



## Backpack; a Tool for the Self-Assessment of International Communication Skills of Faculty Members

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The rapid pace of change in the world has prompted organizations to adapt themselves as quickly as possible to the various social, technological, economic, environmental and political changes in the environment. The need for such a keen adaptation in organizations such as universities of medical sciences, due to their special nature and role, becomes highly important. One of the most important examples of such adaptations in universities is to update faculty members' capabilities and competencies to showcase their best performance in the university.

In general, the skills and competencies required for a medical university faculty member can be divided into two groups of specialized and general skills and competencies. In many cases, the emphasis of the university and the educational system is on the strengthening of the more specialized skills. The purpose of strengthening specialized skills is to update and complete the skills related to the specialized field.

General skills are areas that are not limited to specific occupations and apply to a wide range of works like the skill of team working, communication, cultural intelligence and etc. One of the essential general qualifications required for faculty members is the strengthening of international skills, which has been also mentioned in the Packages for Reform and Innovation of Medical Education (1).

Indeed, one of the requirements of our medical universities is to strengthen the international communication skills of faculty members and students. To strengthen this skill, it seems necessary to use appropriate meth-

ods and mechanisms. In this regard, one of the most important methods is to provide an opportunity for faculty members to self-assess the mentioned skills. Self-assessment involves a wide range of mechanisms and techniques through which individuals can measure the learning processes with specific criteria (2).

Considering the importance of self-assessment of international communication skills, this capability has been designed and implemented in the backpack system. To prepare this system, the following phases were followed:

A) Reviewing various international communication skills, in both Persian and English

B) Interviewing eight experts in related fields including education (medical education, general education and public education), English language, international relations, and communication skills in order to strengthen the results of the review and customize them according to the country's conditions.

C) Asking for ideas of some faculty members residing abroad through e-mail, to complete the model.

D) Classifying the required skills in the form of the four main categories of verbal, nonverbal, individual and cultural recognition skills.

E) Loading the selected content for each skill and its subset on the portal, including related explanations, educational videos, training courses and appropriate books for each skill.

And) designing self-assessment tests for each skill by conducting a review study and interviewing experts in

each field

The most important capabilities of the international communication skills backpack were as follows:

- The ability to self-assess the capabilities of establishing international communications
- Identification of the strengths and areas of improving international communications
- Provision of educational content to enhance international communication skills
- Creation of a platform for content sharing to strengthen international communications capabilities

The backpack system is designed to identify and strengthen the international skills of faculty members, with emphasis on two areas of self-assessment and training to respond to this need. In this system, training and strengthening of international skills are presented in the four categories of individual skills, verbal skills, non-verbal skills and culture recognition. In the individual skills area, personal growth has been considered as one of the essential requirements for any effective communication, including international communication. The components of personal growth include self-confidence, speech, stress control, and eloquence.

In the verbal area, English language skills are increasingly being emphasized as an international language and, given the importance of some other languages in the world, it seems that in the future, teaching of some other languages is essential. In the non-verbal area, the importance of body language has been addressed. Ultimately, the inseparable part of successful international communica-

tion, in face-to-face or impersonal terms, is the recognition of cultural and behavioral differences that are mentioned in the cultural recognition section.

The backpack has provided a set of necessary skills as minimums for international communications. The backpack objective is to strengthen such skills in faculty members to face the least challenges in their academic communications and to have the best performance as a representative of the academic field of the country at the international level.

### Supplementary Material

Supplementary material(s) is available [here](#) [To read supplementary materials, please refer to the journal website and open PDF/HTML].

### Footnotes

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