

EXIT SURVEY ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF AN UNDERGRADUATE MARKETING PROGRAM

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Abstract

Exit survey plays an important role in keeping any programs in higher education institutions moving forward. The findings from the survey contain vital information to the school about what program learning outcomes or skills students think they have achieved after the program. This paper used an exit survey to assess the graduate students of Bachelor of Management (Marketing) in Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Questions asked in the exit survey pertain to whether graduates feel they have gained skills such as application of disciplinary knowledge, integration and application of specific competencies, teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking, communication, ethics and integrity, life-long learning and information management, entrepreneurship and leadership. In addition, the survey includes student ratings of academic advisor contributions, teaching and learning, curriculum as well as academic resources and facilities in AHIBS UTM. The data was collected from 70 graduates who completed their study in second semester of the year 2019/2020 using Google form. According to the results, 90% of them felt they were competent in the skills needed for their future career. In addition, more than 90% of the students were satisfied with their academic advisor as well as teaching and learning activities in AHIBS UTM while 80% of the students found that the program curriculum was useful and adequate. However, lowest scores were found in the exit survey when asked about internet speed, classroom facilities and academic support staff in AHIBS UTM. Lastly, students provided suggestions to improve the quality of the program. Overall, the results have highlighted some essential areas of improvement for AHIBS UTM.

Keywords: Exit survey, program learning outcomes, graduates' skills

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The higher education system in Malaysia has grown from strength to strength to meet the needs of industry. Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 was developed to address the 10 shifts that will continue to increase the standard of higher education system. The first shift is to generate holistic, balance and entrepreneurial graduates, so that they prepare to be relevant in the future workforce. Besides mastering relevant disciplinary knowledge and skills, future graduates are expected to possess strong morality and ethics, national identity, cultural and civilisational literacy, decent behaviours and mindsets, language proficiency and leadership skill. They are responsible to their family, society, national and global community. Furthermore, experiential and service learning will be emphasised for 21st century skills and technological models will be used for self-directed learning. Most importantly, future-proof graduates will be provided skills for entrepreneurship in order to become job creators instead of job seekers (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). This implies that programs and courses offered in education institutions are essential to allow students to get ready for their future employment.

Now, Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) focuses on the artificial intelligence and will modify the nature of future working requirements from task-oriented to human-oriented. As highlighted by Deloitte Global and the Global Business Coalition for Education (2018), there are four categories of skills are needed for IR 4.0: workforce readiness, soft skills, technical skills and entrepreneurship. The workforce readiness includes skills of literacy, numeracy, digital, time management, social norms, self-presentation, resume writing, professionalism and etiquette. Soft skills are important for interactions with others and interpersonal relationships. Examples of soft skills incorporate thinking critically and creativity, communication, teamwork, cooperation, leadership, adapt to changing environment, motivation, self-confidence, social-emotional skills, growth mindset, being culturally aware and empathy. In addition, technical skills are the specialised capabilities and knowledge needed to perform a task efficiently such as project management, financial management, computer programming, technology-based and scientific tasks. Similarly, entrepreneurial skill is imperative for IR 4.0 since the skills including courage, risk-taking, innovation, resourceful, curiosity, resilience, optimism and business execution could adapt changes better and grab future job opportunities. However, a survey on IR 4.0 skillsets for future career preparedness was conducted by INTI International University & Colleges (INTI) and International Data Corporation (IDC) in 2019, the study involved 560 respondents of parents, graduates and students. The study found out that they have low intelligibility on IR 4.0. From students' perspective, they felt that they are not ready to attune to the needs of the IR 4.0. In addition, the finding reveals that courses provided by tertiary education are insufficient to keep pace with industry changes. Clearly, it is important for Malaysian Education Ministry to ensure that graduates are

equipped with right skillsets, so that Malaysian graduates would become more marketable. Further, programs offered at higher education institutions should be constantly reviewed and evaluated by industry players to assure they meet the needs of industry.

In recent years, the job market is incredibly competitive. As reported by New Straits Times (2020), over 60% of graduates are facing tough time for employment in Malaysia after a year of graduation. One of the major reasons is the missing link between the industry expectations and graduate attributes. This means that graduates need to equip themselves with multiple skills to make themselves more marketable. Undeniably, it is important for graduates to have relevant skills and knowledge for future workforce, however, the academic programs offered by higher learning institutions should also play significant roles for the unemployment issues. In order to increase higher education's quality, Malaysia governs a statutory body, namely, Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to regulate the curriculum development and enforce program accreditation. Accordingly, a reliable quality system is required to facilitate high quality teaching and learning (T&L) within the university.

In Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), various measures have taken for the program planning, curriculum development, and curriculum and content review. The Bachelor of Management (Marketing) with Honours is one of the programs offered by AHIBS UTM. The program was known as SHG program and was started by Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development (FPPSM) in Semester 1, Session 2000/2001. The first intake of students for the program (SHG) was the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education or commonly known as SPM) holders only. The duration of study was 4 years and the total of credits for the degree conferment was 125. A total of 52 students were enrolled for this first intake of students. Since then, the program is planned, designed, developed, and reviewed by taking into consideration the needs of industry and current development. Marketing is the heart of business that determines the competitive advantage of an organization. In essence, marketing department aims to develop products and identify market for segmentation and targeting, branding, positioning, promoting, advertising and pricing the products or services.

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2018, employment growth in the five years is expected to reach 67,380 people. As reported in the Labor Force Survey Report 2018 released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, 28.6% of the total workforce is in the employment group of managers, professionals and technicians and associated professionals. In fact, the vacancy for the Bachelor of Management (Marketing) is 33,581. The relevant jobs for graduates from Bachelor of Management (Marketing) are stated in Critical Occupation List including Business Services Manager, Marketing and Sales Manager, Advertising and Public Relations Manager, Supply, Distribution and Related Managers, Advertisers and Professional Marketing and Information and Communication Technology Manager (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021).

The Mid-Term Review of the 11th Malaysia Plan highlighted the needs for local firms to move up the value through market efficiency and export capacity. This means marketing skills and capabilities are essential to expand market outreach. According to MITI Report (2018), marketing is one of the Global Business Service's (GBS). The GBS industry in Malaysia has provided 106,253 jobs in 2018, a rise of 11% from 2017 which was 95,817 jobs (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, 2021). In addition, Tourism Malaysia Integrated Promotion Plan 2018-2020 prioritize the information technology and digital marketing to promote country's tourism which is aligned with the aim to produce graduates in the field of marketing with technology inclination to meet the national's workforce needs (Tourism Malaysia, 2021).

To ensure the quality of the program and industrial relevance, the mechanism or administrative procedures include responding to feedback and inputs from stakeholders such as Curriculum Development Committee (CDC), students and alumni, monitoring all courses to achieve the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), tracking performance through reviewing and assessment of Program Educational Objectives (PEOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) as well as implementing continuous quality improvements (CQI). The Bachelor of Management (Marketing) program review process involves several stakeholders. Graduate is one of the important stakeholders for the process. Graduates will be involved indirectly in monitoring and reviewing the program. Graduates provide information on the strengths and shortcomings of the program and its operations through an exit survey.

Exit survey is widely used by many higher learning institutions to improve the services and educational experience for future students. Examples of the assessment metrics include benefits of learning, experience gained from education, academic and non-academic support system as well as resources and facilities (Mohamed, Suja and Ismail, 2012), career and advising services, communication channels across different departments, personal development, departmental courses and experience gained from research and field (Nelson and Johnson, 1997), administration, analysis, and integration strategy (Yunita, 2017), satisfaction, course and program learning outcomes, recommendations to improve final year project and future career plan (Goh et al., 2014), feedback from students to develop their personal attributes skills and ways to determine the skills (Cicek, Labossiere and Mann, 2013), and teaching and learning, skills or knowledge related to program outcomes, lecturer and academic advisor contributions, academic resources, program preparation and recommendation for program (Sani et al., 2009). Information obtained from the feedback of graduates is used as an indicator for determining the effectiveness of the program. In relation to this, an exit survey was conducted for AHIBS graduates who had completed their study in semester 2, session 2019/2020 in order to get feedback from them especially about the services, syllabus, facilities and their employability status. From the survey analysis, CQI will be designed and enforced.

■ 2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the non-probability sampling methodology which was the purposive sampling technique because the survey was administered to students of Bachelor of Management (Marketing) who had completed their industrial training in semester 2 session 2019/2020. They were eligible for graduation in the academic year of 2020/2021. A Google form was created for the data collection. The exit survey asked fresh graduate whether they were satisfied with their academic advisor, teaching and learning activities, curriculum, academic resources and facilities, as well as suggestions to enhance the program's quality. In addition, the survey used the nine program learning outcomes pertaining to graduate education and collected graduates' perception on the level of achievement upon their graduation. The survey adapted and adopted the assessment criteria from Sani et al. (2009). 5-point Likert Scale was enacted in the questionnaire

ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and finally to 5 (Strongly Agree) as well as from 1 very low to 5 excellent. After the stage of data collection, the data were screened, processed and analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

70 students answered the survey. Most of the respondents were Malay (66%) and female (76%). Importantly, 77% of the graduates chose to go for employment after graduation and 42% of them wished to involve in service industry. Graduates rated the achievement level for PLOs from 1: very low to 5: excellent for skills related to application of disciplinary knowledge, integration and application of specific competencies, teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking, communication, ethics and integrity, life-long learning and information management, entrepreneurship and leadership. As shown in Figure 1, some important findings are that the achievement level for attribute critical thinking and problem solving ranked highest in term of good to excellent, followed by life-long learning and information management. Overall, more than 90% of them felt they were competent in the skills needed for their future career.

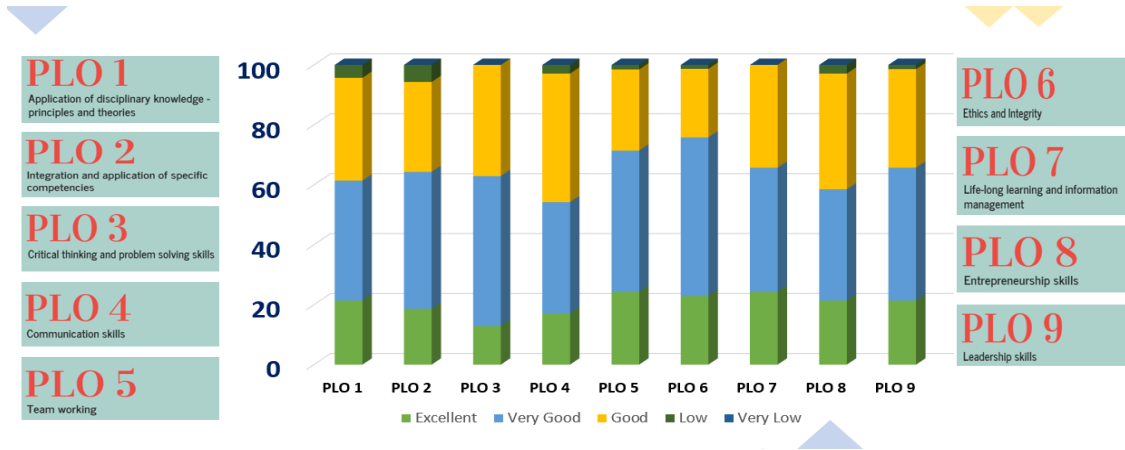


Figure 1: Program Learning Outcomes Achievement

When asked to rate their academic experience related to academic advisor, the majority said that they strongly agreed that their academic advisor is available whenever they need help. In addition, their academic advisor is knowledgeable about curricular requirement, helpful in teaching and learning and lastly they are genuinely interested in helping their students (see Figure 2).

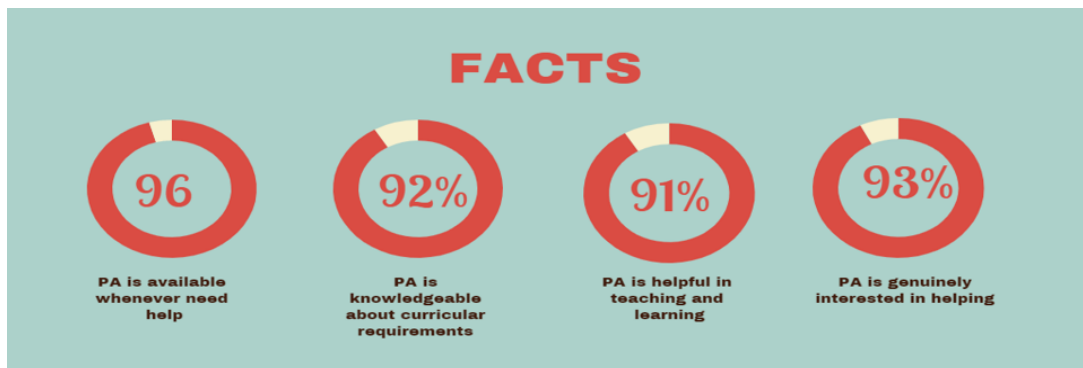


Figure 2: Academic Advisor Services

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of graduates also said that the lecture materials are up-to-date, teaching and learning methods are effective and assessment methods in courses are reasonable. Notably, 97% of them agreed that lecturers are willing to answer questions in classroom and help students to understand the course content. Additionally, more than 90% of the graduates agreed that lecturers use innovative techniques in teaching and are willing to meet students outside of class time for general advices related to the course.

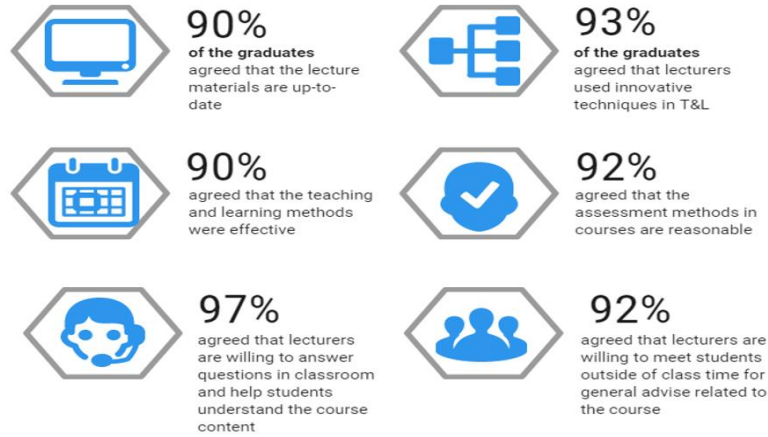


Figure 3: Teaching and Learning Activities

For curriculum design of the program, 88.5% agreed that the total numbers of credit hours offered by the program were adequate. More than 80% of them found that the core course, elective courses and university courses were sufficient and useful for them to develop relevant skills for future employment (see Figure 4).

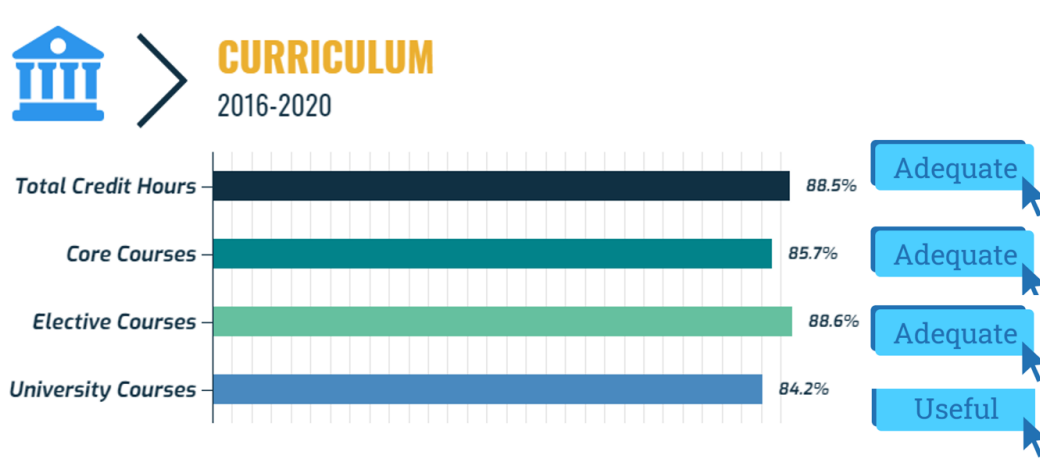


Figure 4: Program Curriculum

Figure 5 shows that 90% of the graduates agreed that student society is helpful in academic, soft skills and social development. In addition, most of them participated actively in the society. When asked about the facilities in AHIBS UTM, 81% of them agreed that the software used in the courses were adequate and 76% of them agreed that the computer facilities in Cyber lab were adequate. However, only 66% of the respondents agreed that the classroom facilities like air-conditioner and chairs were adequate. Furthermore, 66% of the respondents agreed that the academic support staff at office counter are good. Lastly, the lowest score was found in the internet speed. Only 52.9% of the respondents found that the internet speed in AHIBS building is good.

52.9%
 AGREED THAT **INTERNET SPEED**
 in AHIBS building is **GOOD**.

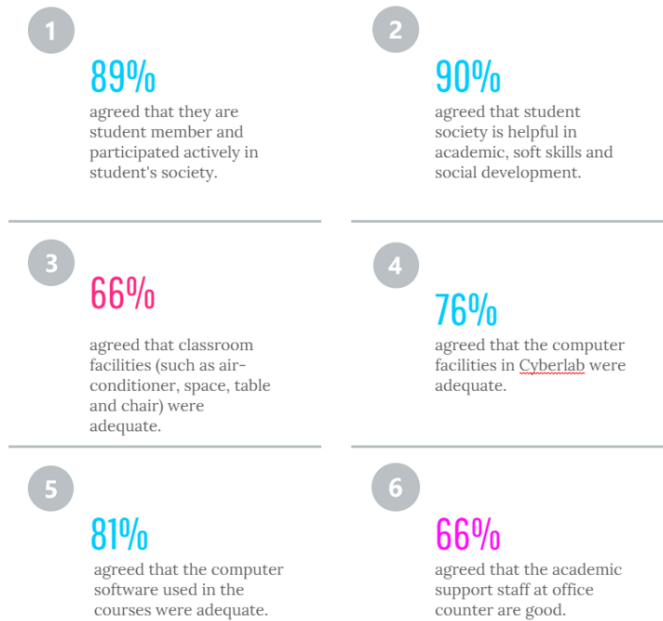


Figure 5: Academic Resources and Facilities in AHIBS UTM

The last part of the exit survey was requesting students to provide suggestions to increase the effectiveness, teaching and learning quality, and applicability to industry needs of the program. A fishbone diagram was used to track down the reasons for program improvement. The areas of improvement include procedures, lecturer and support staff, practical exposures, facilities, course and syllabus and industrial trends and requirements as shown in Figure 5.

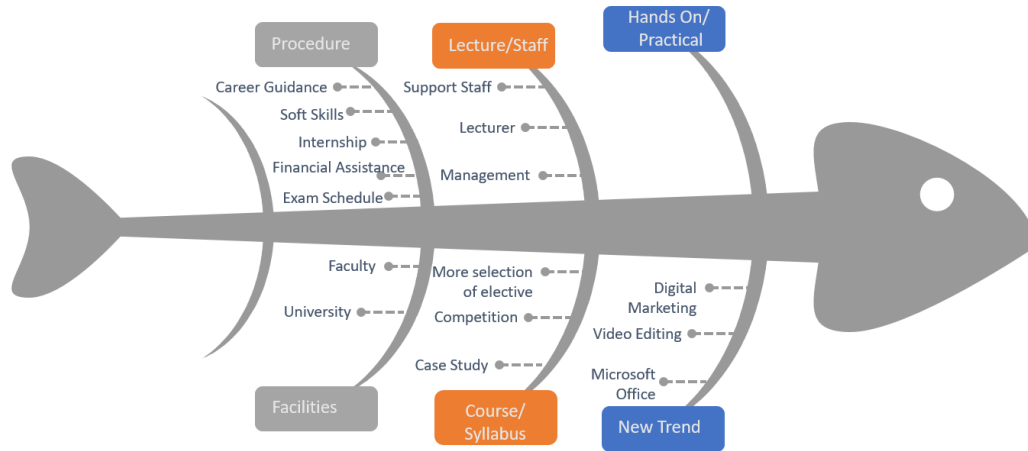


Figure 5: Fishbone Diagram for CQI

■ 4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The exit survey found that the quality of Bachelor of Management (Marketing) program offered by AHIBS UTM is appropriate and satisfactory. The exit survey is the exploratory attempt to measure graduating marketing students’ perception towards nine program learning outcome achievement and the result is useful to identify the attributes’ strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the responses suggested that respondents were satisfied with their overall graduate experience at AHIBS UTM, especially with the academic advisor, lecturers and program curriculum. Respondents valued the support and guidance provided by the faculty and the quality of the resources and facilities available. However, there are some areas of improvement based on the qualitative suggestions. The areas for improvement include revising the procedures for career guidance such as assist students in making occupational choices and developing soft skills, identifying internship opportunities for students to thrive in a fast-paced environment, providing financial assistance for students’ activities and simplifying the exam schedule. Accordingly, AHIBS has developed some action plans to improve student experiences such as providing training and support for those unemployed graduates, forming a team to monitor graduate employability, seeking financial support from industry to sponsor students’ activities, guiding students for career development using social media tools such as LinkedIn

and reviewing procedures for exam matters. Additionally, the faculty has redesigned communication channels to increase navigation and accessibilities of information.

Besides, the CQI incorporates providing hands on and practical exposures to students. For examples, AHIBS is striving hard to expose their students to industrial aspects such as cornerstone projects, industrial training, industry visit, internships, and invited speakers from reputed industries. AHIBS has partnered with different industries and established an Industry Advisory Panel (IAP) to drive the objectives, strategic direction and school's programs. The panels include Telekom Malaysia Berhad, UTM Holding, Malaysia Technology Development Corporation (MTDC), Yayasan Muhibbah, Axiata Group Bhd, Amcorp Properties Berhad, Ambank Islamic, Prince Court Hospital, Malindo Airways Sdn Bhd, Ambank Group etc. The responsibilities of IAP include the following:

- (i) to provide opportunities for students to gain practical experience and expose to related industry practices from professional bodies, local and international industry;
- (ii) to analyze challenges and critical issues that are pertaining to education or discipline due to dynamic landscape and external influences;
- (iii) to recognize outputs from the research that are conducted by business school in order to incorporate the findings into the curriculum;
- (iv) to arrange and provide job opportunities to graduates;
- (v) to review program curriculum developments to meet industrial needs and help to design new teaching and learning activities; and
- (vi) to promote research collaboration (Azman Hashim International Business School, 2021).

Thus far, AHIBS has organized many projects and competitions to develop students' industrial skills such as leadership, team working, time management, critical thinking, problem solving and communication. The competitions include AHIBS Undergraduate Pitch for Funding 2020/2021, E-Poster Competition on National Current Issues 2020, Marketing Convention 2020, COVID-19 Pandemic Visa and Thankyou Frontliner virtual runs, customer relationship management 10 series webinars, global online classrooms and cornerstone marketing project. In terms of the new trend and industrial requirement, Bachelor of Management (Marketing) program was reviewed and revised in 2018 to include Digital Marketing course and the new curriculum was first offered in semester 1 session 2018/2019. Overall, CQI is important and crucial in any program because the process will monitor the program quality in order to ensure that the program is maintained at specified standards or levels. As a conclusion, exit survey analysis is imperative to CQI process.

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