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## **Faculty Academic Performance Assessment (FAPA) Model**

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**Abstract:** Academic Performance Assessment is a key institutional process in evaluating academic faculty to ensure quality and maximum output in all key areas of their assigned responsibility. The current paper provides an overview of the Academic Performance standards for higher education faculty in the United Arab Emirates. These standards are set by various educational authorities in the UAE, such as the Commission for Academic Accreditation (Ministry of Education), the National Qualifications Authority, and the private and public higher education institutions of the country. Three key areas of performance are included, namely, Teaching Effectiveness, Scholarly Activities, and Academic and Community Service. The current paper proposes an assessment model addressing these areas and includes: assessment criteria and indicators, rubrics, timeline and procedure guidelines, post-assessment action plan, assessment forms (lesson observation, Academic Dean assessment, faculty action plan assessment, student assessment, final grade).

**Keywords:** Performance assessment, quality assurance, academic faculty performance, assessment

### **Introduction**

Higher Education increasing pressure to deliver quality education focusing on the best student experience has been, for years, calling for increasing accountability of academic faculty performance. To measure this, numerous faculty performance models have been implemented across higher education institutions worldwide. Such academic faculty assessment models need constant revising to respond effectively and substantially to the ever-changing institutional purposes of assessment. Faculty assessment models can determine the effectiveness of academic programs in promoting faculty performance and professional development. Issues of adequacy and bias need to be considered when implementing such assessment programs, ensuring the establishment of objective and transparent processes that make clear the purpose of the assessment, the sources of data and the metrics of the assessment. Academic performance can refer to student achievement or the outcome of the educational journey of a student towards his/her career goals. Faculty Academic Performance Assessment is a key institutional process in evaluating academic faculty to ensure quality and maximum output in all key areas of their assigned responsibility.

The Academic Performance standards for higher education faculty in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) need to be understood as part of the wider context of educational reform and transformation that has been taking place in the country, including the introduction of teacher standards, school inspection programs and participation in research initiatives which provide data for enhancements and improvements to existing policies and regulations. The Academic Performance standards are the result of the cooperation and coordination of various educational authorities in the UAE, such as the Commission for Academic Accreditation (Ministry of Education), the National Qualifications Authority, and the private and public higher education institutions of the country. Three key areas of performance are mandated by the Standards, namely, Teaching Effectiveness, Scholarly Activities, and Academic and Community Service. The proposed assessment model is addressing these areas. The model includes: assessment criteria and indicators, rubrics, timeline and procedure guidelines, post-assessment action plan, and assessment forms for data collection from lesson observations, the Academic Dean, faculty action plan, and student assessment.

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## **Teacher Standards and School Performance Evaluation in the UAE**

The UAE has been at the forefront of the global trend to advance the quality of teachers with the highest teaching skills and resources, and to elevate the status of teaching as a career. In recent years it has developed and introduced specific plans envisioning the future of the society for the years to come. Aiming towards a knowledge-based economy, new teaching policies aimed at building a high-performing education system and a highly skilled teaching workforce at all levels of education, as well as other sectors of economic and social life. This is an important point to note as it justifies the framework and the philosophy within which any new developments and advancements are proposed at various areas of the education system. Some of the most recent measures include the development of the UAE Teacher and Educational Leadership Standards and the introduction of the Teacher Licensing System to power up the teacher education system in all Emirates. The following sections briefly describe some of these areas as an indication of the ongoing reform to transform the teacher education system, namely the UAE Teacher Professional Standards (Ministry of Education, 2020), ADEK's Irtiqaa Programme (ADEK, 2021), and the most current OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2020).

### **UAE Teacher Professional Standards**

The Teacher Standards for the UAE have been developed to ensure teachers, at different career stages, can demonstrate professional competence that align with the aspirations of the UAE Vision 2021 (UAE Vision 2021, 2018) and international best practice. The Standards and Elements are further elaborated through Performance Criteria. The Standards detail the specific expectations pertaining to all teachers and are set to accomplish a first-rate education system. Four areas of professional competence are defined: Professional and Ethical Conduct, Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Growth (Ministry of Education, 2020).

According to *Standard 1 Professional and Ethical Conduct*, teachers are expected to demonstrate commitment to the UAE heritage and cultural values and personal and professional ethics. They are also expected to collaborate and communicate professionally and comply with legislative and organizational requirements. The second area of professional competence, *Standard 2: Professional Knowledge*, requires teachers to understand, learning and development in relation to diversity of learners, how to implement curriculum, stay informed educational research, learning theories, pedagogical approaches, cultural values and relevant policies. According to *Standard 3: Professional Practice*, teachers are expected to be able to create safe and supportive learning environments, implement effective learner-centered teaching, incorporate appropriate resources and make innovative use of technology, and use varied assessment methods. Finally, *Standard 4: Professional Growth*, extends the competencies to personal and professional development. Teachers should take responsibility for their own professional growth, engage in, and evaluate, professional development (Ministry of Education, 2020).

### **ADEK Irtiqaa Programme: Improving Schools' Performance**

The 'Irtiqaa' Inspection Programme is Abu Dhabi Department of Education's (ADEK) comprehensive evaluation system to measure the quality of education in private schools in Abu Dhabi. It expresses the commitment to excellence in education and the State's strategy to improve the education system and enhance student potential and academic performance. To ensure the sustainability of the program, ADEK applies the program through three main action areas: (a) train UAE national educationalists to become school inspectors accredited by ADEK; (b) perform periodic inspection and monitoring visits in private schools to ensure their commitment to, and application of, the program standards; and, (c) provide the necessary support to schools and continue to improve the quality of education (ADEK, 2021).

### **OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)**

The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is an international, large-scale survey of teachers, school leaders and the learning environment in schools. The TALIS 2018 survey asked teachers and school leaders about their job satisfaction, the working conditions, career mobility and risk of attrition, professional autonomy, collegiality and collaboration, and feedback and appraisal systems.

According to the survey results, in the UAE, 72% of teachers feel their profession is valued in society, which is higher than the average across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (26%). Regarding career stability, commitments to increase the financial remuneration of teachers and principals and to secure it through permanent contracts can compete with the need to limit costs and ensure flexibility in government expenditure. 82% of teachers in the UAE reported having control over determining course content in their class (more likely to report working in innovative school environments), compared to 84% on average across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS. With regard to feedback and appraisal systems, in the UAE, 1% of teachers report that they have never received feedback (based on observation of the teacher's classroom teaching, school-based and classroom-based results and assessment of the teacher's content knowledge) in their schools (OECD average 10%) (OECD, 2020).

## **Criteria, Guidelines and Procedures for HEIs and Academic Evaluation**

Within the wider vision of the UAE to become a knowledge-based economy, significant improvements and reforms were implemented in the higher education sector to advance, and raise the quality of, offered education. The following sections describe in brief ADEK's HEIs Authorization and Evaluation Framework, the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates), the Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation for HEIs, and the recently introduced of a Faculty Development Framework at a private university (name withdrawn) which aims to successfully respond to the latest regulations and standards set for HEIs.

### **ADEK's Higher Education Institutions Authorization and Evaluation Framework**

The ADEK strategic priorities include the raise the quality of Abu Dhabi's higher education system to internationally recognized levels, the alignment of higher education with Abu Dhabi's social, cultural, and economic needs, the development and maintenance of a research ecosystem to drive an innovation-based economy, and the provision of affordable access to higher education to all qualified students. At federal level, the quality assurance framework for HEIs in the UAE includes mechanisms such as the Initial Institutional Licensure, the Initial Program Accreditation, the Accreditation, and the Renewal of Accreditation for existing programs. The quality assurance framework at the federal level falls under the jurisdiction of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA).

Among a long list of evaluation criteria, the framework includes criteria addressing the quality of the institution's academic faculty qualifications and expertise, requiring HEIs to employ qualified and sufficient faculty and staff to deliver its academic programs from top 500 internationally ranked institutions. It also addresses the promotion of research and innovation with mechanisms and processes in place that support research activities, enhance research quality and productivity and promote innovation. Additionally, research outputs and outcomes should be visible at national, regional and international levels. HEIs should also engage in community service as one of their strategic priorities and ensure that they have the relevant financial and human resources to deliver those services (ADEK, 2016).

### **The National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates)**

The Board of the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) approved the qualifications framework for the UAE (known as the QFEmirates) in 2012. The Qualifications Framework for the Emirates Handbook provides detailed information about the architecture of qualifications in the UAE and also defines the requirements that will enable locally awarded qualifications to be compared with and valued alongside international qualifications. The five prescribed strands of learning outcomes (Table 1) reflect what is expected to be achieved at the respective level, for each qualification awarded in the UAE. It should be noticed that expected learning outcomes require the development of competencies (how to apply the knowledge and skills) emphasizing autonomy and responsibility, professional role and professional and personal development based on the knowledge and skills that was obtained during the qualification. These strands are assigned and defined in detail across 10 levels of qualifications which encompass the possible spread of learning, from Level 1 (Certificate 1) recognizing the ability to perform practical and elementary tasks, to Level 10 (Doctoral) recognizing the ability to discover and develop new knowledge and skills required at the frontiers of research and scholarship (National Qualifications Authority, 2012).

Table 1. Strands of learning outcomes (National Qualifications Authority, 2012).

Level X	Strand 1	Strand 2	Strand 3	Strand 4	Strand 5
	Knowledge	Skill	Autonomy and responsibility	Role in context	Self-development

Aspects of competence

### Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation (HEIs)

The continuous and drastic upgrade and transformation of the UAE education system has come from the realization that the future success of the UAE knowledge-based economy depends on graduates equipped to think critically, perform research, and demonstrate the ability to innovate and become entrepreneurs in their specialist fields and respond positively to the opportunities for life-long learning. The 2019 Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation (6th Edition) is the response to this realization for the provision of quality higher education in the UAE. National and international trends have raised challenges for the quality assurance and maintenance of high standards across the higher education sector. The 2019 Standards address these challenges by strengthening the criteria and by detailing the requirements in additional Stipulations and Annexes to the Standards. With regard to academic faculty, as defined by the Standards, they are expected to perform equally in teaching and program development, research and publications and academic and community service.

*Standard 3 Educational Programs* stipulates that HEIs must demonstrate that they have sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified faculty to meet all requirements of its educational programs and courses. Research, scholarship and/or professional practice is incorporated into teaching activity. *Standard 4 on Research and Scholarly Activities* assigns research and scholarly activities, to the faculty members, directed towards the creation, integration, application, and transmission of knowledge. Additionally, the institution must have a strategy for faculty research and/or scholarship which reflects its commitment to research, scholarship, sustainability, innovation and creative activity. According to *Standard 5 about Faculty and Professional Staff*, HEIs must demonstrate that they have appropriately qualified faculty meeting all requirements of its programs, professional standards for teaching and support of learning, including appropriate professional development and fair workload policies. *Standard 11 on Community Engagement* stipulates that HEIs must develop collaborative external partnerships leading to productive relationships that bring beneficial outcomes for the community. Faculty members are expected to be engaged in community service along with institutional service defined in previous standards. Finally, *Stipulation 5 on Faculty and Professional Staff* defines the evaluation process. HEIs must conduct annual evaluations of the performance of all full-time, part-time, and visiting faculty members (Commission for Academic Accreditation, 2019).

An example of the application of the 2019 Standards to the faculty assessment of academic performance and promotion, consists the *Faculty Development Framework (FDF)* from a top private higher education institution in Abu Dhabi (name withdrawn). The FDF outlines the performance areas that encompass the core areas of faculty engagement, in accordance with the 2019 Standards, including leadership and service, research and innovation, teaching, and teaching scholarship. In evaluating faculty for their annual review and for promotion, the FDF aligns faculty performance objectives and activities with the University's strategic priorities to support a culture of high performance. It is inclusive in that it provides an opportunity for promotion of faculty by recognizing and valuing the outstanding contribution of leaders in research and teaching. Two promotion routes are defined distinguishing between faculty who engages in teaching only and faculty who engages in research as well as teaching.

Table 2. Percentage contributions by promotion route.

Promotion Route	Leadership and Service	Teaching	Teaching Scholarship	Research, Innovation and Impact
<i>Leadership and Teaching Scholarship</i>	10 - 20%	40 - 60%	10 - 30 %	10 - 20%
<i>Leadership and Research, Innovation and Impact</i>	10 - 20%	40 - 60%	0 - 10%	20 - 30%

*Leadership* is the responsibility of every faculty member at every rank. *Leadership and service* reflect the expectation that faculty applying for promotion demonstrate an effective leadership contribution to their college or the university to achieve its strategic objectives. Faculty on the *leadership and teaching scholarship* route will make a significant contribution achieving the strategic objectives of its teaching and learning enhancement strategy, while faculty on the *leadership and research, innovation and impact* route will make a significant contribution achieving the goals of its research, innovation.

### **Faculty Academic Performance Assessment Model**

The proposed assessment model addresses Teaching Effectiveness, Scholarly Activities, and Academic and Community Service and includes: assessment criteria and indicators, rubrics, timeline and procedure guidelines, post-assessment action plan, and assessment forms: Lesson Observation Form, Academic Dean Assessment Form, Faculty Action Plan Assessment Form, Student Assessment Form, Final Grade Form.

### **Performance areas**

Three performance areas are targeted by the proposed model: Teaching Effectiveness, Scholarly Activities, and Academic and Community Service. Teaching Effectiveness refers to academic teaching and program development. That includes delivering quality teaching, development of course material, assessments, and teaching and learning material, and development of new academic programs. Scholarly Activities refer to academic research and research publications. Academic and Community Service involves participation in committees and task forces, as well as, volunteer work and contributions outside academia, such as offering professional development and training and other services. The proposed percentages for the three performance areas are: Teaching Effectiveness (45%), Scholarly Activities (30%), and, Academic and Community Service (25%). This distribution favours a faculty performance assessment that emphasizes more on teaching and less on research. The rubric adopts the following grading scale: 100%-90% Excellent, 89%-80% Very Good, 79%-70% Good, 69%-60% Needs Improvement to 59% and below Unsatisfactory.

### **Assessment Grading**

The scores for the three performance areas are collected from four assessment sources, namely one or two (depending on faculty rank) Lesson Observations (25%) conducted by the faculty member's supervisor, the Faculty Action Plan (55%), which includes the faculty member's academic outputs (course review and development, research and research reports, conferences and research publications, academic and community service), the Student Assessment (10%), and the Academic Dean Assessment (10%). This distribution favors a faculty member's personal academic performance and places less weight on the student and supervisor's assessments to avoid biased evaluations. The rubric adopts the following grading scale: 100%-90% Excellent, 89%-80% Very Good, 79%-70% Good, 69%-60% Needs Improvement, 59% and below Unsatisfactory.

### **Assessment Criteria**

The assessment criteria for Teaching Effectiveness (45%) are collected from the Lesson Observation, Academic Dean Assessment, and Student Assessment forms. They refer to a faculty member's expertise, content knowledge, updated information used in the discipline, interdisciplinary approach used in teaching, course organization, teaching methodology, educational technology, integrity, open-mindedness, objectivity, student motivation and engagement. The rubric adopts the following grading scale: 45%-41% Excellent, 40%-36% Very Good, 35%-31% Good, 30%-27% Needs Improvement, 26% and below Unsatisfactory. The assessment criteria for Scholarly Activities (30%) are collected the Faculty Action Plan form. They include course review and development (10%), research reports and awards/grants (10%), conference presentations, refereed publications, creative/work exhibitions, research citations (10%). This distribution is giving an equal weight to a faculty member's scholarly activities. The rubric adopts the following grading scale: 30%-28% Excellent, 27%-25% Very Good, 24%-21% Good, 20%-18% Needs Improvement, 17% and below Unsatisfactory. The assessment criteria for Academic and Community Service (25%) are collected the Faculty Action Plan form. They include public lectures, supervision/student activities, media exposure, committees, consultations, conference organization, professional memberships, intercampus cooperation. This distribution is giving an equal weight to a faculty member's academic and community service. The rubric adopts the following grading

scale: 25%-24% Excellent, 23%-21% Very Good, 20%-18% Good, 17%-15% Needs Improvement, 14% and below Unsatisfactory.

### **Timeline/Procedure**

The Faculty Performance Assessment is initiated and conducted by the Faculty Evaluation committee as follows (based on 16-week course): During *Weeks 4-6* the Academic Dean, or Supervisor, conducts an announced full lesson observation using the *lesson observation form*. After the observation the Academic Dean, or Supervisor invites the faculty member to inform him/her of his/her observation results, to discuss the assessment and record the faculty's response. During *Week 6* students taught by the faculty are asked to evaluate their instructor using the online version of the *student assessment form*. The evaluation results are collected by the Faculty Evaluation Committee and kept in file for his/her final assessment. The faculty is informed of the assessment results. During *Week 13* the faculty is being asked by the Academic Dean or Supervisor, to respond to their *action plan* (submitted at the beginning of the semester) using the *faculty action plan assessment form*. The evaluation form is returned to the Faculty Evaluation Committee and kept in file for his/her final evaluation. During *Week 16* the Academic Dean completes the faculty assessment using the *Academic Dean assessment form*. An assessment grade is assigned to the faculty based on the completed assessment forms using the *final grade form*. All assessment data are submitted for the final performance assessment by the senior management.

### **Final Grade**

The final grade for assessing the faculty performance includes the individual scores obtained from the four assessment forms. The rubric adopts the following grading scale: *100%-90% Excellent*: exceptional performance in addition to consistency exceeding requirements of the job has a major impact in the lasting growth of the educational institution, *89%-80% Very Good*: performance that at times exceeds, and consistently meets the requirements of the job, *79%-70% Good*: performance that consistently meets the requirements of the job, *69%-60% Needs Improvement*: performance that occasionally meets the requirements of the job, *59%-0% Unsatisfactory*: performance does not consistently meet the requirements of the job.

### **Post-Assessment Action**

Suggested post-assessment action per level of performance may include: *100%-90% Excellent*: performance bonus, *89%-80% Very Good & 79%-70% Good*: certificate of appreciation, *69%-60% Needs Improvement*: professional development program, and/or salary decrease, and/or warning letter, *59%-0% Unsatisfactory*: warning letter, and/or end of contract.

### **FAPA model forms**

The *Lesson Observation Form* targets four areas: *quality of instructional content* (use of available resources and technology, student-centered teaching, inclusivity, learning environment, lesson plan), *student behavior management* (teacher engagement with students, attention to the behavior of students, management of disruptions and inappropriate behavior, established et of rules and procedures for misbehavior), *instructional skills* (clear learning objectives, examples and demonstrations, meaningful feedback, interactive activities, development of critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making, independent learning), and *communication skills* (teacher speech, eye contact, non-verbal communication, listening and answering to students, teacher enthusiasm for the teaching/learning process).

The *Student Assessment Form* asks students to evaluate their instructor in five teaching and learning areas: *teaching methodology* (course requirements, assessment schedule, resources, enthusiasm, engagement, creativity and innovation, ways to teach, critical thinking, student participation, independent learning), *organization/structure* (lesson preparation, punctuality, time management, following syllabus and assessment, learning experience), *content knowledge* (subject knowledge, resourcefulness, knowledgeable, answering questions, enhancing learning), *interaction/communication* (explaining course structure and assessment, university policies, respect, being available, teacher expectations, explaining topic well, speaking clearly, willingness to listen and help), and, *technology/innovation* (educational technology tools and innovative

teaching methodologies, classroom technology, encouragement, technologically literate, using technology to learn).

The *Faculty Action Plan Assessment Form* includes the following scholarly activities: *course development and review, research reports, conferences, publications* (academic paper publications in conference proceedings, academic journals, books, edited books, chapters in books, scholarly articles media or magazines/newspapers, research reports, academic courses and programs, digital publications, online academic journals, academic/research blogs/content curation, online courses, educational software), *academic service* (any current or on-going academic projects, inter-campus course coordination activities, exam preparation activities, professional development seminars/workshops presented professional development seminars/workshops attended), *community service* (recent or on-going community service projects).

The *Academic Dean Assessment Form* assesses functional areas of responsibility: *specific job competencies* (the specific knowledge skills and abilities required to perform the technical aspects of the job), verbal communication (participates in discussion/meetings, able to articulate ideas in a clear manner, listens effectively), *written communication* (writes clearly, concisely, using appropriate grammar), *assertiveness/influencing skills* (presents a case or situation in a convincing manner, presents information or ideas in a determined and realistic way), *team work* (supportive of others, builds on other's ideas, encourages trust in others, taking risk and offering ideas), *taking initiative* (anticipates a need and responds accordingly, self-starting), *leadership* (provides a sense of purpose for the group with clear objectives and role definitions), *approachable/client focused*: listens and assists others in a positive manner, *accuracy/timeliness of work* (work is completed for assigned deadlines, attends to detail – errors are rarely found in work, uses), *punctuality*: (consistently is on time for work and uses time productively), *cultural sensitivities*: (demonstrates tolerance and understanding for other cultural backgrounds, the manner of clothing worn is appropriate for the culture, appropriate language is used). It also conducts an overall assessment of the faculty member, such as, highlighting areas of strength, behaviors the employee should seek to improve to increase effectiveness, and highest priorities in the coming year.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed model of Faculty Academic Performance Assessment provides a dynamic model that can be adjusted for online implementation and to the specific assessment needs of a higher education institution. It provides a complete assessment of all major areas of academic faculty performance and it consists a model that rewards substantial academic work completed by the faculty member, intentionally giving less weight on the assessment evaluation of the students and/or education manager to who the faculty member reports to. It is anticipated that the proposed model can provide a framework of fair assessment of academic faculty based on the faculty's evidenced academic outputs. Academic performance assessment remains a vital institutional process not only for evaluating academics but also acting as a driver for enhancing faculty creativity and innovation and increasing their quality of teaching and the learning experience of students. The proposed model intersects the numerous and diverse educational transformations in the UAE education system and anticipates to provide a useful institutional tool for assessing and raising the quality of academic faculty performance in the UAE and beyond.

## **Scientific Ethics Declaration**

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the author.

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