

Distinguished Guests
Esteemed Participants

Good morning to you all. It pleases me immensely to be among you today to take part in launching this timely workshop on "Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education," and to speak to you briefly about the efforts we at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research are doing in this regard.

I say "timely" because we at the Ministry, in collaboration with the Columbia University Middle East Research Center, have just held what we believe is a milestone conference on the subject. Over the decades, and since the inception of higher education in the Kingdom as of the late 1950s, several significant conferences on higher education have been held. But it is the first time that a conference is devoted entirely to the crucial matters of teaching, learning, and assessment. We held this conference in June of this year under the title: "National Conference for the Development of Study Plans, Teaching and Learning, and Scientific Research" – by scientific research we mean the scientific research that revolves around teaching, learning, and assessment, and not scientific at large (which is a whole challenge in and of itself). The key speakers in the conference were both from Jordan and abroad, and the participants were from all Jordanian universities, public and private, and all institutions and bodies concerned with higher education in the country. We made it a point, in fact, to involve everyone, so as to capitalize on the participatory approach and on collective thinking, and reach some kind of a consensus on what we should do to develop teaching and learning at this point in time.

The conference was an extremely valuable opportunity for intense deliberations and deep discussions by all stakeholders and all concerned with teaching, learning, and assessment at the level of higher education in the country – as well as an opportunity to take a number of important, concrete steps for updating teaching and learning at our institutions of higher education. A whole working session, in which the participants were divided into groups, was devoted to brainstorming about and drafting implementable recommendations. In the concluding session, the recommendations were ratified and announced. In the aftermath of the conference, the Higher Education Council formed a general committee, whose mandate is to follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations, on which five subcommittees (which have also been formed) will be working. The work of the subcommittees covers: study plans, teaching and learning, assessment, staff members, and electronic and open learning.

I see this workshop, which Al Hussein Fund for Excellence is arranging in collaboration with Pembroke College of Oxford, as both falling nicely and neatly in line with what we are doing right now at the ministry, and complementary to our efforts to develop teaching, learning, and assessment at our higher education institutions.

As is well-known, our higher education institutions have a dual mission (if not triple or quadruple): teaching and research. While in the days to come, we wish to see our universities and colleges contributing to research (at the national, regional, and international levels) more significantly than they are doing at this point in time; we want them – at the same time – to continue to play a fundamental role in effective teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning at our universities and colleges is quite diverse, without a doubt, and much of it lives up to our – and international – standards. Jordanian universities and colleges, I have to remind, are much sought after in the region by students, because of the good teaching and learning that they offer. I wish also to remind here that the number of regional and international students on our campuses is on the increase – and this is due, in part at least, to the good tradition of teaching and learning that we have. At the same time, however, we are amply aware, that if we want to have – or continue to have – a competitive edge (if we want to become a hub in the region) we need to develop our teaching and learning much

further – as some of it, in this fast-changing world, frankly borders on the archaic and the obsolete. And I assure you that in the days ahead we will tackle this matter with a lot of determination and an unwavering will. We want to create environments and mechanisms conducive to effective and creative learning, not just any learning.

Regarding assessment, much work needs to be done also, especially as most of the assessment we have is assessment *of* learning, not assessment *for* learning.

I am glad that this workshop is paying special attention to ILOs, which are important at both the program level and the subject level. I am also immensely pleased that the organizers of the workshop have opened participation to key staff from our higher education institutions, and that they have invited highly renowned, and highly esteemed international experts from Pembroke College, Oxford, whose specific vision and proven experience – I am sure – will be a great asset to the workshop and to our efforts in enhancing teaching, learning, and assessment at our universities and colleges.

I thank the organizers of this event for their good efforts, and see Al Hussein Fund for Excellence as a key stakeholder and player in developing higher education in the country. Obviously, the government is doing a lot for higher education at this pivotal juncture, but the work of NGOs and other stakeholders in the country is crucial.

I wish you success in all of the two-day sessions, and look forward to receiving any outcomes or recommendations that you may crystallize.

Thank you!

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