

Foundation Institute (FI) – Standards for the English Program

A- Description of English Language program at the FI:

The program is evolving from one cycle (half-way of a semester and considered a semester) to the next, however currently:

The majority of FI students are Omani graduates from high school. In addition, some students are either fulltime or part-time on-the- job trainees working in different government and private workplaces. Non-Omani students come from other Arabic and non-Arab countries. Students entering the University of Nizwa, before they can join their majors, have to prove or improve their English language skills so that they can cope with their academic studies where English is the medium of instruction. At the FI, students are given a placement test and sorted into various levels, according to their current knowledge, understanding, and use of English. These levels are: Pre-Foundation (the lowest level, which approximately equals New Headway Plus Beginner/Elementary), Level 1, Level 2 (circa New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate), and Level 3 (circa New Headway Plus Intermediate). The program may take between one calendar year and one and half years.

The class sizes are aimed at 25-30 students, males and females in the Foundation program, and up to 60 in the Post-Foundation. In the classroom, male and female students are seated separately, to reflect the cultural requirements of the society. Usually, pair-work and group-work are conducted within the same gender.

Each Instructor may teach one group of students for the entire cycle (around 8 weeks), for the designated number of teaching hours. Of course assignments, teaching hours, and other components of the FI program are dependent upon the demands of the courses, and as such, subject to alteration.

The FI has an outcome-based curriculum. There are learning (linguistic and non-linguistic) outcomes for each Level, and for each language component within each level. So, there are outcomes for Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary, Study Skills, etc. However, the FI does not teach skills individually, not, for example, teach Listening today, Writing tomorrow, and so forth, adopting an integrative approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language, teaching more than one skill simultaneously, in order to simulate how languages are acquired naturally.

There is a curriculum, and syllabi, to follow in the FI. Currently, FI uses combination of in-house textbooks and the commercial textbooks (Headway or Total English for levels Pre-foundation-three). It is expected that Instructors will follow the curriculum and syllabus for the individual programs so that the students can achieve the learning outcomes. The priority is achieving the outcomes, not simply completing the prescribed textbook, and other supplementary materials produced by the Instructors. In this way, the FI encourages creativity and adaptation, using a variety of material to suit students' needs, interests, and learning styles. Instructors are encouraged to check with the Curriculum Committee & Assessment Coordinator and their Level Coordinators to ensure that new suggestions and ideas still conform to, and remain focused on achieving the learning outcomes.

In short, teaching at the FI is outcome-based and is a form of embedded parallel programme. There are items which are taught in class and items which students do out of class. Some are formal, others informal. Some are optional, others obligatory.

Students are given homework every day in the form of reading, listening and language knowledge (grammar and vocabulary). General correction of the homework is done in class the following morning.

Teachers are expected to mark the quizzes and provide feedback. They enter the marks on a computerized system — Eduwave —and keep a record of these marks on an excel spreadsheet as a backup.

B- FI ESL/EFL Instructors' knowledge and expertise.

ESL/EFL Language Instructors in the Foundation Institute are expected to:

1. Have sufficient knowledge of the subject to teach effectively.
2. Have an up-to-date knowledge of best practices in teaching English as a foreign language.
3. Engage in effective classroom management.
4. Use effective encouragement, motivation, reinforcement, consolidation, remedial strategies and planning.
5. Continuously reflect on and evaluate lessons to inform their future teaching practice.
6. Incorporate technology into teaching, when possible and/or appropriate.
7. Take into consideration student feedback, interest, learning requirements, styles, and abilities, when planning their lessons.
8. Make effective use of homework and other opportunities for learning outside the classroom.
9. To be available to their students for support and guidance during office hours, in 1-2-1 settings, or by appointment.
10. Inspire trust and confidence in their students.
11. Be able to use the basic computer programs such Word, Excel... etc.
12. Be able to communicate by email.
13. Influence others through their integrity and professional competence.

C- FI ESL/EFL Instructors' responsibilities within the University of Nizwa and FI

ESL/EFL Language Instructors at the FI are expected to:

1. Respect Omani culture and customs.
2. Adhere to and apply all the Institute's policies and procedures, rules and regulations.
3. Be punctual.
4. Maintain good and cooperative relationship with their colleagues and FI administration.
5. Maintain good and cooperative relationship with their direct senior staff.
6. Teach all of their assigned classes efficiently.
7. Be supportive of educational change and development at the Foundation Institute.
8. Instructors should know that email is one of the official communication tools at FI, and therefore, are expected to frequently check their emails (at least 2-3 times a day) for any updates or information from the FI administration.
9. Follow the curriculum and syllabus set for the program. The FI does encourage creativity and adaptations that benefit the teaching-learning process, however, Instructors should check with their supervisors (e.g. Level Coordinators and the Curriculum Committee & Assessment Coordinator) to ensure that the proposed changes or adaptations are in line with the stated learning outcomes, aims and objectives, set for the program.
10. Accept and appreciate feedback received from their students and from their supervisors, and use that feedback to improve their teaching and their students' learning. FI management members visit Instructors in their classes on occasions, to develop management/instructor/student relationships, and observations will be scheduled to ensure the quality of teaching and the provision of a quality learning experience to the students. The majority of these visits are pre-arranged with the

instructor, while others may not. The ultimate aim is to support our Instructors in their continued development, and encourage our students to become serious learners.

11. Consider, with professional courtesy and respect, any request to assist with various academic or administrative tasks at the Foundation Institute, such as cover teaching, invigilation, materials writing, assistance in preparation for TOEFL exams etc.
12. Maintain an up-to-date course teaching portfolio that includes up-to-date student files, students' written work, homework assignments, marks sheet, continuous assessment, and other information as required by the Foundation Institute, in order to comply with accreditation requirements.
13. Refrain from participating in any behaviour that could, directly or indirectly, bring the institution into disrepute.
14. Refrain from participating in any behaviour that could, directly or indirectly, be detrimental to the effective operation of the department.
15. Instructors are encouraged to join different committees and teams, such as materials writing team, examination writing team, professional development committee, etc., in addition to encouraging creativity, innovation, new ideas, proposals, and providing effective feedback.
16. Anything an instructor produces as part of a task that has been assigned to will be the property of and copyrighted to the UofN.

D- FI ESL/EFL Instructors' responsibilities within the classroom.

1. Be professionally prepared for each class.
2. Be in the classroom at least 5 minutes prior to the timetabled start time.
3. Take attendance and maintain up-to-date class attendance records.
4. Have a lesson plan that includes clear statements of the objectives, noting all resources, materials, activities, methods of assessment, reflective and remedial activity.
5. Clearly communicate the objectives of the lesson to the students, in writing and verbally.
6. Check the students' understanding of each key component of the lessons.
7. Provide feedback to students in a timely manner.
8. Encourage all students towards active and interactive participation.
9. Give simple, clear instructions and ensure that students understand their tasks.
10. Speak clearly, with delivery pitched to match the competency level of students.
11. Use materials and resources pitched at a level appropriate to the class, and students.
12. Use a variety of effective teaching approaches, methods and strategies to suit their students.
13. Make their class interesting, communicative, task-based, and learner-centered. Classes should be interactive. Instructors should avoid sitting at their desks and preaching, but move around class explaining, demonstrating, checking, encouraging, guiding, helping, etc.
14. Use the whiteboard as an effective method of communication.
15. Manage time, teaching, and class effectively.
16. Teach to achieve the aims of the syllabus, not necessarily to finish the prescribed materials.
17. Establish a strong and productive rapport between themselves and their students.

E- FI ESL/EFL Instructors' teaching load and working hours.

The current requirements of the FI are for:

1. FI instructors to teach up to 20 teaching hours per week.
2. FI instructor is required to dedicate up to 8 office hours to the students. These are for students to engage in support, assistance, and guidance, with the instructor. The instructor is encouraged to actively advise the students to visit them during these office hours, not only to notify the students of their availability at the scheduled times. If the instructor has no students, then they may use the time to do any administrative tasks related to their classes or other tasks assigned by the FI. Also,

if need arises, the FI may ask the instructor to use some of those hours to assist with other, generic, tasks, such as cover teaching, invigilation, etc. **Please note:** ‘Office hours’ may be utilized at the total discretion of the Director of the FI, or his nominees, by assignation of those hours to any of the component activities of the FI, including the Foundation Learning Resource Centre (Anjiz), or 1-2-1 student support location.

3. FI Instructors are required to be available on campus 8 am – 4 pm daily. These are the University official work hours. Even if the instructor has no timetabled teaching duties on a specific day, they are still required to remain on campus from 8 am – 4pm. Should the timetabled teaching and support duties, on any given day, conclude later than 4pm, the start of attendance time shall be adjusted accordingly. For example, an instructor teaching until 6pm will not be required on campus before 10am.
4. Instructors to sign in, and out, if required. They will comply as to the directions of their management and coordinators with the procedure. Whichever form of time sensitive attendance is implemented, the instructors will be entirely responsible for their compliance, and ethical interaction with the system. By their nature, such systems require the highest standards of integrity to be maintained, and any abuse, or manipulation, of the sign in process will incur serious consequences.