Goals

• Place students at the right level of the Foundation Program, to best support their learning needs
• Support students to make rapid progress in English
• Create an inspirational learning environment that is truly motivating
• Equip students to enter academic departments where they will study their degrees in the medium of English

Working with Oxford

• OUP resources used:
  - Q: Skills for Success (Levels 1 and 2)
  - Oxford Online Placement Test
• Orientation training to help implement the course materials
• Reviewing OUP materials

Outcomes

• Adoption of the Oxford Online Placement Test ensures that students are accurately placed
• Noticeable improvement in English language ability
• Teachers and students report strong engagement using Q: Skills for Success
• Following the success of Q in the Foundation Program, the English Department adopted Q Level 3 and 4 for their language courses
Finding the right level

When students arrive at BUC, the first challenge is to ensure that their English language ability is assessed so that they can be streamed into the correct level of the Foundation Program or go straight into their degree program, depending on their level of English.

In September 2014, BUC implemented the Oxford Online Placement Test, assessing the English language ability of around 1000 students.

"It is working very successfully. Previously we faced challenges with mixed ability classes, but using the Oxford Online Placement Test has solved that problem. It is very accurate – it places the students correctly and appropriately."

Making progress

Many students enter the Foundation Program with a low level of English. They need to make rapid progress in order to exit the program and successfully take on their degree program in English.

In 2011, BUC changed its curriculum and adopted a skills-based approach to language learning, using Q: Skills for Success. They say that this approach has a number of advantages:

"The most obvious impact has been the enrichment of the students' vocabulary," said Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi. "Now that we are using the same books for reading and writing, and listening and speaking, the students get more exposure to the vocabulary because they are studying the same topics. They are able to tackle the topic in all the skills: they are more confident in oral presentations, they speak more fluently and their writing skills have improved."

"I can see the difference in the students' level after using Q. When they first come into class they are usually reluctant to write. A large number are not able to produce good paragraphs and some are not able to produce anything. Applying Q paved the way for students to write. The reading teaches them skills such as skimming, scanning and categorizing information. The students benefited from all these and have been able to improve their reading skills which will later lead them to perform better in writing. They acquire new vocabulary, skills and ideas which they use in their writing."

Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi is the Director of the Quality Assurance Department at BUC. He was the Director of UFP from 2012-2015.

Yamen Dridi, English Language Instructor
Inspiring learners...

To enable rapid improvement in English level, students need to be motivated. The instructors at BUC felt that it was particularly important for students to engage with the topics and themes of the course materials.

Yamen Dridi shared his experience of the topics in Q: Skills for Success: “The topics are not only interesting; they also raise awareness of cultural differences. The students give real-life examples from their friends and neighbours, and express their own ideas. They feel motivated to participate in class.”

...and teachers

Support from Oxford helped BUC to implement Q successfully. An OUP consultant presented a workshop on how to use Q, and later demonstrated the online materials. “All the team was motivated to change to Q,” said Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi. “It was a very smooth transition.”

BUC ran a successful pilot with Level 1 before rolling out the full program. This helped to ensure that instructors were happy and confident with the materials.

“I like the variety of activities that you can answer with many solutions. Foundation books are very important for any student, because it gives many basic rules of English. Foundation is the key to entering professional fields, possibly even teaching the next generation.”

Khadija Rashed
AL.Mamari, Student

Somaia Al-Kindi, English Language Instructor & Acting Director of UFP

BUC later adopted Q iTools, the course’s classroom presentation software, which was received positively by the team.

“Since using iTools teaching has become very easy. With iTools I can project the book at high quality and everything is there – the audio, video, answers. For the students it’s good that the answers are there.”

Elvis Burrows, English Language Instructor
Ready to study in English

After completing the Foundation Program, students then enter the appropriate faculty to begin their academic studies. One key measure of success for the Foundation Program is therefore how well-prepared the students are to study in English.

“Being the Academic English Department, we get a chance to closely observe students’ levels of English throughout their studies at BUC. As the Head of English Department, I am pleased to report that our observations and assessment reports showed a significant improvement in our first Semester students’ levels of English. As it appeared, the improvement had been going consistently with the introduction of the Q: Skills series at the UFP.”

Salah Elhassan, Head of English Department

“Given such success at the UFP, we decided to follow suit and use Q: Skills Listening & Speaking 3 and 4 as coursebooks for two of our English Literature & Translation major courses (Oral Skills 1 & 2). The feedback was amazing: Q: Skills helped us to facilitate our student’s self-confidence in their Oral and Communication skills for three consecutive semesters so far. It worked! Thanks to Oxford.”

The Foundation Program has received similar positive feedback across academic departments:

“Given such success at the UFP, we decided to follow suit and use Q: Skills Listening & Speaking 3 and 4 as coursebooks for two of our English Literature & Translation major courses (Oral Skills 1 & 2). The feedback was amazing: Q: Skills helped us to facilitate our student’s self-confidence in their Oral and Communication skills for three consecutive semesters so far. It worked! Thanks to Oxford.”

Dr. Amjad Miqdadi, Head of IT Department

“I have observed the improvement in the English language ability of our students in the two years since I joined BUC. I have also received commendings remarks from my colleagues in the business department. Based on our daily interaction with students, the contribution of foundation department in escalating the level of students is highly appreciated.”

Hussam Al-Kayali, Ph.D., Head of Department of Business Administration and Accounting

Shaping Learning Together

BUC and Oxford University Press are continuing to work together to achieve mutual educational goals. Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi was one of the reviewers for Q: Skills for Success Second Edition, helping OUP to craft its materials to meet students’ needs.

In addition, BUC was recently accepted as a Pre-Testing Research Partner with Oxford University Press.

“Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi, one of the reviewers for Q: Skills for Success Second Edition, helped OUP to craft its materials to meet students’ needs.”

In fact, I really realized the true essence of the Oxford University Press motto ‘shaping learning together’ when I closely worked with them and got involved in an interactive process with their representatives and consultants designing, selecting, reviewing, and improving materials that best suit the needs of our students and our region. I strongly believe that our cooperation and partnership with Oxford University Press is contributing significantly to the advancement of education not only in our institution but also throughout the whole Gulf region. We will surely enhance this partnership and keep looking for a brighter future as long as we are ‘shaping learning together’.

Dr. Amjad Miqdadi

“Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi, Head of the Quality Assurance Department at BUC

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