

Survey on Necessity of Document Guideline for Fellow Assistant in Enhancing Quality of Services

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ABSTRACT

Residential fellow assistants are responsible for maintaining the safety and welfare of students who reside in a college. Besides, fellow assistants are also in charge of monitoring students' activities and developing students' soft skills and leadership. Thus, this study aims to identify the understanding of the roles among fellow assistants and to analyze the relationship between established guidelines with fellow assistants' comprehension about their responsibilities. The data were collected by distributing questionnaires to the *Institut Pembangunan Fellow (IPF)* of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Johor Bahru (UTM JB) who were willing to participate. The finding reveals that majority of the respondents have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, the percentage of respondents who did not fully understand their responsibilities are quite alarming. Thus, suggestions from the respondents in the open-ended questions can be used in the future to further enhance the understanding of the task which certainly will increase the quality of services as a fellow assistant. This study concluded that the requirement of document guidelines for the IPF is not needed.

Keywords: Guidelines, Responsibilities, Fellowship, Residential College

1. INTRODUCTION

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) is one of the best public higher education institutions in Malaysia. UTM has provided facilities in terms of materials and infrastructure to assist university students in carrying out academic and co-curricular activities (Buku Peraturan Aktiviti Pelajar, 2007) [1]. UTM is also a public institution providing the latest facilities and services for student use to enhance academic, spiritual and personal development in student learning activities. A variety of programs for students have been planned and implemented at all levels at colleges, faculties and universities with the aim of producing excellent students in academic, enhancing student quality and competitiveness among students and to develop a reputation for UTM in international level.

In UTM, there are 10 residential colleges for students. One of the main functions of a residential college at the Institute

of Higher Learning is to provide accommodation for the students is to organize activities that are beneficial to the community and society. However, the activities and methods implemented vary by institution, depending on the capabilities and funds of the organization. Moreover, the institutional policies involved in the implementation of these students' activities are not the same for each residential college. Therefore, it is difficult to determine which institutions have successfully implemented students' activities effectively. Each residential college in a ceremony at the UTM fellows assigned by the management of UTM. The roles of fellows are very important to monitor for student activities in residential colleges. According to a study conducted by Zainal (1998) [2] in Lokman (2017) [3], the quality of life in residential colleges is one of the five factors contributing to student development such as accommodation, facilities, management, activities and involvement. There is no official and documentation for guidelines for duties of fellow in UTM.

This study is designed to identify the understanding of roles among fellow assistants in UTM JB in maintaining the

service quality and to analyze the relationship between established guidelines with fellow assistants' comprehension about their responsibilities. The findings of this study will redound to the benefits of the new appointed fellow assistants for having a better understanding of their roles.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost all academic institutions in Malaysia has its own residential colleges which refer to an institution that houses students on-campus. These residential colleges offer low-cost, safe and convenient living quarters for the students in close proximity to the faculties. According to Ali and Said (2008) [4], the culture of living in residential college is one of the attempts to produce independent, virtuous and knowledgeable scholars outside of the classroom.

A typical organization structure of residential college consists of a senior lecturer who serves as principle, a number of academician/non-academician who serves as fellow, a number of postgraduate students who serve as an assistant fellow and also a group of student representative society who resides in the same college (Abdullah and Bahari, 2002) [5]. This organization is responsible for the safety and welfare of the students within the residential college.

The posts in the organization mentioned in the previous paragraph are selected based on an interview to ensure that they are aware and fully understand the role and responsibilities of being part of the organization. A study conducted by Kamaruddin (1998) [6] found that principles and fellows play an important role in the students' development who live in the college. This is because they spent most of the time (120 hours per week) with the students. Thus, the organization should provide the opportunity in terms of academic and soft skills activities accordingly.

Like other institutions, UTM has its own organization for all fellows and fellow assistants which is known as *Institut Pembangunan Fellow* (IPF). IPF was formed with the intentions to increase knowledge and skills of each member in managing and developing students socially and academically, to strengthen relationships between members, to encourage social activities as well as to take care of welfare among members. Another body that is responsible for the welfare of students in UTM is the Office of Student Affairs (HEP) with the mission to provide conducive and excellent service as well as fostering students' personalities holistically. IPF and HEP are working together in providing a convenient environment to the students within campus. Besides, fellows and fellow assistants have the responsibility to perform tasks assigned by the HEP from time to time.

A study by Gandaseca et al. (2018) [7] who investigated the roles and the challenges faced by fellows in maintaining the effectiveness of activities and welfare of the students in Universiti Putra Malaysia found that 38.3% of the students voted that the fellows were mostly needed for the students' welfare in emergency situations and accidents while only

26.7% of the students felt that the fellows were needed to evaluate activities planned by the students.

Interestingly, in a study by Mohammad Suhaimi (1994) [8] revealed that the development of the students' potential has not become a reality due to a failure to believe that the residential college as an important part of the educational process. This statement was supported by Zainal Ariffin (1998) [9], which stated that the quality of living in residential colleges was one of the five factors in contributing to the development of students such as accommodation, facilities, management, activities and involvement.

Unfortunately, residential college organizations were said to carry out more on administration activities compared to students' development activities. According to Mohd Tahir and Mohd Nawati (2001) [10], the study showed that the role of the management and fellowship of the residential college was still on average and needs to be improved.

3. METHOD/MATERIAL

This study was designed as non-experimental study with quantitative research method. There was a total of 74 fellow assistants in ten residential colleges. A survey through an online questionnaire was distributed through 10 targeted residential colleges in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia which were; Kolej Perdana (KP), Kolej Rahman Putra (KRP), Kolej Tun Dr. Ismail (KTDI), Kolej Tun Fatimah (KTF), Kolej Tun Razak (KTR), Kolej Tun Husein Onn (KTHO), Kolej Tunku Canselor (KTC), Kolej Sembilan dan Sepuluh (K9 & K10), Kolej Datin Sri Endon (KDSE) and Kolej Dato' Onn Jaafar (KDOJ). The data was collected through an online questionnaire and distributed using Google Forms to determine the relevance of document guideline, mentioning the roles of residential college fellowship in enhancing quality services in UTM.

The survey contained of 2 sections: Section 1 and Section 2. Demographic background such as age, gender, years of experience and residential background had been detailed in Section 1. In Section 2, four questions revolving the role of IPF had been included in this questionnaire. This section offered two options of answer which were agree and disagree for easier and quicker administration of questionnaire as the scales already presented the opinion for each item (Revilla et al., 2014) [11]. All responses obtained were then analyzed and explained in descriptive analysis of percentage.

4. RESULTS & FINDINGS

The section below is divided into 2 sections: Section 1 and Section 2. In Section 1, the questions revolving the demographic background of the respondents such as gender, age, years of experience and residential college. In Section 2, there were four questions regarding the role of IPF. Apart from 74 questionnaires that had been distributed, there were 53 responses received.

4.1 Section 1 (Demographic Background)

Figure 1 shows that female respondents were majoring in the percentage of 53% which was 28 females while men had 47% with 25 people. This shows that the majority of the fellow assistant in UTM JB are female. Other than that, the questionnaire also showed that all of the respondents (100%) were in the range of age between 21-30 years old. This is because the IPF consists of post-graduate students who are doing either a master's degree or Doctor of Philosophy. Besides that, the response also has shown that all fellow assistants had less than one year of experience since the contract of being fellow assistants is only for one year. However, the appointments as fellow assistants can be extended with the agreement of the college principal.

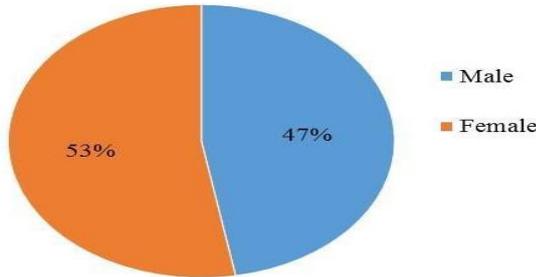


Figure 1 The percentage of fellow assistant based on gender in IPF UTM JB

The response that had been received in Figure 2 shows based on the college residency of the fellow assistants throughout the UTM JB. The greater percentage of the fellow assistants that respond to the survey were from KTDI with 17%, followed by KTC with 15% continued with KTHO and KTR which were 13% respectively. KDOJ had the least percentage with 4%. KRP and KTF shared the K9 & K10 was the only college with 8% respondents.

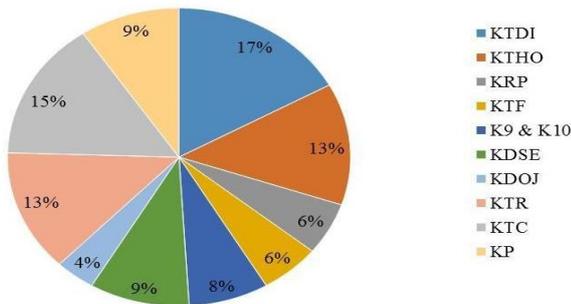
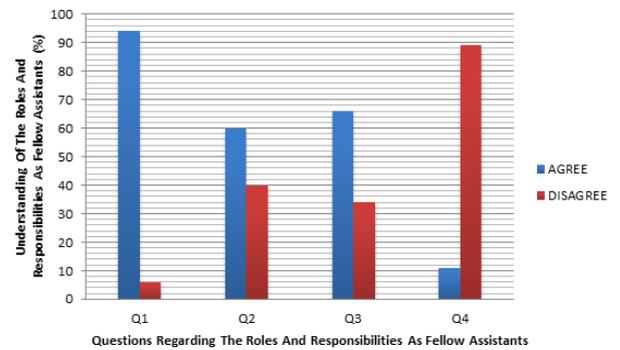


Figure 2 Fellow assistant's responses based on college residence

Figure 3 shows the list of questions involved in Section 2 based on the questionnaire. Survey responses given to answer all four questions in Section 2 were "Agree" and "Disagree". The first question was about the role of fellow assistants in maintaining the welfare and safety of the student. The response gathered shows that 94% of the respondents agreed with this statement while another 6% disagreed. This showed that almost all of the respondent's alert with their responsibilities as a fellow assistant.

As for the second question, it was about the role of fellow assistants in solving the personal problem faced by the students. This had been agreed by 60% from the respondent and another 40% had disagreed with this statement. In the guidelines provided by the IPF, fellow assistants have the right to solve students' personal problem if needed. The number of respondents who disagreed with this statement is quite worrying which showed that they are not aware of this. Next question is regarding the responsibility of fellow assistants in ensuring the students' academic performance. About 66% agreed with this statement while another 34% disagreed with it. Even though the percentage of disagreeing was not significant, yet this role should be known to all fellow assistants as it was written in the guidelines.

The last question in Section 2 was the statement that claiming the responsibilities of fellow assistants is burdensome. There were 89% of the respondents had disagreed with the statement and only 11% of the respondents agreed with this statement.



- Q1 – Fellow assistants play important roles in maintaining the welfare and safety of the students in college.
- Q2 – Fellow assistants play important roles in solving personal problems of students.
- Q3 – Fellow assistants are responsible for leading students toward academic excellence.
- Q4 – The workload of fellow assistants assigned to them is burdensome.

Figure 3 Distribution of respondents regarding the understanding of their roles and responsibilities as fellow assistants

Majority of fellow assistants (72%) show that they fully understand their responsibilities. The respondents mostly agree with the statements given in the survey. According to the established guidelines from Office and Students Affairs UTM JB, fellow assistants are responsible to help college principal in the management of the hostel. The list of responsibility for fellow assistants are as follows:

- i. Help to intensify academic activities and other activity that encourages the residents to contribute to the local communities.
- ii. To help lead the residents toward the Vision, Mission and Objective of the University.
- iii. Help all resident activities
- iv. Help in the welfare of the residents and also their personal problems as well as academic problems.

- v. Help and provide guidance to the Student College Committee.
- vi. Other task assigned by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (HEP & Alumni) and College Principal from time to time.

Besides, the list of fellow assistants' responsibilities from Office and Students Affairs UTM websites, all fellow assistants also received the list attached with a letter of appointment as a fellow assistant.

There were few suggestions have been made to strengthen the understanding of responsibility among the fellow assistants in IPF. However, some of the suggestions were already attached in the letter of appointment. In the attachments, there were lists of reference materials for fellow assistants in order to help them carry out their tasks with ease. Nevertheless, fellow assistants need to find and understand it on their own.

- i. AUKU
- ii. Peraturan Kolej
- iii. Disiplin / Tatatertib Kolej
- iv. Peraturan Kewangan
- v. Perintah Am Kerajaan
- vi. Pekeliling-Pekeliling Kerajaan Yang Berkaitan

In addition, there are also few fellow assistants suggested that college need to organize some workshops or courses to help them strengthen their ability to perform their responsibilities successfully. Nonetheless, this will be based on the objectives and the college budget. On the other hand, monthly meeting between college principal, fellows and fellow assistants need to be done to keep up with students' problems, academic and currents activities in college.

5. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, our study revealed that there is no necessity of new document guidelines for the fellow assistants to carry out their roles in UTM JB. Moreover, there were no differences between established guidelines with the present fellow assistant's comprehension. However, additional measure should be taken, such as giving a short course or workshop and provide a more specific term of reference (TOR) for the fellow assistants. For further study, researchers can approach all fellow assistants one by one to make sure all of them give cooperation to answer the survey and give four to seven number of answer's alternatives in order to increase the validity of the study (Lozano et al., 2008). Besides that, more responses should be constructed in this study so that varieties of response can be received for better understanding.

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