

ASSESSMENT IN FOCUS

Bi-annual Newsletter of the Testing Center
Volume III, No.1, December 2012

St. Mary's University College
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Assessment in Focus is dedicated to dissemination of information and developments at the Testing Center, that would assist in the development and maintenance of up-to-standard and quality education at SMUC, and at similar institutions of higher learning in Ethiopia

EDITOR'S NOTE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EXAMS

We apologize for our failure to produce the second annual publication of "Assessment in Focus" of 2011/12 academic year. At the same time, however, we need to quickly point out that some of the newsworthy items slated to have been included in the last failed publication of the newsletter are made part of the present issue.

The present publication of "Assessment in Focus" deals mainly with the issue of quality assurance in the field of education. And it is proper for the editorial note to fall in line and express few words on the subject.

Quality assurance is a term used by the world of industry (manufacturers) to describe the administrative systems put in place to ensure that quality control can be carried out effectively. This is the way in which quality assurance ensures the application of sound staff training, administrative procedures and monitoring of products at various stages of manufacture up to the highest standard possible. Quality assurance is the system of administrative procedures set up designed to ensure quality control of the production line. This includes the training of staff so that they know how to recognize sub-standard works, and avoid such type of produce from production.

Coming to the educational context, quality is all about maintaining standard academic education. And quality assurance of exams means the ability of assessment tools to measure and produce reliable achievement results of students in their studies. In its strictest sense, quality is concerned with educational management process, monitoring of performance and assessment of outputs.

Quality assurance offers Higher Education Institutions the opportunity to get recognized certifications that are globally accepted. In this regard, quality assurance needs to ensure that exams are up to standard and marked fairly and

consistently.

In general, the practicality of quality assurance of exams entails ensuring the appropriateness of test items and instructions, as well as fairness in marking and grading. Bench-marking of exams is necessary to ensure good quality.

Quality assurance of exams is based in part on the quality inputs, such as the quality provision of education by effectively trained instructors. As a matter of fact, quality education is dependent on well-trained, motivated and effective instructors, who are respected by their students and the community, as a result of their teachings and researches. In other words, instructors' quality has a powerful influence in promoting and realizing the quality assurance of exams.

To enhance quality assurance, St. Mary's University College is committed to giving trainings and workshops by properly skilled educators to instructors and assessors to help them deliver what is expected of them in designing quality exams. Whatever questions arise from students and learners, it has been always a rule for instructors and assessors to take measures to rectify the problems immediately. In conclusion, we would like to underline that quality assurance of exams needs uninterrupted intellectual devotion and practice on par with, if not more than, the level the education providing institution has set as targets.

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- Agri Economics
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- Educational Planning and Management

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SOME ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT AT THE TESTING CENTER (TC)

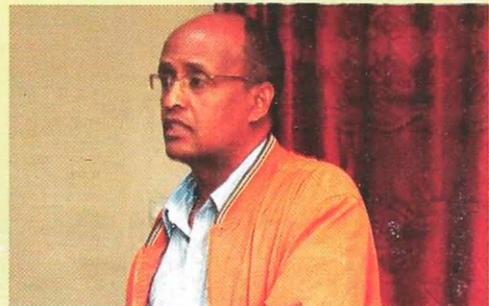
Trainings Given on Assessment for Different Programmes

Reported by Alexander Mulugeta

- Training on Ethiopian Occupational Standards (EOS) for TVET, focusing on the knowledge and the practical aspects of units of competences and elements of competencies of specified occupations, was offered by the TC on May 19, 2012. The trainees were moderators and exam developers of Institutional TVET Comprehensive Examinations (ITCEs) for Accounting, Marketing, Law, Administrative Office and Secretarial Technology, IT Assistance, Purchasing and Supplies Management and Human Resource Management for both the Regular Division and CODL, for the Second Semester/Term. Explanations were also given to the trainees concerning the general rules that must be followed during the process of exam development by teams and submission of prepared exams to the Testing Center of the university college.
- Trainings on Comprehensive Degree Exit Examination (CDEE) planning and item development were given by the Testing Center on May 19 and 22, 2012, in two rounds, to St. Mary's University College

Regular Division and CODL academic staff, as well as selected exam moderators from outside the University College. Copies of a compiled guide material intended to serve as reference in the process of preparing test plan and test item development were distributed to the participants.

- On August 1, 2012, training on knowledge and skills needed to prepare assessment tools (assignments and exams) and test blueprints were given to four newly recruited TC academic staff by TC educational measurement and evaluation experts, at Midir Babur Campus. A similar training was also offered on August 7, 2012, to other three newly recruited academic staff, at the same campus.



Assist. Professor Wondwosen Tamrat, President & Founder of SMUC, Opening an Event Organized by the TC

The above different trainings were given at different times by Dr. Wubishet Shiferaw, Ato Shenkute Mamo and Ato Teshome Teka, all educational measurement and evaluation experts at the TC. Ato Debela Mekonen, instructor at the Department of Accounting, also collaborated in the training given to ITCE Moderators and Exam Developers.

Training on Research Methods in Education

Reported by Binyam G/Egziabher

It was one of the two trainings organized by the Testing Center of SMUC, for its academic staff-members, on August 29, 2012. The resource person was Ato Melaku Girma (Ph.D. candidate) of the Faculty of Education, SMUC. The training was a refreshment session, and provided experience to TC academic staff-members to help them further build-up their research skills. The training included the following areas: concepts, characteristics, types of educational research, methodology and research ethics. Participants carried out lively and hot discussions during the training.



Training on Research Methods Being Given for TC Academic Staff, August 29, 2012

Training on Quality Assurance

Reported by Binyam G/ Egziabher

“How do we know our graduates are satisfied with their educational experience at SMUC?” That was one of several points pondered over at the training held on August 29, 2012, which was organized on quality assurance by the Testing Center (TC) of SMUC for its academic staff-members. Definition of quality assurance, need, scope and methods of applying it at the Testing Center were some of the major areas of the training.

The resource person for the training, Dr. Wondmagegn Chekol, Director of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of SMUC, pointed out in his discussions, that lack of quality assurance awareness is often one of the problems for failure to implement internal quality assurance system effectively. So, to overcome the problem, he recommended trainings, seminars and discussions on quality assurance to be given continuously. He commended the training organized by the TC administration to create better awareness of quality assurance for its staff members. At the training, 24 academic staff-members participated, who at the end unanimously opined that it was a very fruitful experience.



Training on Quality Assurance for TC Staff, August 29, 2012

EXIT EXAMS AT SMUC

By Shenkute Mamo

St. Mary's University College (SMUC) Testing Center (TC), conducts Comprehensive Degree Exit Examinations (CDEEs) and Institutional TVET Comprehensive Examinations (ITCEs) to enhance the quality of its Degree and TVET Programs at the Regular Division, and CDEEs at its College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL).



IT ITCE Exam Being Conducted at an SMUC Computer Laboratory, September 08, 2012

Exam developments for the CDEEs have been based on the Graduate Profiles and Learning Outcomes of the respected departments, and the exams measure candidates' mastery of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be requisite in graduates and are demanded of them in the world of work (business and industry).

Exam developments for the ITCEs have been based on Ethiopian Occupational Standards (EOS), and the exams measure the level of mastery of the units of competencies and corresponding elements of competencies for both knowledge and practical aspects.

All preparatory activities for both CDEEs and ITCEs are monitored by the SMUC Testing Center, and the exams are moderated by professionals from the world of industry and business. From the respective academic departments of SMUC, academic staff members participate in the development of both CDEEs and ITCEs.

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ENTRANCE EXAMS FROM TVET TO DEGREE PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED

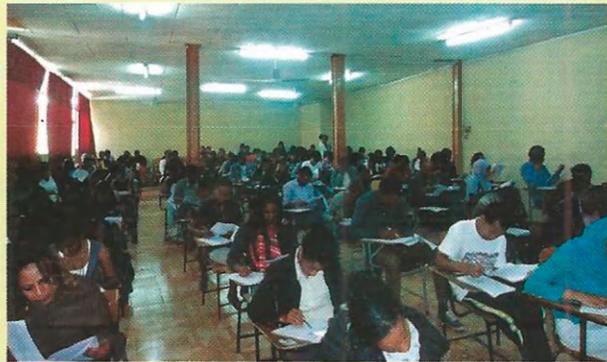
Under the auspices of the Testing Center, SMUC, orientation was given to exam developers and moderators of entrance exams from TVET to Degree Programmes. As a result of the MoE policy of allowing capable TVET graduates to join Degree programmes by fulfilling the requirements shown below, SMUC put into work the needed scheme for the purpose and admitted its first batch of such students as of the beginning of 2012/13 academic year. MoE stipulations, governing the path for TVET graduate applicants to join Degree programmes are the following:

- a) Completion of, at least, Level IV TVET training with a CoC Test pass certificate.
- b) 2 years work experience in the same or related field of TVET training.
- c) Pass in entrance exam prepared by the University College/University to which admission is applied for.



Opening of Entrance Exams Orientation for 2012/13 Exam Developers and Moderators by Ato Misganaw Solomon, AVPAA of SMUC, September 06, 2012

SMUC Testing Center prepared and administered admission exams for Business and Technology (Computer Science and related programmes), on the basis of the Exam Blueprints provided by the MoE. On October 13 and 14, 2012, the exams were given to 411 candidates, of which 315 passed. 303 of them were admitted to the different degree programmes of SMUC. Of the total number of registered candidates to take the exams, 41 failed to appear on the exam days, therefore, they did not sit for the exams.



Entrance Exam for 2012/13 Academic Year Being Conducted at SMUC, October 14, 2012

THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

By Wubishet Shifereaw, (Ph.D.)

Assessment is the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to students and identify their progress, and discern strengths and weaknesses to judge institutional effectiveness and curricula adequacy. Assessment

has become over the years an important key to the improvement of quality of education. The general concept of quality of education is composed of three interrelated dimensions: the quality of human and material resources available for teaching (inputs), the quality of teaching practices (processes) and the quality of results, i.e. outputs and outcomes (Grisay and Mahlek 1991). All these elements are interrelated and a serious deficit in one is likely to have implications for quality in others.

The concern of quality has progressively shifted its focus from inputs to outcomes in terms of the learning achievement. The quality of outcomes is the relevance of knowledge, skills and attitudes students acquire for life after school and insertion to cultural, social and economic conditions of the society. Evaluating the quality of the educational system partly or wholly entails analyzing first and foremost the extent to which the products or results of education provided meet the standards stipulated in the system's educational objectives. It must also be explored to what extent the knowledge, skills and values acquired by students are relevant to environmental conditions and social needs.

The idea of quality is closely related to the idea of standards. Standard is a measure of the adequacy of a socially or practically described level of performance. (Kellaghan & Graney 2001). The focus is more on knowledge and skills

that are considered appropriate and adequate for students to have acquired at particular levels in the education system. Standards specify proficiencies described as comprising higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, investigative and reasoning skills, improved means of communication and capability to compete in actual life situations. This particular role of standards will help teachers to make concrete the goal of a system and assist in focusing on what students at varying level of achievement should know and be able to do.

Assessment is used extensively to promote pedagogy and improved quality learning. The pedagogic promoting role of assessment can be best realized and further assured by using a systematic procedure for obtaining representative sample of pupil behavior in each of the areas to be measured. Thus, in the process of preparing table of specifications and selecting appropriate and varied item formats, assessment of higher institutions should focus on the acquisition of appropriate knowledge, skills, behavior and attitudes which are all concerns of assessment about outcomes. Assessment is used as a lever of change leading to higher quality and standards of learning with much consideration on its effect on curricula, teaching and learning.

In view of the present emphasis on assessment, the information derived from assessment can be used to make decisions about students'

educational careers, or to hold individuals or institutions accountable. If quality does not reach an acceptable standard, it seems reasonable to ask who is accountable. Accountability is usually focused on specified results or outcomes. Teachers and students should be held accountable for learning. Institutions, agencies and individuals that exercise control over the resources and activities of schools should also be reflected as accountable in the system. Thus, continuous feedback is an important means to enhance quality of education.

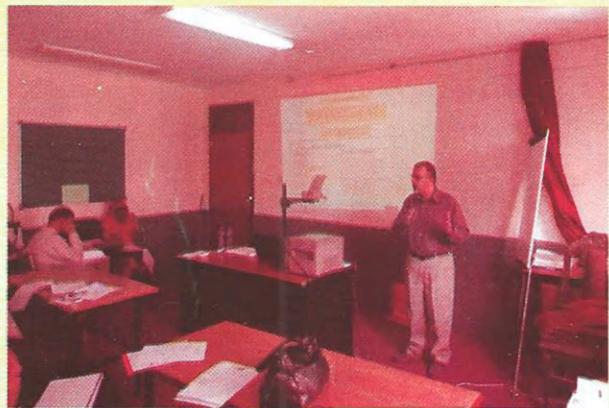
ACCA TUITION STARTED AT SMUC

SMUC HAS BECOME A REGISTERED ACCA LEARNING PROVIDER !

SMUC launched tuition for the exam papers (courses) of the London-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) as of September 2012. The tuition program is a collaborative work of SMUC and the Arusha School of Business and Finance (Tanzania) under the umbrella of ACCA Ethiopia Office.

During September 14-19, 2012, accelerated tuition was conducted on the exam papers (courses) F5, F7 and F9 for a total of 61 students. Students who attended the courses expressed their satisfaction with the program. In the satisfaction survey conducted after the tuition

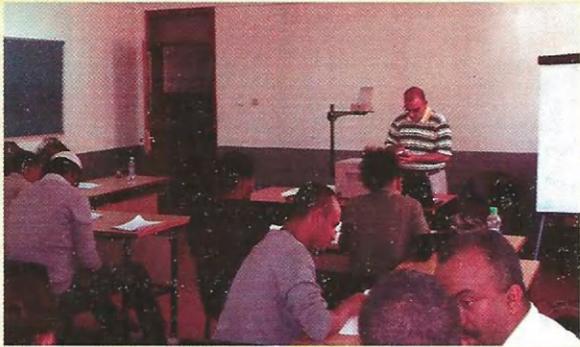
program, they expressed that the tuition has helped them greatly by showing them how to approach their studies and giving them guidance not only to cover syllabi, but also how to use resources, properly prepare for exams and go about working on exams in order to pass ACCA papers.



Training for ACCA Papers in Session, September 16, 2012

Between November 15 and 20, 2012, accelerated revision was conducted, too, by SMUC for the December 2012 ACCA exam papers F5, F6, F7 and F9. Again like in the September 2012 accelerated tuition program, candidates (students) expressed their satisfaction in the November 15-20, 2012 revision program.

At the end of the tuition and revision sessions, candidates also suggested some improvements to be made on certain aspects of both the tuition and revision programs. And the university college has heeded the suggestions, and has taken since then the necessary steps to make the needed improvements.



Training for ACCA Papers in Session, November 17, 2012

At present, ACCA registration for 2013 has started at SMUC. The registration at SMUC, which, began on December 17, 2012, is for new ACCA students (applicants) only. And for registering at SMUC, students will be given free books/learning materials and free tuition, on first come first served basis. Registration is being carried out, in Building 2, 1st Floor, to the right, in Language Resource Center, at SMUC Main Campus, located at Mexico Square, near the Wabe Shebelle Hotel.

St. Mary's University College works in collaboration with several national, continental and global higher education institutions and associations. One among them is ACCA. St. Mary's is now a registered ACCA Learning Provider in Ethiopia.

WHAT IS TEACHING AND HOW COULD WE MEASURE ITS EFFECTIVENESS?

The above two points are pertinent questions that an educator/a teacher has to ask himself/ herself

from time to time, and be focused on as he/she pursues the task of educating/teaching his/her students. The excerpt presented below from a writing by a professional teacher about half a century ago provides food for thought on the above points. Are the observations of the writer relevant for us present educators/teachers? They are worth pondering over.

“ Nothing in education needs more explaining more than this, that a teacher may be neither a professor nor an educator, that a professor may mature to the age of retirement without teaching or educating, and that an educator, without loss of reputation, may profess nothing, and never face a class.

A teacher is one who shows his fellow man how to do something, which imparts an active skill, and who kindles the desire to acquire this skill and to use it. In all creatures there is a natural ambition to live, which necessarily includes an ambition to learn, but even a natural ambition will need encouragement. The cow teaches the newborn calf to walk, the mother bird teaches her young to fly, though neither cow nor bird, so far as we know, has a teacher's diploma, or the equivalent, from a normal school. If the calf is reluctant to stand up, the cow gets behind and under, and gives a dramatic boost. If the fledgling recoils from the unsolid air, the mother bird pushes it forward. This is teaching, of no mean sort.”

“The teacher, through his pupils, may influence the future, which is perhaps the part of time which most deserves our attention.”

Source: My Life as a Teacher.

(1948) by John Erskine.



PASSING THE BUCK

THE COLLEGE PROFESSOR SAYS !

“Such rawness in a student is a shame,
But high school preparation is to blame.”

The high school teacher remarks:

“From such youth I should be spared;
They send them up so unprepared.”

The elementary school teacher observes:

“A cover for the dunce’s stool,
Why was he ever sent to school?”

The kindergarten teacher whispers:

“Never such lack of training did I see!
What kind of person must the mother be?”

The mother replies:

“Poor child, but he is not to blame;
His father’s folks were all the same.”

Source: Glenn Secley, from “High Points”,
February 1953, p.19. in The Teacher’s Treasure
Chest. Leo Duell. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.;
Prentice-Hall, Inc.

QUOTES ON PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

“ If you don’t know where you are headed, you probably end up some place else. ”

Douglas J. Eder

“ The most important thing about assessment is that it promotes dialogue among faculty. ”

Mary Senter

“ We plan. We develop. We deliver. We assess and evaluate the results of the assessment. We revise, deliver the revised material, and assess and evaluate again. Perfection is always just out of reach; but continually striving for perfection contributes to keeping both our instruction fresh and our interest in teaching piqued. ”

E.S. Grassian

“The most important question is not how assessment is defined but whether assessment information is used..... ”

Palomba & Banta

Source:

www.sunnyorange.edu/assessmentapa/docs/AssessmentQUOTES.pdf



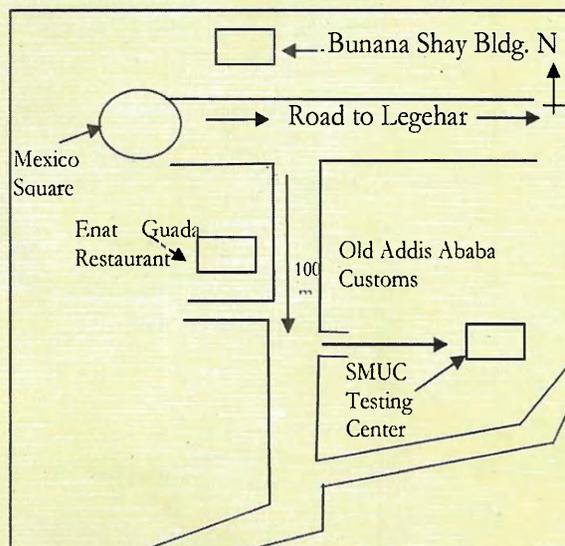
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 - Etc.
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- ❖ ACCA registration for new applicants and tuition
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The Testing Center is located opposite Bunana Shay Building near Mexico Square. See the sketch map provided for details.

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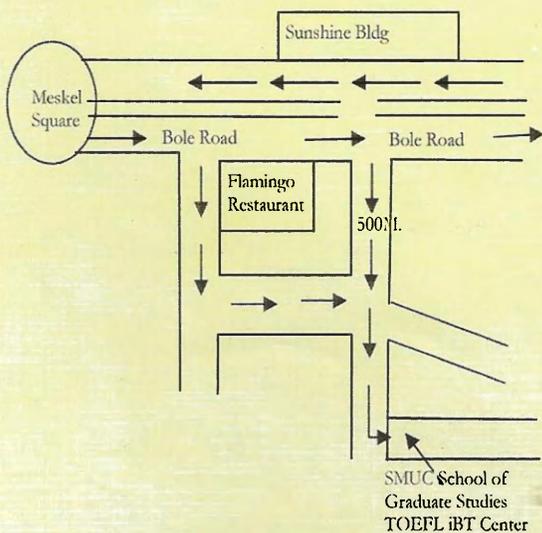
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| 2. Auditing | 9. Personnel Management | 15. Secretary |
| 3. Cashier | 10. Human Resource Management | 16. Archives Management |
| 4. Finance Management | 11. Business Administration | 17. Customer Service |
| 5. Finance Officer | 12. Project Management | 18. Database Management |
| 6. Marketing Management | 13. Risk Management | 19. Computer Programming |
| 7. Salesperson | | 20. Software Engineering |
| | | 21. Computer Networking |

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Registration lasts until March 31, 2013. The offer is for the first 304 applicants, and is on first come first served basis.

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