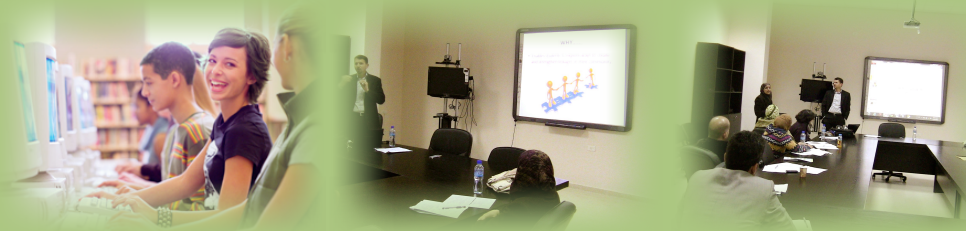


# CELT: A shared responsibility for learning and teaching

مركز التميز في التعليم  
The Center for Excellence in Teaching



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## CELT integrated program plan



The main goal of the CELT is to promote excellence and innovation in the teaching and learning methods and environments in the university, the

areas that are set as priorities for the coming two years include:

1. Building and disseminating a culture of excellence and innovation.
2. Preparing and conducting training modules around the concepts, tools, and practices of the learner-centered approach
3. Improving the teaching practices through the integrated use of ICT
4. Constructing & introducing new methods of assessing learning
5. Promoting research in teaching & learning

## Latest News:

Call for *symposium proposals* on new models in teaching and learning. The event will take place on May 15, An-Najah National University, CELT, Nablus, Palestine.

For more information on the call for symposia presentations, please click: <http://www.najah.edu/node/26396>

## Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching hosted a series of workshops during Fall 2012

Designing effective ILOs

Assessment

Problem based learning

e-minds maps

Community based learning

e-test design

Critical Thinking

Smart board applications

# Community Based Learning



## COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING (CBL): WHAT&WHY

All parties involved in the learning process including academic institutions, instructors and students agree that the conventional teaching style is no longer satisfying their needs, not to mention their community's needs. This consensus has made it a necessity to adopt Community Based Learning (CBL) as one of the innovative approaches in which community and worksites are engaged as extensions of the classroom in the student-centered approach to learning.

In the Spring of 2012, a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) class, which is usually offered by the Civil Engineering Department as an elective class, was redesigned as a CBL class with the support of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). Substantial changes were made on the course intended learning outcomes (ILOs), objectives and contents in order to satisfy the CBL requirements. The class was offered in its new format during this semester (Fall 2012/2013).

From the first day, students have had the opportunity to work on a community project, with a community partner, while fulfilling their academic requirements. The GIS-CBL class, in other words, has made a crucial transition from knowing to doing (knowledge to action). In previous semesters, the course was taught following the conventional method, i.e. neglecting community issues and focusing only on knowledge. The basic principle underlying the CBL, in general, and the GIS-CBL,

in specific, is that community needs provide the basis for the learning process without completely altering the course materials. Consequently, the students and community members as individuals, groups and organizations both benefit for the GIS-CBL output. Since the beginning of the semester, it has been obvious that teaching GIS as a CBL class promotes discussion and debate on community issues among all stakeholders (the students, the instructor and the community partner). This in turn increases students' civic engagement and enables them to explore ways to create and strengthen linkages in their community. Moreover, learning within a CBL framework enables students to acquire knowledge about their communities and their problems beyond textbooks; it encourages flexible and innovative approaches to real world problems; it provides for interaction with community experts that provide them with inter-generational understanding and cooperation; The learner will access the most up-to-date information and they will introduce their creativity and skills to the community.

As to the challenges, the GIS-CBL class has so far faced three main challenges. The first one is to achieve balance between the classroom materials and classwork, from one side, and the project work and the community activities, from the other side. Relating to the same point, the second challenge is the difficulty in the coordination with the community organizations due to the lack of

experience of these organizations in such kind of learning-service activities. The last challenge, but a very important one, is represented in the students' resistance during the class activities, especially those taking place in the community environment, which can be mainly attributed to the unfamiliarity of the students with the new learning approach.

Finally, as part of its effort to promote CBL as a teaching approach in An-Najah National University, and in collaboration and coordination with the University administration, CELT will offer a series of workshops during the coming Spring (2012/2013) in order to offer the opportunity for faculty members to exchange their experiences and ideas about the CBL course design and implementation. Participants in these workshops will learn fundamental strategies to design high quality CBL classes

## Community Services as Teaching and Learning Strategy



Community Problem Solving is the practical application module that draws on the methods of experiential and enquiry-based

education and Problem Solving and learning outside the classroom. Community Problem Solving provides students with an opportunity to practice the skills needed for solving real time problems and to participate in finding solutions to local community issues. In the Information Technology College, the Database Systems course was redesigned the assistance of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) as Community Based Learning course. As part of the course requirements, students had the opportunity to work in teams on a community project

The Learning Database Systems course through community project is an instructional approach built upon authentic learning activities that engage student interest and motivation. These activities are designed to solve a problem and generally reflect the types of learning and work people do in the everyday world outside the classroom.

Community Problem Solving is synonymous with learning in depth. A well-designed project helps students use/ apply the central concepts and principles of a discipline. Moreover, learning within a Community Problem Solving framework teaches students 21st century skills as well as content. These skills include: communication and presentation, time management, research and inquiry, self-assessment, reflection, group participation and leadership.

Performance is generally assessed on an individual basis, and takes into account the quality of the product, the depth of content-understanding demonstrated, and the contribution made to the ongoing process of project realization. Consequently, the students and community members as individuals and organizations are both beneficiaries of the Database Systems course output.

Finally, although many instructors at An-Najah National University “do projects,” not all projects lead to learning. Incorporating CBL yields projects that meet today's standards for accountability and teaches students the academic content and the 21st century skills they need for success.

## Co-teaching at An-Najah National University...Our experience.

Our experience in adopting co-teaching as an innovative teaching approach at An-Najah National

University was conducted by Language Teachers (LTs) and a Discipline Teacher (DT). The experience aimed at improving the quality of teaching in general and increasing



class interaction in particular. To this end, we focused on English 10322 offered for engineering and science students. This course touched upon project writing, critical thinking, oral communication, problem solving, leadership, and presentation skills. Accordingly, we agreed that a collaborative approach has to be established due to the relevance of the course material across the two

disciplines (language and engineering) and the need for studying some relevant case studies in Industrial Engineering (IE). A whole class of 42 students taking 10322 was taught by a DT from IE (co-teacher) and one LT. A “One Teaching-One Assisting” co-teaching model is presented in a student-centered approach.

In order to plan for implementing this initiative, the DT and the LTs held several meetings before launching this course. They agreed on many items including material, co-teaching approach, procedure and assessment criteria. Regarding the material, the case studies were carefully chosen in accordance with the course material. As a result of that, the teachers found that there was a need to omit some course material to create space for co-teaching. The course ILO's were redesigned and 20% of the course grade was given for assessing co-teaching tasks and activities. In addition, in-class activities and tasks based on the case studies were created with focus on skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and group discussion. Such skills were supposed to enhance students' oral communication abilities. To this end, the students were divided into groups and group leaders were selected. In a further step the members were assigned tasks to implement. Finally, both DT and LTs agreed on ways for assessing students' oral and written work by designing two rubrics.

What made the experience exciting is the fact that both teachers collaborated in the lecturing interchangeably. This made the interaction more exciting since interaction among both teachers made teaching more interesting, yet the teachers faced challenges at some points. The experience would be better implemented if the language teacher also collaborates with the co-teacher in teaching language related skills in engineering courses to experience co-teaching from a different perspective. The great achievement both teachers appreciated was the fact that many group leaders were honest in terms of evaluating their group members' work. Doing self-assessment (SWOT analysis) made them feel the seriousness of group work and helped them solve leadership problems. We found that the co-teaching approach improved the oral communication, presentation, writing,

interaction, teamwork discussions, leadership and problem-solving skills of the students. Accordingly, we strongly recommend colleagues at ANU and the decision-makers (administrations) in other universities in Palestine to adopt such an approach in their teaching.

## **Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching announces its new workshop menu for spring 2013**

1. Designing effective ILOs
2. Project based learning
3. Critical thinking
4. E- Mind maps
5. Teacher e-portfolio
6. Smart board applications
7. Prezi

For workshop registration, please call us at 88-2227 or send an email to [celt@najah.edu](mailto:celt@najah.edu)



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