

Editor's Introduction

David Palfreyman

Zayed University, Dubai

This issue of *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives* begins with two papers relating to the impact of assessment in Gulf university contexts. Wright, Redding and Eltom discuss the pros and cons of online as opposed to paper-and-pencil testing for course assessment, with associated issues of supervision during assessments. They examine the “trade-offs” implicit in selecting assessment methods, discussing factors such as assessment validity, learning benefits, cost efficiencies, convenience, and public relations benefits for the institution. Lewthwaite’s paper, on the other hand, examines the reactions of students and teachers to an institutional test of proficiency, the IELTS Writing exam. Lewthwaite uses the concept of “washback” to analyze these reactions, which contribute to teaching and learning approaches in the courses which lead up to the exam. His findings indicate that in the IELTS writing tasks are favourably perceived by UAEU teachers and students, in terms of class-based writing skills and relevance to skills needed in students’ subject courses.

In this issue, as well as a student reflection on a “course in which I learned a lot”, by Al-Hammadi, we include a reflection by a member of faculty (Crawford) on a course which he has taught. Both of these pieces give insight into goals and strategies in teaching and learning, and the effects which these two processes can have on each other.

Elizabeth Bergman and Fiona Baker review two books relevant to teaching and learning, which are both available in Zayed University’s library. *Managing Very Challenging Behaviour* provides valuable insights into how difficult situations can develop between faculty and students, and strategies which faculty can adopt to pre-empt or defuse such situations. *E-tivities*, on the other hand, presents a rigorous and practical framework for planning and implementing online courses.

As always, I would like to thank the LTHE Editorial Group for their work in preparing this issue of the journal.