ACTVET

Abu Dhabi Centre for
Technical and Vocational
Education and Training

مركز أبوظبي
للتعليم والتدريب
التقني والمهني

VIRTUAL TEACHER STANDARD

BACKGROUND

On March 5th, the Minister of Education, in the UAE announced that all school systems were to work online as part of the 'Learning from Afar' initiative, due to the ongoing health crisis. Abu Dhabi Centre for Vocational Education and Training (ACTVET) as the regulator, on March 6th 2020, at one days' notice, had all 17 public schools with a registered 7,921 students, two Polytechnics, five Further Education Colleges and four Health Science Colleges with a registered 5,782 students (PSSN, 2020) online. Within 12 hours, 90% of students were being taught virtually, online, a great success.

INTRODUCTION

The Director General of ACTVET reflected on the 'Learning from Afar' initiative and prepared a report entitled, 'The United Arab Emirates continues education, at home, during the COVID-19 health crisis', published by ACTVET. On reflection, the Director General arrived at ten points important for activation of virtual teaching at short notice and they were:

1. A Business Continuity Plan is of top importance for the assessment of risk and the application of mitigation for crisis situations.

2. An Operation Room could be set up and operational within 12 hours. Should further crisis emerge then the ACTVET school system will be able to fully function provided the internet connectivity is available.

3. The technology in schools was sufficient to support the 'Learning from Afar' initiative.

4. Regulatory staff had the kills and experience required to step into temporary positions as the need arose.

5. Teaching and support staff were flexible enough to be able to function in a remote location with little disturbance.

6. Teachers were able to use the online learning, live streaming system and technology without any challenges. This applied to both digital natives and digital immigrants.

7. The previous use of online, distance and flipped classroom learning was necessary for staff to perform at short notice.

8. The quality of teaching could be quality assured from the Operation Room, by fewer Inspectors, with consistency of judgement, at less cost. Therefore, the 'Learning from Afar' initiative created unexpected monitory saving.

9. Students needed to continue to have social contact with others when they were learning at home and chat time needed to be built into the timetable to avoid isolation.

10. Standard or guidelines for online virtual teaching was not available for teachers to follow. Teachers unaware of what best practice or excellence looked like. The last point indicated that a virtual teaching standard for teaching staff to follow was not available and needed to be addressed.

In this new continuous online virtual environment, the Director General of ACTVET, the regulator for the ACTVET school system, realized the importance of preparing a virtual learning standard for staff to follow. Soon, a team of teachers were contacted to discuss, brainstorm and report on the important issues associated with virtual teaching. From the teacher's feedback, virtual standards emerged that were important for the continuation of excellence in teaching. The draft Virtual Teaching Standard was circulated to teachers in the UAE and abroad for feedback and confirmation and the Virtual Teacher Standard was created and subsequently approved. All teachers in the ACTVET school system received a copy of the Virtual Teacher Standard and it became the basis for the inspection criteria consequently developed. The Virtual Teaching Standard that was established is as follows:

Indicator 1

APPLICATIONS AND CONNECTIONS

1.1 Teacher downloads and use multiple computer applications and packages.

1.2 Teacher connects by voice and web cam (preferred) for maximizing virtual communication with learners.

1.3 Teacher accesses and uses whiteboard for virtual teaching (preferred).

1.4 Teacher accesses and uses a learning management system or similar.

1.5 Learners and teachers access to technical support is available.

Indicator 2

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

2.1 Teacher dresses professionally at all times.

2.2 Teacher is visible or audible on camera for the duration of the virtual class.

2.3 Teacher engages and interact with learners professionally.

2.4 Teacher maintains confidentiality of learner personal details, records of learner achievement and progress.

Indicator 3

CLASS WORK PREPARATION (WHERE TEACHERS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY)

3.1 Teacher prepares for lessons with the appropriate materials available.

3.2 Teacher sends all materials to learners that are required for a class before the commencement of the class.

3.3 Teacher develops and deliver classwork that reflects sequencing and scaffolding of curriculum requirements.

3.4 Teacher paces class work to enable learner success and maximize learning.

Indicator 4

TEACHER PEDAGOGY

4.1 Teacher plans holistic well-structured learning that is learner centred, paced and leveled to maximise learner achievement.

4.2 Teacher pedagogy demonstrates quality, educational best practice.

4.3 Teacher skills and knowledge responds to learner responses and needs.

4.4 Teacher supports virtual learning and has high expectation for learner achievement.

4.5 Teacher promotes the concepts of citizenship, culture and its values, social justice, equality and inclusion.

4.6 Teacher and peers evaluate learning outcome achievement, teaching approaches and standardization of curriculum delivery and assessment at regular intervals.

Indicator 5

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

5.1 Teacher is adept at monitoring learners working in virtual classrooms and virtual sub groups (Channels) groups.

5.2 Teacher structures the virtual learning environment to promote and maximise a safe learning environment.

5.3 Teacher differentiates learning with sensitivity to ensure maximization of learner achievement.

5.4 Teacher maximises learning by ensuring learner behaviour and resources are managed effectively.

5.5 Teacher allows virtual socialization between classmates, as appropriate, where students are in remote learning environments.

Indicator 6

VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT

6.1 Teacher instructs learners about the virtual assessment, prior to assessment.

6.2 Teacher prepares virtual assessment that reflect the classwork and curriculum requirements.

6.3 Teacher prepares fair, valid, reliable and equitable assessment.

6.4 Teacher provides learners with feedback and guidance for performance improvement.

6.5 Teacher utilises assessed performance outcomes for monitoring, tracking and reporting learner success
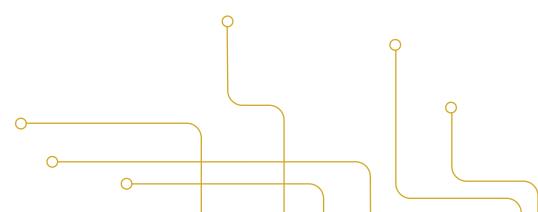
Indicator 7

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Teacher maintains currency of apps to maximize the learner experience.

7.2 Teacher undertakes regular reflection, research and professional development activities for lifelong learning.

7.3 Teacher engages with educators in the learning community to maximize virtual learning knowledge and skill.

7.4 Teachers take responsibility for their own professional learning and maintain currency of knowledge and virtual practice in and for the teaching domain.
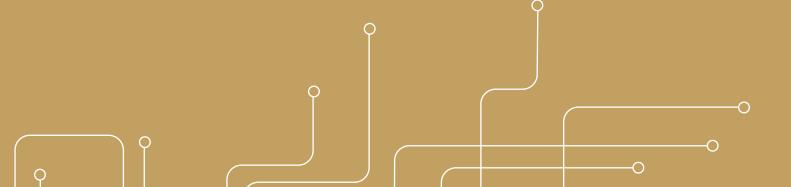
Indicator 8

VIRTUAL ONLINE SECURITY

8.1 Teacher and student uses passwords for virtual online safety and privacy.

8.2 Teachers assess immediate and cumulative risks with learners in a virtual environment.

8.3 Teachers is mindful of the health and safety of themselves and learners.

8.4 Teacher reports any perceived or actual risk to educational Authorities (or predetermined agency).

CONCLUSION

The ACTVET school system continues to function fully with online learning being carried out in remote environments. However, the daily approach to education has changed, as a result of the evolving health crisis. Changes have affected how teachers teach and how students learn. The ACTVET school system is showing resilience in its approach to maintaining the quality of teaching by guiding teachers with the Virtual Teaching Standard. Teachers will be able to meet the expectation of the ACTVET school system by following the standard to achieve the performance required. The health crisis and ACTVET's proactive response, is just one example of disruption leading to innovative change.

References

PSSN (2020) Post Student and Staff Numbers Report, ACTVET, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.