. Clearly demonstrate the target skill or strategy, in order to show the students a model of proficient performance. Have a list of steps to success.

Use clear and concise language: Use consistent and unambiguous wording and terminology. The complexity of your speech (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure) should depend on students' receptive vocabulary, to reduce possible confusion. Make sure that students understand the basic concepts and notions to be used in class before you embark in larger conversations.

Provide an adequate range of examples and non-examples: In order to establish the boundaries of when and when not to apply a skill, strategy, concept or rule, provide a wide range of examples and non-examples. A wide range of examples illustrating situations when the skill will be used or applied is necessary so that students do not under use it. Conversely, presenting a wide range of non-examples reduces the possibility that students will use the skill inappropriately.

Provide guided and supported practice: In order to promote initial success and build confidence, regulate the difficulty of practice opportunities during the lesson, and provide students with guidance in skill performance. When students demonstrate success, you can gradually increase task difficulty as you decrease the level of guidance. Thankfully, the College of Communication has a dedicated team of Faculty who are both scholars and practitioners as well as a support technical staff that is well versed with media production and practice-based skills.

## 6. Feedback and guidance:

Providing effective and timely feedback is essential to our teaching. The College has a policy on assessment, that has made clear our principle, values and views on assessment. What we make clear in this document is how feedback needs to be communicated to students, given that is an essential part of the learning and teaching process.

One important part is that feedback needs to be timely and opportune. It also requires to be based upon a quality relationship that can be both affirmative and corrective. Although feedback needs to be standardized, it nevertheless needs to incorporate elements that acknowledges the needs and issues that each student face. In occasions, that can be solved in a few paragraphs but in other the Faculty will have to use the feedback to identify those students who require a longer conversation.

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