



**Oman Academic
Accreditation Authority**

**Report of an Audit of
Nizwa College of Technology**

March 2012

Audit Report Number 26

©2012 Oman Academic Accreditation Authority

P.O. Box 1255
P.C. 133
Al-Khuwair
Sultanate of Oman
Ph +968 2461 4361/2
Fax +968 2461 4364
<http://www.oaaa.gov.om>

CONTENTS

Overview of the Quality Audit Process	3
How to Read This Report.....	4
Conclusions	5
Executive Summary of Findings.....	5
Summary of Commendations.....	6
Summary of Affirmations	7
Summary of Recommendations	7
1 Governance and Management	10
1.1 Mission, Vision and Values	10
1.2 Governance	11
1.3 Management	11
1.4 Institutional Affiliations for Programs and Quality Assurance	12
1.5 Strategic Plan	13
1.6 Operational Planning	13
1.7 Financial Management.....	14
1.8 Risk Management	14
1.9 Policy Management	15
1.10 Entity and Activity Review Systems	15
1.11 Student Grievance Process.....	16
1.12 Health and Safety.....	16
1.13 Oversight of Associated Entities (e.g. owned companies).....	17
2 Student Learning by Coursework Programmes	18
2.1 Graduate Attributes and Student Learning Objectives	18
2.2 Curriculum	18
2.3 Student Entry Standards.....	19
2.4 Teaching Quality.....	20
2.5 Plagiarism	21
2.6 Student Placements	21
2.7 Assessment Methods, Standards and Moderation.....	22
2.8 Academic Security and Invigilation.....	22
2.9 Student Retention and Progression	22
2.10 Graduate Destinations and Employability	23
3 Student Learning by Research Programmes.....	24
4 Staff Research and Consultancy	25
5 Industry and Community Engagement.....	26
5.1 Industry and Community Engagement Planning and Management.....	26
5.2 Relationships with Industry and Employers	26
5.3 Relationships with Professions	27
5.4 Relationships with Other Education Providers	27
5.5 Relationships with Alumni	28
5.6 Relationships with the Community at Large	28
6 Academic Support Services.....	29

6.1	Academic Support Services Planning and Management	29
6.2	Registry (Enrolment and Student Records)	29
6.3	Library	29
6.4	Information and Learning Technology Services	30
6.5	Academic Advising	30
6.6	Student Learning Support	30
6.7	Teaching Resources	31
7	Students and Student Support Services.....	32
7.1	Students and Student Support Services Planning and Management.....	32
7.2	Student Profile	32
7.3	Student Satisfaction and Climate.....	33
7.4	Student Behavior	33
7.5	Career and Employment Services.....	34
7.6	Student Finances.....	34
7.7	Accommodation, Catering and Transport.....	34
7.8	Medical and Counseling Facilities	34
7.9	International Student Services	35
7.10	Social and Recreational Services and Facilities	35
8	Staff and Staff Support Services.....	36
8.1	Human Resources Planning & Management	36
8.2	Staff Profile	36
8.3	Recruitment and Selection.....	37
8.4	Induction.....	37
8.5	Professional Development	38
8.6	Performance Planning and Review.....	39
8.7	Promotion and Other Incentives.....	39
8.8	Severance.....	39
8.9	Staff Organisational Climate and Retention	40
8.10	Omanisation.....	40
9	General Support Services and Facilities	42
9.1	General Support Services and Facilities Planning and Management	42
9.2	Public Relations and Marketing	42
9.3	Communication Services	42
9.4	Facilities Management.....	43
Appendix A.	Audit Panel.....	44
Appendix B.	Abbreviations, Acronyms and Terms.....	45

OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY AUDIT PROCESS

This Quality Audit Report (the 'Report') documents the findings of a Quality Audit by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA – formerly the Oman Accreditation Council) of Nizwa College of Technology (NCT). It comments on NCT's Mission and Vision, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its systems for achieving that Mission and Vision. Quality Audit is the first stage in Oman's institutional accreditation process. It is designed to provide a level of assurance to the public about the quality of NCT's activities, and constructive feedback to NCT to assist with its ongoing improvement efforts.

The Quality Audit commenced with NCT undertaking a self study of its Mission, Vision and systems. The results were summarized in its Portfolio. This document was submitted to the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) by the due date of 15 January 2011.

The OAAA appointed an external Audit Panel (the 'Panel'), comprising suitably qualified and experienced local and international reviewers, to conduct the quality audit. For membership of the Panel see Appendix A. The Panel met (international members by telephone) on 1 March 2011 to consider NCT's Portfolio. Following this, the Panel Chairperson's representative and the Executive Officer undertook a planning visit on behalf of the Panel to NCT on 1 April 2011 to clarify certain matters, request additional information and make arrangements for the Panel's audit visit.

Prior to the audit visit, the Panel invited submissions from the public about the quality of NCT's activities. No submissions were received.

The audit visit took place over 15-18 May 2011. During this time, the Panel spoke with around 90 people, including representatives of the governing authorities, staff, students and external stakeholders. It also visited a selection of venues and reviewed a range of additional materials.

No information provided after 18 May 2011 (being the last day of the audit visit) was taken into consideration for the purposes of this audit.

The Report contains a summary of the Panel's findings, together with formal commendations where good practices have been confirmed, affirmations where NCT's ongoing quality improvement efforts merit support, and recommendations where there are significant opportunities for improvement not yet being adequately addressed. The Report provides a balanced set of observations, but does not comment on every system in place at NCT.

The Panel's audit activities and preparation of this Report were governed by regulations set by the OAAA Board. This Report was approved for release by the OAAA Board on 26 March 2012.

The OAAA was established by Royal Decree No. 54/2010 to replace the Oman Accreditation Council. Its responsibilities include conducting quality audits of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate of Oman. For further information, visit the OAAA website (<http://www.oaaa.gov.om>). Full details of the quality audit process are available in OAAA's *HEI Quality Audit Manual* (available from http://www.oaaa.gov.om/QAM_2008_FINAL2.pdf).

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Each OAAA Audit Report is written primarily for the institution being audited. The Report is specifically designed to provide feedback to help that institution better understand its own strengths and opportunities for improvement. The feedback is structured according to nine broad areas of activity and presented as formal Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations, or as informal suggestions, each accompanied with explanatory paragraphs. It is expected that the institution will act upon this feedback as part of its continuous efforts to provide the best possible education to students.

The Report is made public because it also may be of interest to students and potential students, their families, employers, Government, other higher education institutions in Oman and abroad, and other audiences. Students, in particular, may find this Report interesting because it provides some independent comment on the learning environment at this institution (particularly Chapters 2, 6 and 7). However, prospective students should still undertake their own investigations when deciding which higher education institution will best serve their particular learning needs.

Quality Audit is the first stage in Oman's two-stage process for institutional accreditation. Its focus is formative (developmental) rather than summative. In other words, although the audit addresses nine areas of activity which are common to all institutions, it does not measure the institution against externally set standards of performance in those nine areas. Instead, it considers how well the institution is attending to those areas in accordance with its own Mission and Vision and in the context of relevant legal regulations. Therefore, Quality Audit recognises that each institution has a unique purpose and profile; it does not directly compare one institution with all the other institutions in Oman.

For these reasons, a Quality Audit does not result in a pass or fail; nor does it provide any sort of grade or score. It should also be noted that the precise number of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations that an institution receives in its Audit Report is not as important as the substance of those conclusions. For example, some Recommendations may focus on critical issues such as assessment of student learning, whereas others may focus on issues such as the maintenance of teaching equipment in classrooms which, while important, is clearly less critical. Therefore, it is neither significant nor appropriate to compare the Audit Reports of different HEIs solely on the numbers of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations.

The second stage in the institutional accreditation process is Standards Assessment. This stage, which will take place about four years after the Quality Audit, does provide a summative assessment against external standards in the same nine areas of activity. It should be noted that Oman also operates a system of accreditation/recognition for academic programs, separately from the institutional accreditation process. For more information on Oman's System of Quality Assurance in Higher Education please visit www.oaaa.gov.om.

This Report contains a number of references to source evidence considered by the Audit Panel. These references are for the HEI's benefit in further addressing the issues raised. In most cases this evidence is not in the public domain.

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the Report, and are not prioritised. It should be noted that other favourable comments and suggestions for improvement are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Executive Summary of Findings

Nizwa College of Technology (NCT) was established in 1993 as Nizwa Technical and Industrial College, and was upgraded to a College of Technology in 2001. It is one of seven Colleges of Technology (CoTs) governed and financed centrally through the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). All seven CoTs in the Sultanate of Oman operate under the MoM, through the Undersecretary for Vocational Training and the Director General for Technological Education (DGTE). A Board of Trustees (BoT), chaired by the Minister of Manpower, oversees and advises on the strategic direction of all seven CoTs, and a Technical Committee, also referred to as the Deans' Committee and chaired by the Undersecretary for Vocational Education (who is Deputy Chair of the BoT), is responsible for strategy implementation across all CoTs with the DGTE being executively responsible for implementation of BoT decisions in each college.

In terms of the Portfolio, the Panel found the NCT submission to the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) to be a well written and coherent document resulting from a comprehensive self-study of NCT's operations. A college-wide survey was conducted in 2009 and this provided the basis for assessing the status of NCT in all aspects of its operations, and the results of this survey provided much of the Portfolio content.

In undertaking the self-study and preparing the Portfolio, the College made use of the ADRI (see Appendix B) approach as set out in the OAAA's *Quality Audit Manual*. This culminated in a self-review that offered NCT a thorough and frank look at itself, and which resulted in the identification of numerous areas for improvement. However, the Panel found that much of what was written in the *Improvement* sections of the Portfolio appears to be aspirational; some sections lacked data and clarification to support plans for improvement. In almost all sections in the Portfolio, a number of improvements have been indicated but there were no further comments as to what action has been taken. To address this omission, and in response to the Panel's request, a Master Action Plan was produced in which each planned improvement was identified together with a timeline and progress to date. However, the Panel expressed concern that the successful implementation of this Master Action Plan, along with the achievement of the College's strategic objectives, will depend on the allocation of adequate resources.

At College level, management of NCT is by a College Council (CC), chaired by the Dean, who has overall executive responsibility and authority for all College matters. There are a number of College Committees, and Assistant Deans who have delegated executive authority and responsibility. However, evidence indicates the need to clarify and amend the College's organizational structure to clearly delineate authority, responsibility and accountability at central and College levels.

While the Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, values and graduate attributes are common for the seven CoTs, NCT has developed its own sub-goals, strategies and KPIs. NCT aspires to be the "College of Choice" for Omani school-leavers, and there are a number of policies and procedures in place to support this goal. Admission to the College is open to all Omani students after successfully completing 12 years of general education, and who meet the eligibility criteria set by the MoM through the Higher Education Admissions Center (HEAC). According to the College's Portfolio, in 2010 there were 271 full-time staff members of whom 217 were in the academic areas (p.78). In 2009-2010 there were 2325 students

and in 2010-2011 this number had increased to over 3000. The Panel was informed that the number of students would be increased by a further 1500 in 2011-2012. The College is urged to ensure that its facilities and infrastructure are able to support this considerable growth in student numbers.

NCT offers a four-level General Foundation Program (GFP) and Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma programs in Engineering, IT and Business Studies. Admission is open to all Omani students who have completed General Education and who meet the eligibility criteria set by the MoM through HEAC. Over 30% of NCT’s students are enrolled in the GFP. Previously, students were required to pass an internal examination equivalent to TOEFL at the end of the GFP; this has now been amended so that students take the TOEFL examination at the completion of their Diploma, and before they enter the Higher Diploma program. Before they finally graduate, students are required to complete a practical on-the-job-training (OJT) program. NCT has three academic departments: Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies and each offers a range of specializations in their respective fields. However, the College is encouraged to investigate the reasons for high numbers of student repeaters in these programs.

Applied research and scientific publication appear in the College’s Vision and Bylaws, and the College acknowledges the value of carrying out and publishing scientific and applied research. However, currently there is no alignment between NCT’s strategic planning and its Vision regarding research and scholarly activities. It is recommended that the College review its vision in relation to research to reflect an appropriate role of research in the context of College position within the higher education sector.

The centralized Quality Assurance Department (QAD) of the MoM provides support and guidance to NCT with the development of its Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) and the creation of NCT’s Quality Assurance Follow-up Unit (QAFU). The Panel noted NCT’s efforts to build strong relationships with its stakeholders, including employers (who accept NCT students for OJT), its alumni, professional bodies, other higher education institutions and the community in general. The Panel was impressed by NCT’s effective College-wide implementation of academic advising and monitoring of student progression, as well as the new laboratories (in the engineering area) and teaching facilities, which utilize advanced teaching support technologies. The Panel noted, however, that an upgrade of infrastructure in other areas is needed, including improvement to library services and student learning support.

To support its vision of becoming the “College of Choice” in Oman, NCT has adopted policies and procedures specifically focused on achieving this goal, for example the review of teaching and soliciting student feedback. However, there was an absence of independent evidence regarding high quality teaching and learning (as noted in the Mission). The Panel found that the College needed to expand its professional development program to cover all staff development needs in order to link with NCT’s strategic goals.

Summary of Commendations

A formal Commendation recognizes an instance of particularly good practice.

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology for its successful and positive interaction with local industry and employers through On-the-Job Training student placements. 27
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology on the effective College-wide implementation of academic advising and monitoring of student progression..... 30
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology on the provision of new engineering laboratories and teaching facilities to support an improved student learning environment. 31

Summary of Affirmations

A formal Affirmation recognizes an instance in which NCT has accurately identified a significant opportunity for improvement and has demonstrated appropriate commitment to addressing the matter.

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology's efforts to increase awareness and ability in risk mitigation through training in order to ensure consistency in dealing with risks in all units of the College..... 14
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the efforts of Nizwa College of Technology in integrating the generic graduate attributes in curricula, teaching delivery and continuous assessment. 18
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology's efforts with regard to ongoing staff professional development, use of e-learning strategies and increasing depth of usage of the capabilities within the learning management system. 20
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Nizwa College of Technology needs to ensure systematic student involvement in the teaching and learning process and supports the College's initiatives in this area such as the implementation of Student Participation Assessment as a tool in the overall assessment of learning..... 20
5. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Nizwa College of Technology that it needs to continue exploring opportunities for external moderation of exams and supports its efforts to improve its assessment system through collaborative arrangements with other Colleges of Technology..... 22
6. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology's efforts to strengthen its association with its alumni such as the establishment of the Graduate Follow-up Department. 28
7. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Nizwa College of Technology needs to enhance its social and recreational services for students and supports the College in the implementation of its improvement plans..... 35
8. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Nizwa College of Technology that there is a need to improve its staff morale and supports its efforts to do so for example through introducing further social activities and creating a staff club as a staff amenity..... 38

Summary of Recommendations

A Recommendation draws attention to a significant opportunity for improvement that NCT has either not yet accurately identified or to which it is not yet adequately attending.

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology develop a College-based strategy to monitor the implementation of all aspects of its Mission and Vision and ensure that values are embedded in all aspects of College operations..... 11
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, review its organizational structure, including its internal committees, to clearly delineate authority, responsibility and accountability at Ministry and College levels in order to improve effectiveness in terms of communication, transparency and timely response to issues raised. 12
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, develop and implement a

	systematic approach to succession planning in order to minimize disruption when senior management is changed.....	12
4.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology improve its operational planning process, through greater staff involvement and ownership, and set clear time schedules with staff for the completion of activities and projects.	13
5.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology pursue its stated objectives in seeking greater flexibility in budgetary matters, and in strengthening the link between its strategic and operational plans.....	14
6.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that as Nizwa College of Technology develops its risk management system, it includes consideration of potential external risk factors both within its network and in the sector as a whole.	15
7.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology review its entity and activity review systems to integrate the follow up actions resulting from reviews, as well as the impact of these actions, into the College's quality improvement cycle.	16
8.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology conduct a detailed analysis of student grievances and examination appeals submitted in order to identify factors leading to student dissatisfaction and use this data to improve the current processes.	16
9.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology conduct a full health and safety audit, according to accepted criteria and standards, of all physical resources and procedures to assist in the formulation of policies, procedures, and action plans.....	17
10.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, develop and implement formal mechanisms to involve external stakeholders on an ongoing basis in the curriculum development and review process.....	19
11.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology investigate the reasons for the high numbers of student repeaters in the Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma programs and, as appropriate, develop and implement strategies to reduce the number of repeaters.....	23
12.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology review its Vision in relation to research to reflect an appropriate role of research and scholarly activity within the context of the College position within the overall higher education sector.....	25
13.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement an operational plan for its industry and community engagement activities, informed by feedback from external stakeholders, with clear performance targets in line with the College's strategic objectives.	26
14.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology implement plans for the alignment of its library services and resources to its Strategic Plan in consideration of the expected increase in enrolments.....	30
15.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology adopt an overall human resource plan with measurable targets in order to support the College in meeting its strategic objectives.....	36

16. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology take a more proactive role in the recruitment process and evaluate its effectiveness so that the staffing profile is aligned with the College's strategic goals and operational plans..... 37
17. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology further expand its professional development program to cover all staff development needs so that it is satisfactorily linked to the College's strategic goals..... 38
18. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement a systematic approach to monitoring and reviewing staff severance and dismissals including appeals and exit records..... 40
19. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement staff grievance processes which are clearly communicated to all staff..... 40

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Nizwa College of Technology (NCT) was established in 1993 as Nizwa Technical and Industrial College, and was upgraded to a College of Technology in 2001. It is one of seven Colleges of Technology (CoTs) governed and financed centrally through the Ministry of Manpower (MoM).

At College level, management of NCT is by a College Council (CC), chaired by the Dean, who has overall executive responsibility and authority for all College matters. A number of College Committees and Assistant Deans have delegated executive authority and responsibility. Certain strategies and policies are applied across all seven CoTs, and within those, specific strategies, policies, operational plans and their implementation are undertaken at an individual college level. This layered process impacts on human and physical resourcing, finance, and certain functional areas. In its consideration of the Portfolio, and all supporting evidence the Panel has sought to take full cognizance of this issue in identifying where responsibilities and potential actions reside.

This Chapter considers the Panel's views on the key areas of governance and management, including strategic and operational planning; financial, policy and risk management; entity and activity review systems and health and safety.

1.1 Mission, Vision and Values

As a part of the system of CoTs under the MoM, the College's Mission, Vision and values found in its Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and its Quality Assurance Manual (QAM Sec.1.2 to 1.4) are identical to the other six CoTs. The Mission, Vision and values are considered as core components that provide guidance in all activities of NCT staff and students.

In May 2005, the MoM developed the initial Mission, Vision and values for the five CoTs that existed at the time through a workshop held by the central Quality Assurance Department (QAD). This workshop also initiated the first Strategic Plan for all Colleges. Further refinement was undertaken at a workshop in January 2008 that included all CoTs plus external consultants. It was agreed that the Mission, Vision and values, the first Strategic Plan and the eight strategic goals developed from it should be common to all CoTs (see Section 1.5).

The Mission, Vision, and values of the CoTs are stated to be as follows:

Mission

“To achieve and sustain a strong reputation for excellence in teaching and learning. The College is dedicated to the delivery of high quality technological education and aims to produce graduates who have the professional and personal skills to enter employment with confidence, contributing effectively to the Sultanate's ongoing development”.

Vision

“NCT intends to become the “College of Choice” for students and for industry by providing a demonstratively high quality teaching, learning and research that makes a significant contribution to the ongoing national economic development”.

Values

“Professionalism – a commitment to strive tirelessly to deliver high quality student-centered technological education;

Integrity – honesty, fairness, and openness to constructive criticism;
Accountability – recognition that the College staff has collective responsibility to Omani society;
Flexibility – willingness to learn, develop new skills, and take on new responsibilities;
Creativity – full recognition of the value of innovation in all areas of college work;
Tolerance and Teamwork – readiness to work effectively with others regardless of background, and to recognize and welcome cultural diversity;
Communication – a commitment to the effective exchange of information (inside and outside the College) to foster goodwill and support efficiency”
(Portfolio, p. 9).

The Panel concluded that the Mission, Vision and values were well known across NCT, and were effectively communicated to staff in their form and content. The Panel, however, could not find evidence that all aspects of the Vision were embedded into the learning experience of students, or into staff development activities. In particular, although research is specifically mentioned, there was no identified research strategy, nor significant tangible evidence of an ongoing research plan (see Chapter 4).

There was also an absence of independent evidence regarding high quality teaching and learning (as noted in the Mission), although feedback obtained for example through the On-the-Job-Training (OJT) program showed considerable appreciation from students and the industries directly involved in the practical and work-based skills elements (see Section 2.6).

In terms of professed values, the Panel found that flexibility and creativity were limited as a result of the overarching direction and management of the MoM. The College should now develop a strategy to ensure that its Mission and Vision are fully implemented and that the College values are embedded in all aspects of its operations.

Recommendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology develop a College-based strategy to monitor the implementation of all aspects of its Mission and Vision and ensure that values are embedded in all aspects of College operations.

1.2 Governance

NCT is one of seven Colleges of Technology (CoTs) governed and financed centrally through the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). All seven CoTs come under the authority of the Minister of Manpower, through the Undersecretary for Vocational Training and the Director General for Technological Education (DGTE). A Board of Trustees (BoT), chaired by H.E. the Minister of Manpower, oversees and advises on the strategic direction and policies of all seven CoTs. The DGTE is executively responsible for the implementation of BoT decisions in each college. A Technical Committee, chaired by the Undersecretary for Vocational Education, is responsible for strategy implementation across all CoTs. All seven Deans of the Colleges serve on the Technical Committee (Portfolio, p.10). The terms of reference for all governance bodies are included in the CoT Bylaws.

1.3 Management

NCT is managed and supervised by the CC which is chaired by the Dean, with support from the three Assistant Deans and Heads of Centres, Departments and Sections as well as by a number of College committees, as set out in the CoT Bylaws. The CC membership, authority and

responsibilities are indicated in the CoT Bylaws (Portfolio, p.12). The Panel noted that not all these committees are represented in the organizational chart. The interface between the organizational structure (Figure 1.1, Portfolio, p.11) and the Committees included in the organization chart is not clear.

The NCT committee structure shows committees for Health and Safety, Risk Management, Disciplinary, Investigation, Examinations, Quality Assurance and Follow-Up, and Policy Management. However, the academic department councils, referred to in the Portfolio (p.12) as a link to the CC, do not appear in the structure diagram, even though they are referred to as a communication link to the CC. From both the Portfolio and evidence provided during the audit visit, the Panel formed the view that the centralized nature of the College's management bodies and the lack of clear structures and reporting-lines of College level committees negatively impacted communication with staff regarding NCT strategy, planning and operational management.

The Panel noted that NCT has referred to plans to improve communication and to have more transparency in the decision-making process at all levels (Portfolio, p.12), but no specific actions or timelines were provided. The College stated that a staff survey conducted in the academic year 2009-2010 included questions on management (Portfolio, p.13). The results indicated that staff were aware of the organizational structure and how the management system functioned, as well as an understanding of their individual roles and accessibility of documentation. However, there was no evidence of mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational structure or the performance of management in terms of their remits, responsibilities, accountability and deliverables as set out in the Bylaws.

Recommendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, review its organizational structure, including its internal committees, to clearly delineate authority, responsibility and accountability at Ministry and College levels in order to improve effectiveness in terms of communication, transparency and timely response to issues raised.

The Panel also noted that the appointment of the Dean and Assistant Deans had been subject to change while the Portfolio was being developed. The Panel formed the view that this lack of succession planning has contributed to instability in senior management, discontinuity in College operations and follow-through of decisions.

Recommendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, develop and implement a systematic approach to succession planning in order to minimize disruption when senior management is changed.

1.4 Institutional Affiliations for Programs and Quality Assurance

The College stated that "being a public, government-funded institution, it is not obligatory for NCT to have program affiliation with local and foreign HEIs" (Portfolio, p.13). However, NCT has an agreement with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), UK regarding the offering of the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) program.

Although Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) type agreements had been drawn up with other CoTs within the MoM system, there was no interaction with other institutions on performance indicators or benchmarking. The Panel believes that a sector-wide and external means of

verifying the quality of delivery of programs and standards of services of facilities would be a beneficial method of benchmarking performance.

1.5 Strategic Plan

NCT's strategic planning commenced in 2005 when a common Strategic Plan was developed for all seven CoTs. In 2008, the Strategic Plan was modified and five common components for the Strategic Plan were adopted by the CoTs, namely Mission, Vision, values, graduate attributes and goals. Eight goals, common to all CoTs, were identified as well as ten common graduate attributes.

During the audit visit, the Panel confirmed that NCT monitors the implementation of the Strategic Plan through self-study reports along with annual centre and department reports. The outcomes of all these reports are compiled by the Quality Assurance Follow-Up Unit (QAFU) and combined with other feedback from various College units. However, the College acknowledges that there is a need to share practices and benchmark these KPIs with other CoTs (Portfolio, p.15). The College is urged to pursue this and is encouraged to also consider benchmarking against other HEIs outside the CoT network.

1.6 Operational Planning

NCT, in common with the other CoTs under the MoM, is required to prepare annual operational plans by selecting relevant sub-goals, strategies and KPIs from the College's Strategic Plan. To do this, account must be taken of the achievements and challenges encountered in the implementation of the previous operational plans (listed in annual reports submitted by departments and units to the Dean), together with requirements based on the current environment and future projections. Once the relevant sub-goals and strategies are selected, the College is expected to decide on an implementation plan with timelines and responsibilities to enable monitoring of progress.

The NCT Heads of Committees (HoCs) and Heads of Departments (HoDs) are responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of operational plans, which are then checked for relevance both internally (by QAFU) and externally by Quality Assurance Department (QAD) at MoM. Upon recommendation by QAFU, operational plans are approved by the CC.

NCT acknowledges that there is a need to involve more staff in the development of operational plans, so that ownership and timely completion of projects are achieved (Portfolio, p.16). The Panel recognizes that although progress had been made in implementing infrastructure improvements (see Section 6.7), critical phases of the development for example, tendering for electrical and mechanical services, had not been done in a timely fashion, requiring intervention by the newly appointed Dean at the time to bring the project back on track. The Panel was of the view that such issues emerged because the process of operational planning and implementation was shared with senior staff only, and may also have been affected as a result of changes of personnel at senior levels. The Panel concluded that the proposed plans to encourage greater involvement from staff were critical and should be acted on as soon as practical.

Recommendation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology improve its operational planning process, through greater staff involvement and ownership, and set clear time schedules with staff for the completion of activities and projects.

1.7 *Financial Management*

The MoM controls the funding of all CoTs. At NCT, the Finance Department (FD) is managed by the Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs (ADAFA) and the Head of Financial Department, as stated in the Bylaws. NCT receives development and operational budgets from the MoM allocated according to previous expenditure, student intakes and development plans in accordance with MoM practice. The College states that the development budget is sub-divided into infrastructure projects, outsourcing employees, and equipment purchase (Portfolio, p.17). The operational budget is sub-divided into student allowances, salaries and wages, purchase of materials and services, furniture and equipment and student learning resources. The Portfolio shows the average percentage expenditure over the period 2007-2010 under the five fixed headings of the current budget (Portfolio, Table 1.1, p.18). The Panel understood that within these fixed headings, the College through the ADAFA may prioritize the provision and make allocations to the various units within the College.

No funding was available for student and staff activities, research and consultancy, although these areas featured in the Vision and values of NCT and the CoTs. Although the College states that “student activities are supported by many different financial means other than the college budget” (Portfolio, p.18), the Panel found no evidence or data to support this statement.

From interviews, the Panel understood that at the time of the audit, NCT was not in a position to earn additional funds from consultancy or specialist courses and feed these funds back to support its activities. In any event, direct earnings have to be transferred to the MoM. NCT indicated in the Portfolio (p.18) and substantiated during the audit visit that a number of issues were to be raised with the MoM relating to reallocation of funds during the year, such as financial autonomy to allocate funds for student activities, staff research and consultancy and staff development. NCT also intended to propose that inflation factors be included by the MoM in allocation. The Panel found no evidence of progress in raising these matters with the MoM. The Panel formed the view that although NCT was managing finances within its allocated budget, NCT had little flexibility to link budgets to the Strategic Plan, or to the operational plans of each department.

Recommendation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology pursue its stated objectives in seeking greater flexibility in budgetary matters, and in strengthening the link between its strategic and operational plans.

1.8 *Risk Management*

The NCT Risk Management Committee, under the chair of the ADAFA, with membership of the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA), HoDs and HoCs, has responsibility for identification and management of risks (Portfolio, p.19). Prior to 2010, NCT had managed risk implicitly whereby each department or section dealt with situations within their respective areas by means available to them (ibid). Key areas identified included staff shortage, student probation, reduction in semester duration and non-provision of mission-critical support services. The formation of a Risk Management Committee and the compilation of Risk Register, according to the NCT Risk Management Policy, sought to streamline and formalize the approach and also to provide training in risk management for staff.

Affirmation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology’s efforts to increase awareness and ability in risk mitigation through training in order to ensure consistency in dealing with risks in all units of the College.

The Panel recognized that issues identified in the Risk Register tended to be operational and in some cases were examples of consequential actions rather than issues identified with corporate risks. NCT has made a good start in this important area and is encouraged to develop its Risk Management Policy further by the identification of risks due to external factors, such as MoM directives, non-approval or delays in approval of key infrastructure developments, financial support changes, as well as risks that can be more readily identified and assessed in probability by NCT itself. For example, the College stated that in response to H1N1 virus and the PHET cyclone, mitigation had been through reduction in student contact hours “to ensure that all outcomes are addressed” (Portfolio, p.19). The consequence of this action on the student experience and results had not been taken into account nor subsequently checked. This leads to the view of the Panel that risk management now needs to be more fully integrated across NCT to identify consequential impacts on related areas of operation.

In developing its risk management system, NCT had not considered areas such as the potential impact of MoM policy changes (for example the increased student intake over a short period of time or senior management changes). The College needs to develop more effective communication channels with the MoM in order to keep up to date with network and sector-wide developments and issues. The Panel concluded that although measures were in place to deal with operational issues related to technology through the Educational Technology Centre (ETC), there were no measures in place for disaster recovery of IT systems, in the event of major failure due to fire, flood, or major server failure.

Recommendation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that as Nizwa College of Technology develops its risk management system, it includes consideration of potential external risk factors both within its network and in the sector as a whole.

1.9 Policy Management

NCT has a Policy Management System (PMS) framework that embodies policy needs analysis, formulation, review, approval, publication, implementation and monitoring, and feedback mechanisms. The Panel considered the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) to be comprehensive and useful. It was developed in 2005-2006 together with the other COTs, with guidance from the MoM's Quality Assurance Department. The QAM and the College's Quality Assurance Follow-up Unit (QAFU) provide guidance through policies, procedures, guidelines and directives on how the College should conduct its quality assurance and enhancement activities.

Since major policies are set by the Bylaws of the MoM, the Panel did not identify areas where NCT had modified or suggested changes to policies or how the need for a new policy was identified and taken forward. Improvements to the PMS were listed, (Portfolio, p.20), but the Panel found no evidence of progress in the Master Action Plan provided to the Panel.

1.10 Entity and Activity Review Systems

NCT ensures ongoing review of its entities and activities internally by QAFU and externally by QAD (Portfolio, p.20). The College Council is responsible for conducting internal reviews of the College activities through the use of annual reports from the College units, and these internal reviews form the basis of QAD's annual external review of NCT's entities and activities. Evidence of the external QAD reviews was provided in the form of evaluation reports which included the status on actions taken for improvement during subsequent reviews. The Panel noted the various mechanisms, procedures, reports and feedback reports that NCT uses for internal and external review of its activities.

Much of the evidence on entity and activity review was gained internally, from reports and feedback from course tutors and coordinators. The Panel did not find evidence of analysis of student performance, historical cohort progression rates, module statistics on student performance either internally or across comparable CoTs that could have provided reliable objective evidence. In general, absence of such evidence detracts from evaluation of the level of achievement in attaining the eight goals as set out in the Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology review its entity and activity review systems to integrate the follow up actions resulting from reviews, as well as the impact of these actions, into the College's quality improvement cycle.

1.11 Student Grievance Process

NCT has a Student Grievance Policy which provides students with the right to appeal against the results of examinations. Grievances related to disciplinary and harassment issues are handled by the Investigation Committee which is chaired by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA). Any decisions taken by the Investigation Committee are referred for action to the Discipline Committee (DC), which is chaired by the Dean. Students have the right to appeal to the MoM Undersecretary against the DC's decisions.

The process of grievances and academic appeals seemed to the Panel to be dealt with by different mechanisms. Grievances are handled by the process as stated in the Portfolio (p.21). Academic Appeals on examination results are handled at centre or department level, by a committee chaired by the ADSA and including the relevant HoD, three staff from the department and one staff from another centre or department. The appeal outcome from this committee is approved by the CC. Table 1.3 (Portfolio, p.22) refers to Examination Appeals showing the percentage of changes made. Reference to Appendix 1 of the Portfolio shows actual figures. It was reported that the percentage of changes to marks or grades as a result of examination appeals was decreasing, but the total number of examination appeals was increasing, particularly in Engineering.

The student satisfaction survey showed a low level of satisfaction with both grievance handling and examination appeals. NCT has not identified the reasons behind this dissatisfaction, or the reasons for the increase in examination appeals. Further analysis of actual cases and reference to the criteria for examination appeals may yield information to enable NCT to address this issue. The College needs to review its current student grievance process (and the variety of mechanisms in place) in order to establish clear criteria that are consistently applied and to ensure that the process is clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Recommendation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology conduct a detailed analysis of student grievances and examination appeals submitted in order to identify factors leading to student dissatisfaction and use this data to improve the current processes.

1.12 Health and Safety

NCT has a Health and Safety Committee (HSC) to oversee health and safety needs and to implement the guidelines provided by the Health and Safety Policy. Many of the actions in this area were centered on awareness-raising through notices, training in fire safety, and a symposium every two years. Ten training programs were conducted in 2009-2010 on health and safety matters (Portfolio, p.23).

The College maintains an Incident Report Register which showed a low incidence of cases reported to the NCT Clinic. Reviewing the documentation, the Panel gained the view that these reports were not very specific or relevant to actions to be taken. It was stated that a full-time health and safety officer was to be appointed, (Portfolio, p.23), but during the audit visit, it appeared that an existing staff member had been given that duty in addition to normal duties. With the existing student population of the College and its forecast increase in intake, the Panel believes this matter requires urgent attention.

The evidence presented in the Portfolio (p.23) on the adequacy of health and safety in the College was derived from the overall student satisfaction survey (referred to in Section 1.11). This showed the student view that improvements in health and safety were necessary. With the exception of the newly-built laboratories and workshops, the level of safety provision in other older and short-life buildings was observed by the Panel to be inadequate. During the visits to the Engineering workshops, the Panel noted that instructions for operating various machines safely were exclusively in English. When asked about this, the response was that students were expected to be proficient in the English language when they entered the course. The Panel found this to be an inadequate approach to safety.

Recommendation 9

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology conduct a full health and safety audit, according to accepted criteria and standards, of all physical resources and procedures to assist in the formulation of policies, procedures, and action plans.

1.13 Oversight of Associated Entities (e.g. owned companies)

NCT has no associated entities.

2 STUDENT LEARNING BY COURSEWORK PROGRAMMES

NCT describes its Mission and Strategic Plan Goals 2 and 3 as follows:

We will offer to all students high quality teaching, learning and training opportunities in line with the requirements of the market needs;

We will keep up with modern developments in technology through analysis of market needs in curriculum review processes (Portfolio, p.24)

This Chapter reflects the Panel's findings in the areas of student learning by coursework programs such as graduate attributes, curriculum; teaching quality; student placement and retention; student assessment; academic security, graduate destinations and employability.

2.1 Graduate Attributes and Student Learning Objectives

The development of generic CoT graduate attributes has been an important step for the College teaching staff. While it is acknowledged that the development of graduate attributes (GAs) is common for the seven Colleges of Technology (CoTs) within the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), the Panel gathered from both course delivery plans and staff interviews, that NCT staff fully support the GAs and understand the importance of these pertaining to the delivery of the courses within the various programs. Students and staff also confirmed that the course delivery plans are given to students at the commencement of their program. The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), including which GAs will be covered by the SLOs, are explained to students.

The Panel also learned that, while not overtly stated in the course delivery plans, the weighting given in assessments and various assessment tasks enables specific GAs, particularly the 'soft' skills, to be assessed. Academic staff confirmed that strategies such as group work, projects and different assessment methodologies contributed to ensuring that the achievement of the GAs is monitored. It was also noted from the Master Action Plan (see Section 1.5) that a survey will be carried out with students exiting the College to measure the extent to which the GAs have been attained starting from 2012.

Affirmation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the efforts of Nizwa College of Technology in integrating the generic graduate attributes in curricula, teaching delivery and continuous assessment.

2.2 Curriculum

NCT offers a four-level General Foundation Program (GFP) and Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma programs in Engineering, IT and Business Studies. The structure of the curriculum includes practical training at the exit level, both On-the-Job-Training (OJT) and Enhancement Practical Training (EPT). The College also offers the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) (examined by the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the International Computer Driving License (ICDL).

The Panel explored how the curricula were developed both at MoM level for the seven CoTs and how the College staff design their course delivery plans to meet the curriculum requirements while ensuring that the content was current and in line with MoM requirements. The Panel learned that the curriculum was originally designed in 2002-2003 and reviewed in

2007. It was confirmed that the MoM is beginning a full review of the curriculum with a view to implementing a more standardized framework.

In discussions with staff, the Panel ascertained that in the development of the curriculum content for delivery, using the SLOs and textbooks prescribed in the curriculum, they were able to ensure that scenarios and examples used were current. Staff explained that the use of the internet, reading and attending conferences were methods adopted for ensuring that they remain current in their discipline and the content and learning resources used in their teaching.

During the interviews with alumni, it became clear to the Panel that although the OJT element of the curriculum was considered invaluable, there was a perceived issue with the applied versus the theoretical in the actual classroom curriculum, and a request for more “hands-on” skills to be included was made by a few alumni (see Section 2.6).

The Panel also heard from employers of their willingness to be involved in any consultation involving curriculum review and currency to ensure that the needs of the respective industries and regional developments and associated employment opportunities for graduates are met. The Panel concluded that there is a need for an ongoing formal mechanism, including input/feedback from employers and other external stakeholders, to support curriculum development and plans for future program offerings. While the Panel recognises that this would need to be addressed in consultation with the MoM, it is of the view that the College needs to have a greater role in this area.

Recommendation 10

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology, in consultation with the Ministry of Manpower, develop and implement formal mechanisms to involve external stakeholders on an ongoing basis in the curriculum development and review process.

2.3 Student Entry Standards

Admission criteria and the number of students admitted to NCT’s General Foundation Program (GFP) is determined annually by the MoM. These decisions are sent to the national Higher Education Admission Center which carries out the admission and allocation of specializations of students to all higher education institutions (HEIs), based upon their General Secondary Diploma results.

Before being admitted to the GFP, all students must undergo an English Placement Test which is administered by the English Language Centre (ELC) in order to determine their level. The Panel learned that most students are placed in Level 1 or Level 2 (of 4 levels) on entry to the College. The Panel also noted that entrance tests for Information Technology (IT) and Mathematics had been introduced.

The Panel was informed that a recent decision to remove the TOEFL testing requirement for students exiting the GFP is to be implemented in the academic year 2011-2012. An internal assessment will be carried out to confirm that students meet the level of English required for moving into Certificate and Diploma programs, but the Panel was informed that this does not include the speaking component that is included in the TOEFL test. The TOEFL test will continue to be a requirement to enter the Higher Diploma. The Panel expressed its concern at the change in testing student proficiency in the English language and encourages the College to ensure that all students have the required language level to proceed with their studies. The Panel also explored the College’s preparation towards meeting the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs and noted that progress had been made in this area.

2.4 *Teaching Quality*

Teaching quality at NCT has been identified as the means to achieve its Vision of becoming the “College of Choice” in Oman, and that there are a number of policies and procedures in place (for example, review of teaching, staff appraisal, staff load distribution) to support this goal. NCT stated that the quality of teaching is to be enhanced through the development of e-learning and professional development which included training staff on the use of the Approach; Deployment; Results and Improvement (ADRI) model for improving teaching and learning (Portfolio, p.31). The outcomes from applying ADRI are taken into account in developing and revising the course delivery plan at the end of each semester and the staff meet to consider possible areas of improvement.

The Panel noted that Moodle (a learning management system) is heavily utilized in the College, and staff development activities indicate that extensive training has been offered in this area. The Panel explored the indication (Portfolio, p.25) that some 80% of courses are uploaded into Moodle for students’ use for self-learning and found that the use of that capability within Moodle varied across departments. It appeared that the uploading of course delivery plans was common across all departments. Some staff use Moodle for interactive learning activities, such as quizzes, discussion forums, submitting assessments, and encouraging students to submit drafts of assignments for advice. The ELC confirmed that Moodle is used to develop language skills, provide tasks and resource materials for students. The Panel also learned that “Cutting Edge” software had also been installed on the facility. The Panel was advised that each department has an e-learning coordinator who plans and builds the infrastructure and is responsible for the upgrading of programs through the Moodle capability. Staff confirmed that professional development opportunities had been readily available through the Staff Development Unit and the Head of the Educational Technology Centre.

Affirmation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology’s efforts with regard to ongoing staff professional development, use of e-learning strategies and increasing depth of usage of the capabilities within the learning management system.

The Panel heard from students about the difficulties they are facing with the English language and in particular, understanding the accents of some faculty members. NCT is encouraged to take appropriate measures to address the obstacles that undermine the learning process.

The College expressed its intention to enhance student satisfaction with teaching performance (Portfolio, p.31). The Panel noted from the Portfolio (p.32) that the College plans to ensure systematic student involvement in the teaching and learning process through wider implementation by staff of the Student Participation Assessment (SPA) as a tool in their overall learning assessment plan. SPA is the process whereby students are assessed on their participation in class. The College has found that this improves attendance, communication and students’ ability to listen and extract vital information.

Affirmation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Nizwa College of Technology needs to ensure systematic student involvement in the teaching and learning process and supports the College’s initiatives in this area such as the implementation of Student Participation Assessment as a tool in the overall assessment of learning.

The Panel also explored with staff and students the frequency of student evaluation of teaching and learned that every course is evaluated every semester. Confidential feedback is given to the

staff member, and any areas for improvement are discussed with the line manager and professional development opportunities identified through the Staff Development Unit. The Panel also noted from the Master Action Plan that 'Best Teaching and Learning Practice' symposiums are planned for March - April 2012, and believes that this sharing of good practice will benefit all academic staff.

2.5 Plagiarism

NCT has an Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) and approved guidelines for dealing with plagiarism by staff and students. The Panel explored with both staff and students the induction received concerning the ways in which student work should be referenced, the meaning of plagiarism and the penalties should incidents of plagiarism be detected. The Panel confirmed that good induction takes place and students are well aware of the requirements and penalties. The Panel also notes that NCT is currently using an open-source utility for detecting incidents of plagiarism and it intends to purchase the 'Turnitin' software in the first semester of the academic year 2011-2012. The Panel supports the College's effort in this area.

2.6 Student Placements

All CoTs, including NCT, have an OJT placement program to equip students with the necessary work-oriented training in preparation for employment. All students in the Diploma and Higher Diploma programs are required to undergo an OJT program comprising eight weeks training in the industry. All activities related to student placement programs are guided by the OJT Policy, and the Industrial Liaison Department of the MoM is the governing body for OJT; that is, it supervises all OJT programs for all the CoTs.

The Panel acknowledges the importance of the OJT program for students. Feedback from student, staff and industry confirmed its relevance for the students' future employment opportunities (see Commendation 1). The Panel explored the process by which students are registered, record their preferences for placement, and are supervised and assessed during the OJT. The Portfolio (p.35) indicates that an average of 60% of the places match students' specializations which is lower than the target of 80% set out in the Strategic Plan Strategy 2.c.1. The Panel found that 100% of students eligible for placement are placed. However, it was also noted that sometimes Business and IT students do not consider their placements to be an appropriate match to their specializations, whereas Electrical and Mechanical Engineering students are more likely to be placed in their specialization. The Panel was assured that every effort is being made by the OJT Department to find placement opportunities in public and private sectors.

The Panel learned that students are visited twice during their eight-week period on OJT and that the weighting of assessment is 60% by the employer and 40% by the NCT assessor. Students are encouraged to prepare a report on their experience following the OJT, usually in the form of a presentation. The Panel was informed that any gaps in skills and knowledge, including the 'soft' skills are identified and can be addressed during the EPT program which is carried over six weeks. This can be extended by a further six weeks if there are still gaps in students' skills. According to NCT, this ensures that the OJT program is intrinsically integrated with program curricula and assists in fulfilling the graduate attributes. Panel interviews with alumni confirmed that although the OJT experience was invaluable, more hands-on skills could be more explicitly covered in the teaching component of the curriculum to complement this activity.

Industry feedback indicated that in some instances students are not well supervised by NCT staff and more practical sessions within their time at the College prior to going on OJT would assist students in carrying out their placement. The Panel suggests that such issues should be monitored following future supervision visits.

2.7 *Assessment Methods, Standards and Moderation*

Assessment at NCT is administered locally as guided by the MoM Bylaws, and there is a Student Assessment Policy and an Assessment Moderation Policy that govern this area at NCT (Portfolio, p.36). NCT intends to develop a systematic evaluation of exam question papers involving other CoTs to improve question paper standard (Portfolio, p.38). The Student Assessment Handbook refers to policies relating to Student Assessment and Assessment Moderation (pp. 47-59). The Panel established that there is a process of internal checking of examination papers which takes place prior to student examinations. Marking is checked before the final results are approved for release by the Examinations Committee.

It was also noted that the Quality Audit Department (QAD) at MoM, during one of its annual audit visits, undertakes post-assessment sampling of question sheets to verify the coverage of the SLOs and mark distribution. The Panel also learned that some exchange of examination scripts has taken place with Ibra CoT, and considers that this is an important step in enhancing the quality of assessment of student learning.

Affirmation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Nizwa College of Technology that it needs to continue exploring opportunities for external moderation of exams and supports its efforts to improve its assessment system through collaborative arrangements with other Colleges of Technology.

2.8 *Academic Security and Invigilation*

NCT takes its responsibilities in ensuring a high degree of safety and physical security of examinations very seriously, with the Dean and the Assistant Deans having overall responsibility for monitoring the College's examinations. The College states that the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) will postpone or cancel any examination if there is any doubt about the integrity of an examination or evidence of leakage of any question papers (Portfolio, p.39).

The policies and procedures in place are set out in the Student Assessment Handbook (pp.60-81). The Panel heard from students that they understand the penalties for incidents such as cheating in examinations, and from staff that effective systems were in place for conducting examinations. The Panel notes from the Master Action Plan that surveillance cameras for examination halls are due for completion by June 2011.

2.9 *Student Retention and Progression*

NCT states that student retention and progression is an important measure of the College's efficiency and, as a result, it has a Retention and Progression Policy as well as an Advising Policy. The Panel also noted from the Portfolio (p.41) that the dropout trend has been decreasing over the period 2003-2010 with the exception of academic year 2005-2006. The Panel ascertained from interviews that the reduction in the dropout rate is attributed to interventions such as tutorials and counseling. The Panel was also informed that NCT believes that increased awareness by students of the importance of academic advising contributed to improved student retention. The system of academic advising is discussed in more detail in Section 6.5.

Table 2.9 featured a breakdown of 'Active Students per Level for the period 2003-2010' (Portfolio, p.41) with respect to students who complete their studies on time and the percentage of 'repeaters'. The Panel was informed that the percentage mark required in order to pass is different for each level – for example: 50% for Foundation; 55% for Certificate; 60% for

Diploma and 65% for Higher Diploma. The rationale appeared to be that as students progress, a higher standard of achievement is required.

The Panel is of the view that there was no clear explanation for the current strategies used to deal with 'repeaters' and that, while the strategies of providing tutorials and counseling are improving student retention, there does not appear to be a clear strategy to reduce the number of students repeating courses within programs. During interviews with NCT's graduates, the Panel was informed that of some students did not complete their program as a result of securing employment. These students do not have the opportunity to complete their program through part-time study. This could be one of the contributing factors to the drop-out statistics but this could not be clarified. The Panel notes from the Master Action Plan that despite the incorporation of one to two-hour slots per week into the timetables to allow for tutorials and other activities, there is no planned action to reduce the number of repeaters.

Recommendation 11

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology investigate the reasons for the high numbers of student repeaters in the Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma programs and, as appropriate, develop and implement strategies to reduce the number of repeaters.

2.10 Graduate Destinations and Employability

Graduate destinations and employability impact strongly on NCT's vision to become the "College of Choice" in Oman. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs (ADSA) has overall responsibility for graduate destination and employability at NCT (Portfolio, p.42). The Panel noted that a Career Guidance Office had recently been established (Portfolio, p.44 and SM068). In discussion with staff and students, the Panel learned that job-search workshops are offered regularly, where students learn how to write curriculum vitae and also how to conduct themselves at a job interview.

The Portfolio (pp.42-43) also mentions the development of a "Graduate Tracker Project". This appears to have been modified in the Master Action Plan to a database of graduates which is currently in progress. Staff confirmed that this will form the basis of an alumni organization (see Section 5.5). Mention is also made in the Portfolio (p.44) and in the Master Action Plan that the College intends to survey students and analyze graduate tracking data and give assistance in finding jobs. The Panel found that steps are being taken to implement the College's plans in this area, and the College is urged to build on progress made so far.

3 STUDENT LEARNING BY RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

At the time of the quality audit, NCT did not offer research programs; therefore, this section is not addressed in the NCT Portfolio or within this Report.

4 STAFF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY

As mentioned in Chapter 1, NCT is part of the network of the Colleges of Technology (CoTs) under the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) which gives priority to undergraduate technological education through course work. Currently, MoM does not provide funding to support research and therefore there is no explicit external research imperative regarding staff teaching for these undergraduate programs. The Panel notes, however, that applied research and scientific publication appear in the College's Vision and Bylaws, and the College acknowledges the value of carrying out and publishing scientific and applied research (Portfolio, p.45). Little attention and support is offered to NCT staff who wish to undertake applied research or consultancy work. The onus seems to be with MoM to provide funds and resources; otherwise it is unrealistic to expect that a research and consultancy program can be developed at NCT. Currently there is no alignment between NCT's strategic planning and its Vision regarding research and scholarly activities. NCT has a number of Masters and PhD holders who may be able to conduct applied research and consultancy work if they have support and a reduced teaching load. Building a relationship with Omani research institutes such as Oman Research Council could support NCT research and scientific publication programs.

The College proposes including a strategic goal on research in order to have a clear policy and direction regarding research and consultancy (Portfolio, p.45). It is the Panel's view that establishing an applied research and consultancy program may offer opportunities to enhance NCT's Mission, optimize the use of the College's facilities, help support the local industry and community, improve collaboration and relationship with industry, and encourage teaching staff to maintain academic currency within their specialized fields.

Recommendation 12

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology review its Vision in relation to research to reflect an appropriate role of research and scholarly activity within the context of the College position within the overall higher education sector.

5 INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NCT believes in a strong relationship with industry and the community. It has identified the importance of enhancing relations with the community as one of its strategic goals:

Goal 4: We will foster an open and fruitful relationship with public and private sector organizations and with the community at large (Strategic Plan, p.13).

This Chapter reports on NCT's relationship with industry and employers, professional bodies, other higher education providers, its alumni, and the community at large.

5.1 *Industry and Community Engagement Planning and Management*

According to the NCT Bylaws, the Dean and the College Council (CC), with the support of Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA), are in charge of planning, managing and maintaining relationships with the industry and community at large. In the area of industry engagement, the College has recognized the need to develop strong ties with the industry in Oman to support OJT and the Enhancement Practical Training (EPT). The Panel found that the OJT Department, MMC and PRRC made a good effort in building working relationships, finding placement and organizing job fairs on campus.

In the area of community engagement, the College has recognized the need to develop community outreach programs and activities; staff and faculty are supporting activities in Nizwa and Al Dakhliyah region. NCT has just started a Career Guidance Centre to help students find industrial placements. NCT would benefit from developing a plan for its industry and community engagement with defined KPIs and specific targets to drive the initiatives and measure progress and growth in related activities over time. This detailed planning should include clear mechanisms for obtaining relevant feedback from external stakeholders on a targeted and systematic basis with performance targets that will allow evaluation of the achievement of the relevant strategic goal. The Panel considers that NCT's plan to establish a committee for industry and community relationships chaired by ADSA is a good step in this direction.

Recommendation 13

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement an operational plan for its industry and community engagement activities, informed by feedback from external stakeholders, with clear performance targets in line with the College's strategic objectives.

The College could consider organizing and promoting activities such as an NCT open day and opening the College to the community. Such activities may help attract high school students to join the College for their post-secondary education and would also enhance ties with the community in general.

5.2 *Relationships with Industry and Employers*

The Panel believes that NCT has made good efforts to maintain a close relationship with industry and employers and the CC includes three members from the local community to facilitate this interaction. It was clear to the Panel that NCT's efforts in this area have had a positive impact on NCT's operations and profile, especially in arranging training placements for OJT and EPT programs. The Panel heard details of some well-developed relationships with industry and employers particularly with respect to the organization of the Career's Fair, regular

visits by staff and students to industries and invitation of industrial experts to speak to the students to bring real world practice to the College.

While NCT indicates a desire to have more involvement from industry and businesses, it proposes that this involvement be focused mainly on public relations and securing OJT opportunities for students (Portfolio, p. 47). During the audit visit, it became clear that feedback from OJT placement employers is sent back to the relative academic department. However, with regard to the development of the undergraduate curriculum, there is no systematic input into the curriculum from employers. The Panel acknowledges the enthusiasm of the external stakeholders with whom it met and their willingness to work with NCT to facilitate the input of external stakeholders in the curriculum development process and NCT's business in general (see Recommendation 10).

The Panel acknowledges the NCT's efforts to attract support from industry for improvement of its teaching and service facilities. These efforts are paying off and an example is the success story of the Oman LNG gift of 250,000 Omani Rials to sponsor the establishment of the Business Simulator Centre. Other gifts include donations made by Oman Trading Establishment L.L.C. (OTE) and Oxy-Oman to support students' activities.

Commendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology for its successful and positive interaction with local industry and employers through On-the-Job Training student placements.

5.3 Relationships with Professions

NCT has a limited number of formal relationships with professional bodies. NCT states that: "The College programs are supplemented by running international curriculums [*sic*] such as CAT (Certified Accounting Technician) and ICDL (International Computer Driving License)" (Portfolio, p.49). The Certified Accounting Technicians program is examined by the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

The Panel encourages NCT through the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) to provide some incentive for staff to become members of targeted professional bodies. Generally, student membership is free or with minimal cost for some professional institutions. If enough memberships can be obtained by staff and students, then Chapters for these institutions can be formed at NCT.

5.4 Relationships with Other Education Providers

NCT identified the need to liaise with other education providers to give students the opportunity for exchanges and study-abroad programs to enrich their educational experience (Portfolio, p.49). According to Article 4.8 in the Bylaws, the Board of Trustees (BoT) is responsible for encouraging and governing academic cooperation between NCT and other higher education institutions (HEIs).

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with Al Musanna College of Technology to conduct training programs, share resources and participate in various events and activities. NCT has formal relationships with the College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa. These are promising initiatives in promoting relationships with HEIs and the Panel encourages NCT through the BoT to have more MoUs and collaboration agreements with other government and private HEIs. These relationships may create opportunities for collaborative teaching, joint teaching and training programs, as well as student and faculty exchanges.

5.5 *Relationships with Alumni*

NCT maintains an alumni database and a web-base to stay in contact. The Panel was informed during the audit visit about the ongoing activities to establish contact with NCT's alumni and to improve NCT's data management. The Panel welcomes the establishment of the Graduate Follow-up Department (GFD) which is responsible for regularly writing to major companies who employ NCT graduates, asking them to report details of NCT graduates they employ (Portfolio, p. 42). The Panel noted the recent implementation of the Graduate Tracker Project which aims to collect NCT graduate details into a single database for easy access and update of alumni information (Portfolio, p. 42). However, the Panel heard from graduate students that while they were very responsive to the idea of an alumni organization being established, very few had been contacted or followed-up by the College since graduation. This is an area the College is working on. The initiatives such as Alumni Party Day, short stories and videos of distinguished graduates and developing an alumni section as part of the College's web-page are all useful activities to build good relations with alumni.

Affirmation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports Nizwa College of Technology's efforts to strengthen its association with its alumni such as the establishment of the Graduate Follow-up Department.

During the alumni interviews it became clear that they would welcome more practical training and "hands on skills" embedded in their academic program, and the Panel encourages NCT to consider making the necessary amendments to the curriculum to incorporate a more practical component. All acknowledged the benefits of the courses offered to all students, such as Job Search, Business Ethics and Communications in helping them to enter the job market.

5.6 *Relationships with the Community at Large*

NCT aspires to become a centre for community activities and is planning to introduce community-based projects for final year students (Portfolio, p.51). It was noted that a wide range of cultural, sport, health and workshops activities have been undertaken by staff and students alike throughout the Al Dakhliya region (Portfolio, p.53, Table 5.3). The external stakeholders highlighted some of these activities during interviews. The College organized workshops and seminars for the community delivered by the English Language Centre (ELC) and IT Department to improve communication skills and computer technology awareness. These activities need to be in line with NCT's overall plan for industry and community engagement (see Recommendation 13).

6 ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

NCT states that academic support services play an essential role in producing high quality graduates who will participate in Oman's economic development as projected in the College's Mission and Strategic Plan (Portfolio, p.54). This Chapter reports on issues related to the planning and management of NCT's academic support services, registry, library services, teaching and learning services, information and learning technology, academic advising and teaching resources.

6.1 *Academic Support Services Planning and Management*

The College does not have a unit dedicated to academic support planning and management. Rather, it states that "academic support is provided by different units in the College" (Portfolio, p.54). This is a "shared responsibility between the concerned units of the College under the guidance and supervision of the CC [College Council] and Dean" (Portfolio, p. 54). At present, the CC and Dean oversee the three main academic support functions: registry, academic advising and teaching and learning services, information and learning technology and academic advising. As noted in Section 1.6, the College is urged to review its operational planning in support areas (see Recommendation 4).

6.2 *Registry (Enrolment and Student Records)*

The College serves as a registration centre for the Higher Education Admissions Centre (HEAC) during the application and admission of secondary school students to higher education institutions (HEIs). The Panel noted that NCT is currently utilizing its own student information database in parallel with the Ministry of Manpower (MoM)'s centralized student management system in order to provide additional student information and to generate reports. The Panel also noted the low level of student satisfaction, mainly at the Certificate level, with the Centralized Student Management System (CSMS) registration component, mainly due to the slowness of the system (Portfolio, p.56). The College is urged to address this issue, for example through considering an increase in the number of servers available through the MoM during the registration period.

6.3 *Library*

The NCT library is managed by a librarian assisted by three staff. A Library Management System (LMS) is in place which enables various services to be provided to staff and students, including information services, printed books, circulation, acquisition, etc. Although NCT claims that "Library resources requirements are identified by academic units according to learning needs of students" (Portfolio, p.57), the College acknowledges that the Library is disadvantaged by the MoM requirement to purchase books only from one source, namely the annual book fair in Muscat (Portfolio, p.57). The Panel encourages NCT to explore, in coordination with MoM, other possible means of acquisition.

The College uses student and staff surveys to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of its Library resources. NCT acknowledges that these surveys indicate averages that "are below the planned target of Strategic Plan Strategies" related to library equipment and resources (Portfolio, p.58). The Panel urges NCT to implement its plans in this area and take immediate action to ensure alignment of its Library services and resources to its Strategic Plan and to meet students' learning needs (for example increased Internet access as well as more relevant books), taking into consideration the projected increase in admissions.

Recommendation 14

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology implement plans for the alignment of its library services and resources to its Strategic Plan in consideration of the expected increase in enrolments.

6.4 Information and Learning Technology Services

NCT's Information and Learning Technology Services (ILTS) fall under the responsibility of the Head of the Educational Technology Centre (ETC), with support from the Head of the Educational Services Section (ESS) and the Computer Services Section (CSS). The provision of resources for these services is the responsibility of the Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs (ADAF). According to NCT, "e-learning services in different academic units at NCT are the responsibility of e-learning coordinators who provide guidance, training to staff, spearhead the implementation, monitor and report e-learning activities" (Portfolio, pp. 58-59).

The Panel noted that Moodle (learning management system) is highly utilized in the College, and the staff development activities indicate that extensive training has been offered in this area (see Section 2.4). NCT has identified as an opportunity for improvement the need to increase its information and learning resources, including the introduction of free access laboratories, in line with its operational plans, and in order to accommodate increasing student demands (Portfolio, p.61). The Panel supports these efforts.

6.5 Academic Advising

The Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA), together with the Assistant Dean Student Affairs and the Head of the Admission and Registration Department (ARD) manage the academic advising services. The Panel established through interviews with staff, as well as from the documentation provided, support for the claim that NCT has an effective policy and procedure for academic advising and all NCT teaching staff have responsibility for implementing this (Portfolio, p.61).

Academic advisors provide support to their allocated students throughout their study period to facilitate their studies, help solve any academic problems and encourage accountability for their studies. An important part of this advisory service is the students' progression and identifying at risk students, who are then given additional, targeted support. The Panel was informed that student retention had improved and agreed with the College that the proactive approach taken in academic advising had contributed to this.

Commendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology on the effective College-wide implementation of academic advising and monitoring of student progression.

6.6 Student Learning Support

The Dean, with support from the Assistant Deans, is responsible for supervising, promoting and overseeing student learning activities and its resources at NCT. The Housing, Student Activities and Graduation Department (HSAGD), in coordination with the academic units, plans and organizes extracurricular activities with the assistance of the OJT Department. During the Panel's tour of some campus facilities when in situ interviews were conducted, various laboratories and workshops were visited and relevant support staff were interviewed. The Panel

came to the conclusion that these facilities, together with the number of support staff seem to be adequate.

The College has documented the range of learning support services provided to NCT's students, including an open day, theatre and literature competitions, cultural activities, scientific design projects and programs for new students (Portfolio, p.62). The Panel noted that NCT plans to seek feedback from students on their interest in these activities and also to upgrade resources by providing free-access computer laboratories by the first semester 2011-2012 (see Section 6.4). The Panel supports these plans.

Supplementary academic and counseling services are provided through the English Language Centre which brings together services that support students in their learning, writing, numeracy and use of technology. In addition, it provides expertise and resources for faculty to support and enhance student learning across the curricula.

6.7 Teaching Resources

NCT has a process for the development of teaching resources and a method for academic staff to identify new library resources required for teaching. The list of requirements is compiled and forwarded to the Finance Department which coordinates the purchase once operational budgets are approved by the MoM. More substantial resources to support teaching and learning including items such as IT equipment and classroom furniture are prepared as part of the annual operational and five-year development plans (Portfolio, p.64). Staff and students all indicated their awareness of the MoM's intention to increase the number of students at NCT for the academic year 2011-2012 and the impact this will have on teaching and learning resources. The Panel encourages NCT management to be proactive in ensuring that sufficient resources are provided, in the first instance in the ELC and also, as the increased number of students flow through, in the Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma programs.

NCT considers the quality of its teaching resources (classrooms, laboratories, IT equipment, text-based and electronic materials, desks etc) as a crucial element for the inculcation of the ten stated graduate attributes in its students (Portfolio, p.64). The College operational budget provides for consumable teaching resources such as furniture, while the MoM provides for the capital resources such as major laboratory upgrades or creation of new facilities (Portfolio, p.64). The Panel was particularly pleased to note the recent commissioning of new well-equipped laboratories and teaching rooms which are currently utilizing specialized educational technologies in the Engineering areas. The Panel also noted further development plans to similarly upgrade further facilities to support the expected expansion of the student enrollment plan.

Commendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Nizwa College of Technology on the provision of new engineering laboratories and teaching facilities to support an improved student learning environment.

7 STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

NCT states its commitment to the provision of “excellent student services that support learning in technological education” (Portfolio, p.66). This Chapter reports on the Panel’s findings in relation to students and student support services at NCT which includes: students and student support services planning and management, student profile, student satisfaction and climate, student behavior, career and employment services, student finances, accommodation, catering and transport, medical and counseling facilities, and social and recreational services and facilities.

7.1 *Students and Student Support Services Planning and Management*

Student support services planning and management are under the responsibility of the Student Affairs Department (SAD) managed by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA). The SAD is made up of four Departments including Admission and Registration Department (ARD); On-the-Job-Training (OJT) Department; Counseling and Graduate Follow up Department (CGFUD); and Housing, Student Activities and Graduation Department (HSAGD) (Portfolio, p.66). ARD maintains students’ files and provides the necessary statistics to different departments.

NCT staff confirmed that the OJT Department liaises with Heads of Centers and Departments regarding industrial links, their counterparts in industry and other concerned bodies as well as ensuring students’ compliance to bylaws, rules and regulations. The Panel was informed by students that the HSAGD organizes extracurricular activities and provides students with information regarding suitable accommodation. The CGFUD helps students adapt and settle into College life academically and socially.

The Student Council (StC) started in the academic year 2009-2010 with six elected members. In the present academic year 2010-2011, elections were conducted and a Council with nine members was established. Later, the number of members was increased to 15 in order to cope with the load imposed by the need for different activities. Although the Panel was informed that the StC was represented in NCT’s College Council (CC) neither the Bylaws nor the CC minutes confirmed that this actually occurs. The Panel encourages the involvement of students in committees that deal with student issues. The Panel noted, and agreed with the College the need to involve more students in electing their representatives to the Student Council so that the StC can offer a range of activities that will fulfill the diverse students’ needs (Portfolio, p. 67). The College also plans to create awareness among more students regarding the importance of their involvement by conducting workshops and identifying specific needs through different channels of feedback. The Panel found evidence of an engaged and energetic StC which is well supported by NCT’s management and staff.

The College indicated that the monitoring and review of the student support services are carried out by internal and external reviews (Portfolio, p.66). The Panel encourages NCT to make use of other methods in parallel with students’ surveys.

7.2 *Student Profile*

All NCT students are Omani with the intake of female students joining the College decreasing from nearly 50% in the academic year 2005-2006 to around 30% in 2009-2010 (Portfolio, p.68). Student profile data is maintained within MoM’s Central Registration (Portfolio, p.67). The data includes student numbers, gender, nationality, age, and type of study. The MoM determines the number of students to be admitted annually in the parallel programs as well as the entry requirements. NCT’s ADSA sets up the registration plan and procedures for each semester. The

student is personally responsible for registering under the supervision of their assigned academic advisor.

Enrolment has grown from a total of 2023 students in 2005-2006 to 2325 in 2009-2010 (Portfolio, p.68) but the Panel heard that in the 2010-2011 academic year, enrolment has exceeded 3000, and is expected to increase by another 1500 in 2011-2012. The Panel was informed that the College is aware of the implications for staff workload and physical resources. The need to address the impact of student growth in terms of provision of library services (see Recommendation 14) and information and learning technology services (see Section 6.4) has already been noted by the Panel.

The Engineering Department is the largest of the academic departments, followed by the Information Technology Department and finally the Business Department. Over 30% of NCT's students are currently enrolled in the General Foundation Program (GFP). The College presented detailed student profile data in the Portfolio and stated that it plans to carry out an analysis of the profile of students in collaboration with the MoM so that the student profile can be aligned with the provision of services to students (Portfolio, p.68). The Panel acknowledges NCT's efforts to make effective use of student profile data.

7.3 *Student Satisfaction and Climate*

NCT solicits student feedback through StC, discussion forums, and satisfaction surveys. The College's SAD collects student feedback to identify areas for improvement. The Panel confirmed examples of actions that have already been taken in response to feedback. The Panel met a number of students, many of whom appreciated the care and attention extended to them by the College's faculty and staff members and reported that they were happy with their experience at NCT. The Panel considers that the SAD is making considerable progress towards the achievement of high levels of student satisfaction. Interviews with students highlighted that opportunities to discuss their complaints were available at NCT, primarily through direct and personal contact with a relevant position of authority or StC. The lack of space and complaints about infrastructure were the major issues voiced to the Panel by NCT students.

The Panel noted that in relation to these issues, NCT has clear future plans for expanding the space and improving facilities. The Panel appreciates NCT's plans to disseminate the information regarding its services to all students through different channels, but believes that NCT should take the opportunity to develop tangible action plans that are clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

7.4 *Student Behavior*

Student behavior is governed by NCT's Bylaws. Students on General Foundation Programs and specialization programs are given presentations during the induction week and NCT provides student handbooks which cover its expectations regarding student behavior (Portfolio, p.69). Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that the induction program had been helpful and that staff were approachable. The Panel concluded that the College's approach to student induction was effective and enhanced the overall student learning experience.

The Panel learned that reported cases of cheating, grievances and misconduct are dealt with through committees according to standard procedures. These committees include the Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee. Students who are not satisfied with the responses they receive are able to appeal (see Section 1.11).

7.5 Career and Employment Services

Career and employment services are provided by NCT's On-the-Job Training (OJT) Department, linking employment services to student placement. NCT has taken part in career fairs and has introduced a course called "Job Search" which is compulsory for all students. Private sector companies interview prospective employees on campus and lists of students looking for jobs are sent to the MoM. The Ministry also maintains a job bank that catalogues employment vacancies and is accessible to students. NCT has established a marketing unit and plans to start a placement centre to strengthen links between graduates and the job market (Portfolio, p.71). While the Panel supports such initiatives, it encourages NCT to take a more proactive approach to tracking graduates and reinforcing links with them.

The OJT program was seen by both students and employers to be a job recruitment pathway. A Careers Fair is organized annually to provide a venue for employers to meet students, and 24 companies attended the 2011 event. The Panel heard positive reports from both students and employers who had participated in the event, and encourages the College to continue to support activities promoting career and employment services.

7.6 Student Finances

Students do not pay fees as NCT is a government-funded College. A monthly allowance is provided to students by the MoM to cover transportation and housing expenses according to their situation. NCT has limited control over its students' financial allocations as they are funded directly by the government. The Panel could not confirm the existence of mechanisms for counseling in hardship cases. Student feedback on finance showed that most of the students were dissatisfied with the amount of allowance they received. They also reported occasional delays in receiving these allowances. Although this issue was indicated by NCT (Portfolio, p.72), the Panel was informed through interviews with students that the monthly allowance is now better than before and sufficient to meet students' needs.

7.7 Accommodation, Catering and Transport

NCT does not provide student accommodation but assists students in finding suitable accommodation in nearby areas (Portfolio, p.73). Meals and snacks services are provided through staff and student canteens. The Panel confirmed that the College has solicited feedback on these services and has been responsive to findings; for example, low student satisfaction with the College's canteen has led to formal action against the previous contractor.

Transportation is provided by NCT only for industrial visits, book fairs, sports activities, tours and medical emergencies. NCT acts as liaison between students and the companies that provide transport to and from the College. The Panel found no issue in this area. The Panel encourages NCT to be more proactive in monitoring and, where justified, intervening to ensure that the arrangements for students' needs are being met.

7.8 Medical and Counseling Facilities

NCT has an in-house clinic staffed by two nurses (male and female). The clinic provides, during working hours, basic health services for students and staff (Portfolio, p.74). Medical emergencies are sent to the nearby governmental hospital using NCT transportation. The Panel noted that student surveys were used by NCT to monitor the effectiveness of its medical and counseling facilities and heard no complaints about the clinic during their interviews with students.

The SAD provides counseling services for students who have social, emotional or psychological problems. Documentation reviewed by the Panel, supported by feedback from students during

interviews, suggests that most students are largely satisfied with the counseling and advising process.

7.9 *International Student Services*

This section does not apply to NCT as it does not enroll international students.

7.10 *Social and Recreational Services and Facilities*

The HSAG Department encourages students to organize and participate in various cultural, social and recreational activities. Students are given the freedom to express their talents and channel their energy through useful activities. Despite the College's claims, there is a common perception among the students and staff that the NCT does not provide adequate services/facilities in this regard. Results from the College's student satisfaction survey show that students complained about insufficient extracurricular activities (Portfolio, p.76).

NCT recognizes the need for continued improvement in the area of sports facilities and extracurricular activities (Portfolio, p.76). The Panel supports NCT's initiatives in this area, including the plan to coordinate with the Nizwa Youth Complex authorities to allocate one day per week for NCT students to conduct sporting activities there (Portfolio, p.76). NCT expects that with the development of the new College infrastructure, indoor/outdoor sports facilities will improve. The Panel is aware that most of the improvement plans are still awaiting MoM approval and suggests that students should be involved in the planning and arrangements for these new facilities. The Panel understands there is a lack of Ministry funding for student activities and supports NCT's proposal to have a separate budget for this purpose to enhance its social and recreational services and encourages the College's efforts towards addressing these requirements.

Affirmation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Nizwa College of Technology needs to enhance its social and recreational services for students and supports the College in the implementation of its improvement plans.

8 STAFF AND STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

NCT recognizes that Human Resources (HR) is a critical aspect for the achievement of its Mission, Vision and Goals as well as for its Strategic Plan and strategies (Portfolio, p.77). This Chapter reports on the Panel's findings in relation to staff and staff support services including HR planning and management, staff profile, recruitment and selection, induction, professional development, performance planning and review, promotion and other incentives, severance, staff organizational climate and retention and Omanisation.

8.1 *Human Resources Planning & Management*

The responsibility for recruiting new academic staff or administrative staff for the College rests largely with the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) and contracted agencies (Portfolio, p.77). NCT contributes to this process by identifying academic staff or administrative staff shortages and reporting these in writing to the MoM. The College claims that the adequacy of HR planning and management is reflected in its optimal teaching load for academic staff, low teacher-to-student ratios, and adequate number of courses offered every semester (Portfolio, p.77). Although the Panel confirmed that the teaching load for academic staff has recently improved, it found that planning is done on an annual basis only and tends to be centered on staff recruitment to fill teaching positions as required. The Panel also heard that the limited control over the process of recruitment at College level is reflected in the fact that some teachers are not teaching in their area of specialization.

The HR Department would benefit from developing a clear operational plan to support the College's strategic objectives, with measurable targets. The Panel considers that developing, managing and monitoring such a comprehensive HR plan is essential to meet the College's needs in areas such as recruitment, performance management and professional development.

Recommendation 15

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology adopt an overall human resource plan with measurable targets in order to support the College in meeting its strategic objectives.

The College is also urged to develop and implement a system for succession planning in order to ensure that changes in senior management do not negatively affect its operations (see Section 1.3).

8.2 *Staff Profile*

In the academic year 2010-2011, the College had 271 full-time staff members of whom 217 are in the academic areas (Portfolio, p.78). The staff come from about 20 different countries, with the majority of the academic staff from India, the Philippines and Oman. Over 59% of the teaching staff have Master's degrees, about 11% are PhD holders and about 18% of staff hold Bachelor's degrees (Portfolio, p.79).

The Panel did not establish how NCT sets targets in the area of staff qualifications and experience to link with future developments. The statement about the development of the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) (Portfolio, p.78) appears to be in conflict with another statement that "NCT plans to tap the expertise of qualified staff to develop an automated HRIS system" (Portfolio, p.79) as an improvement action. However, NCT informed the Panel that a new in-house HR system has been developed and it is in the testing stage.

The Panel could not confirm how the staff profile information collected is being used at NCT to support the planning process. There is no evidence of statistical analyses to review whether or not the staffing profile is optimally aligned with the College's Strategic Plan. The Panel suggests that NCT develop appropriate measures and instruments to analyze data about staff profiles with a view to integrating it into a formal HR planning and management system (see Recommendation 15).

8.3 Recruitment and Selection

NCT's staff recruitment and selection is guided by its Strategic Plan sub-goal 7.a: "To establish an effective and efficient recruitment process". The College recruits directly through MoM (primarily for administrative and support staff) or through recruitment agencies (for teaching staff). The process for appointment of staff involves Heads of Departments and Heads of Sections identifying staff shortages in their departments and then forwarding their requirements of staff to the Dean through the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA) and Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs (ADAF). An integrated list of staff needed is then submitted to the MoM. Academic staff requirements are based on projection of student numbers. The MoM has a formal agreement with private employment agencies to recruit staff in accordance with the MoM's procedures. Staff are then recruited by the MoM or its appointed agents through placing advertisements in appropriate national or international newspapers, or by advertising on web sites; scrutinizing application forms and/or curricula vitae and conducting panel interviews. Offers are made to successful candidates, following approval from the Dean. The Panel was informed that the recruitment process for non-academic staff is handled by the MoM and the Ministry of Civil Service. During interviews with internal and external stakeholders, the Panel heard that the recruitment process is undertaken jointly for all of the Colleges of Technology (CoTs), rather than individual colleges, with short-listed candidates 'pooled' unless there is a specific requirement for a particular College. The Panel also heard that the Dean has the authority to appoint a member of staff to an acting position in order to fill a vacancy temporarily.

The Panel noted that NCT seems satisfied with the recruitment process through the MoM and agencies and claims that the good planning, lower staff turnover and optimal staff availability by MoM is indicated by the decreasing trend in requirements for new applicants over the years (Portfolio, p.80, Table 8.3). The Panel noted that there are no mechanisms for evaluating the recruitment process or ensuring that the right candidates have been selected for a specific position. The Panel encourages NCT to take a more proactive role in recruitment and selection of its staff in order to ensure that the College's staffing profile is aligned with the College's strategic goals and operational plans.

Recommendation 16

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology take a more proactive role in the recruitment process and evaluate its effectiveness so that the staffing profile is aligned with the College's strategic goals and operational plans.

8.4 Induction

NCT's staff induction is guided by its Strategic Plan sub-goal 7.b.1 to "create standard induction procedures and support newly recruited staff through a full and formal induction". NCT's Quality Assurance Manual includes the necessary policies and procedures for staff induction. NCT recognizes the importance of staff induction and states that all new academic staff members are received by the Dean, Assistant Deans and HR Department before being sent to their respective department where they go through a series of induction activities (Portfolio, p.80).

The Panel was informed that recruitment agents conduct a separate induction process for international teaching staff members prior to their arrival in Oman as part of a familiarization process, while a formal induction program is organized in each department after their arrival. However, in interviews with the non-Omani staff it became clear to the Panel that there is a need for an induction of new expatriate staff on Omani culture. The Panel encourages the College to further investigate this area

Members of academic staff confirmed to the Panel that they were supportive of the induction program but requested more social activities. The Panel established during staff interviews that NCT was embarking on concerted efforts to further improve the staff induction system by introducing social activities and creating a staff club. The staff reported that they appreciated these efforts.

Affirmation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Nizwa College of Technology that there is a need to improve its staff morale and supports its efforts to do so for example through introducing further social activities and creating a staff club as a staff amenity.

8.5 Professional Development

NCT has developed a Strategic Plan sub-goal *“To provide continuing personal and professional development programs to all staff”* supported by enabling strategies and associated KPIs. NCT states that the staff development is the responsibility of the Dean, Assistant Deans and HoDs (Portfolio, pp.82-83) and also indicates that training needs may be identified based on "a continuous training needs analysis of the staff". NCT states that it values professional development as an important and integral part of its operations to improve the skills of the staff in their workplace. Scholarships are provided by the MoM for Omani staff to study abroad or at Sultan Qaboos University. For non-Omanis, the focus has been on in-house training. NCT specifies the support provided to mostly Omani staff members for external professional development activities such as attending conferences or seminars inside or outside Oman (Portfolio, p.81). A number of workshops and training sessions have been delivered through the Staff Development Unit by in-house trainers since NCT lacks funds to invite resource personnel from outside. The College indicated that survey results indicate staff are, in general, satisfied with the quality and usefulness of the training provided (Portfolio, p.81).

In-house activities are individually evaluated by participants. While the surveys indicate acceptable rates of satisfaction with NCT's current practices, interviews with relevant staff showed varying levels of satisfaction, with some staff members stating they were satisfied with the professional development opportunities provided while others believed more initiatives could be put in place and more challenging training programs could be implemented. The Panel found that staff with supervisory or managerial duties were not in general being prepared for their new positions.

Recommendation 17

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Nizwa College of Technology further expand its professional development program to cover all staff development needs so that it is satisfactorily linked to the College's strategic goals.

The Panel is concerned about how the College ensures that academic staff and academic support staff remain up-to-date in their subject specializations and practices in the field. The Panel found that membership of international professional bodies is not common and heard that such

membership is not supported by the College. NCT is advised to focus on professional development in relation to academic currency and staff roles and responsibilities in order to achieve the College's stated goals. NCT is also encouraged to seek involvement of sponsors for staff development either through the SDU or collaboration with other higher educational organizations and professional institutions.

8.6 Performance Planning and Review

NCT recognizes the importance of having rigorous procedures for staff appraisals (Portfolio, p.82) in order to provide proper promotional avenues for staff. NCT has developed a SP sub-goal 7.c "*To establish an appraisal system that recognizes hard work and identifies professional and personal training needs of staff*". This goal is supported by enabling strategies.

Several forms of staff appraisal activities are conducted at NCT including initial appraisal, which is the first appraisal of staff conducted during the probation period and periodic appraisal which is carried out throughout the career of the staff. It comprises student feedback; Head of Section feedback and Head of Department feedback. In the case of students' complaints, or any reason for re-evaluation of a staff member, a special appraisal similar to the initial appraisal is conducted.

NCT claims in its approach that there is a link between the staff appraisal and professional development programs (Portfolio, p.82) and staff confirmed this during interviews. The Panel confirmed that academic staff appraisal systems have been established in the College and supports the College's stated approach to continue creating a direct link between staff appraisal and training needs and also establishing a feedback system to determine staff satisfaction with the process (Portfolio, p.83). The Panel also found there was no clear policy or procedure on how performance planning and review are managed for the Dean and Assistant Deans. NCT is encouraged to address these issues as it develops its overall HR plan (see Recommendation 15).

8.7 Promotion and Other Incentives

Staff recruited by the MoM are eligible for promotion based on the conditions set out by the Ministry of Civil Service, whereas staff recruited by MoM through private agencies are not eligible for promotion (although the Panel was informed that their employment package can be enhanced on NCT's recommendation). NCT recognizes the need to have a promotion and rewards policy applicable to all categories of employees within the organization and the Panel encourages such activity in order to support succession planning and the long term HR management of the College (Portfolio, p.84). The Panel believes that NCT should consider developing faculty promotion rules which are unified and transparent to all academic staff and based on clear criteria including, for example, research, teaching as well as contribution and service to the institution and the community. Similarly, clear promotion rules should be set for non-academic staff based on performance review and experience.

In terms of incentives, NCT has set up an "Employee of the Month" scheme and organizes various competitions for its staff where winners get certificates of excellence, or are given tokens and souvenirs for outstanding performance. The Panel confirmed the existence of such incentives and noted that these are well appreciated by the academic staff.

8.8 Severance

NCT indicates that its approach to severance is governed by Civil Service Law for Omani staff and by the terms of each contract for non-Omani staff (Portfolio, p.84). The decision to terminate services is initiated by receipt of a complaint, followed by inquiry, report from HoD, ADAA/ADAFa and finally the recommendation of the Dean (Portfolio, p.84). In case of

immediate termination, the concerned employee is compensated according to MoM policy or terms of their contract.

The Panel was unable to find evidence of a formal termination process supported by standard HR practices. The Panel also found that the College has no mechanism to measure the effectiveness of severance procedures, although it has acknowledged the need to improve the severance process by establishing clear procedures for it, with clear roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation 18

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement a systematic approach to monitoring and reviewing staff severance and dismissals including appeals and exit records.

8.9 Staff Organisational Climate and Retention

NCT recognizes that maintaining a healthy work environment at the College is everyone's responsibility. However, the Dean, Assistant Deans, HoDs and HoSs take the lead in determining the work culture of the departments and the College as a whole. The College claims that they have in place events, competitions and activities to involve the staff in co-curricular activities (Portfolio, p.85). The Panel confirmed the existence of such activities but also heard that they were not enough activities to fulfill the needs of all the staff.

NCT conducted two surveys in 2009 and 2010 to monitor organizational climate in relation to staff satisfaction with NCT services. In 2010, more than 88% of staff in five departments responded to 16 questionnaire items. Results showed that around 80% of the staff were very happy with the working environment at NCT. The four areas of concern were staff development, leave policy, documentation to be maintained, and office space.

The Panel was informed that NCT is aiming to develop ways to improve staff morale and recognize staff achievement. The Panel supports the College's efforts in these areas, especially if these are developed as part of an overall improvement plan to achieve Strategic Goals.

The Panel noted that NCT recognizes the need for a system to deal with staff grievances (Portfolio, p. 84 – 85), and believes that the College needs to develop and implement formal staff grievance processes which are communicated to all staff.

Recommendation 19

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the Nizwa College of Technology develop and implement staff grievance processes which are clearly communicated to all staff.

8.10 Omanisation

The College states that it follows the Omanisation policy as laid down by the MoM (Portfolio, p. 86). The College also supports Omani staff members in undertaking further studies in Oman and abroad to gain higher qualifications, although this is sponsored through the MoM. As mentioned above, NCT reports that 12 staff from NCT have returned after finishing their studies abroad.

The Panel appreciates the efforts of NCT in achieving 92.6% Omanisation of administrative staff and understands that there has been moderate success with Omanisation in the academic areas (Portfolio, p.86). The Panel understands that NCT has faced particular challenges in hiring Omani faculty members and that developing Omanis to assume academic positions at NCT is a

long-term process. As the College develops its HR plan (see Recommendation 15), it is encouraged to establish clear targets for Omanisation and to consider different strategies to attract Omani staff to ensure it takes full advantage of available support from MoM for its Omanisation efforts.

9 GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES

NCT states that it is committed to ensuring that the College facilities are efficiently managed, effectively used and innovatively developed (Portfolio, p.87). This Chapter reports the Panel's findings in relation to general support services planning and management; public relations and marketing; communication services; and facilities management.

9.1 General Support Services and Facilities Planning and Management

This area is under the overall supervision of the Dean, with the Assistant Dean Administration and Financial Affairs, (ADAFAs) being responsible for the management and planning of all services, except those under 9.2 which are the responsibility of two committees (see below). The Head of the Administration Department, supervised by the ADAFA, executes plans and supervises the staff involved in providing general maintenance, security, greenery maintenance, purchase of equipment and maintenance of parking facilities. The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) determines the overall budget for general support services and facilities, and in addition, provides the human resources (HR) through both direct contracts and external contractors. The overall responsibility for these areas is attributed to the MoM and appears to be compromised by perceived budgetary restrictions (Portfolio, pp.87-88).

The Panel noted that the effectiveness of general support services is measured primarily through staff and student surveys. Evidence gained from the Portfolio (p.87), supplementary materials and from formal and random interviews during the audit visit indicated a general dissatisfaction with the quality of provision and service as well as a lack of clarity of the timescales by which proposals for development submitted to the MoM would be considered, and if approved, undertaken.

9.2 Public Relations and Marketing

The responsibility for implementation of the NCT's Strategic Plan goal to foster an open and fruitful relationship with public and private sector organizations as well as with the community rests with the Public Relation and Reception Committee and Media and Marketing Committee. Interactions with industry and the community are referred to in NCT's Portfolio (p.88).

The Panel noted that evidence of success was presented as results from staff and student surveys, within an overall survey of general support services facilities. NCT claims (Portfolio, p.89) that its target of achieving 100% media coverage of major College events has been accomplished, and the survey satisfaction level of staff and students of 3.1 against the global target used for all surveys of 3.5 indicates that there is a reasonable level of satisfaction with media coverage (Portfolio, p.89). NCT has identified that surveys of external stakeholders need also to be considered, and more concentration on penetrating the English media is necessary. At the time of audit, the Panel did not see evidence of progress on these matters. The Panel encourages NCT to undertake an evaluation of both the current status of its perception by the public as well as the effectiveness of its public relations and marketing activities.

9.3 Communication Services

The Panel noted in the Portfolio (p.90) and in supplementary materials that a wide range of hardware, software and internet based systems as well as hard copy materials were available to support effective communication. The Panel had the opportunity during the audit visit to verify and note the effectiveness of these systems, and to receive valuable feedback from staff and students.

NCT had identified that one of the main impacts on the satisfaction level of communication was internet speed. The Panel noted that this had been improved and was now 16Mbps and it may be assumed that the satisfaction level may now be higher than the figures gained from the 2010 surveys. It was also noted that a further increase in internet speed to 32Mbps was proposed but not as yet approved.

Overall, the satisfaction and effectiveness in this area was perceived to be very good in operational and interpersonal areas. However, the Panel believes that the future expansion of enrolment to NCT and the subsequent effect on students, staff and overall resources will put continued pressure on the need for fast, efficient and effective communication throughout the institution.

9.4 Facilities Management

NCT has identified maintenance of stores, inventories, equipment purchase, receipt and delivery, asset registers, and scrapping or write off of old or unused equipment as part of the remit and responsibility of the Head of Administration Department (Portfolio, p. 90). An audit team from the MoM conducts an annual audit of procedures and maintenance of inventory. Other areas cited in this section have been considered and commented on by the audit Panel under 9.1 above

There was no evidence presented that relates specifically to facilities management as described above, nor were annual audit reports produced by the MoM identified in supporting materials. Evidence gathered during interviews indicated that NCT was aware of improvements that could be made for example by software systems for asset management, and potential linkage of such system to other parts of management information systems. The Panel noted that submissions had been made to the MoM for additional staff to help in this area.

NCT may wish to consider implementing a study of current procedures in facilities management, and a study of potential areas of improvement through software based asset management, condition surveys, and maintenance scheduling linked to replacement and refurbishment in order to yield increased efficiency and effectiveness in this area.

APPENDIX A. AUDIT PANEL

Dr. Patsy Paxton (Chair)
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University,
Port Elizabeth
South Africa

Professor Frank McIntosh
Consultant
(Formerly Dean of Caledonian College of Engineering)
Oman

Professor Hussein A. Abdullah,
Director of School of Engineering
University of Guelph
Canada

Dr. Omar Houache
Formerly Head of Department
International Maritime College
Oman

Dr. Terry Fulljames
Director Academic, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic
New Zealand

Dr. Ali R. Al-Hassnawi (Executive Officer)
Oman Academic Accreditation Authority

APPENDIX B. ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND TERMS

The following abbreviations, acronyms and terms are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context. In some cases, URLs are provided to facilitate further enquiries about these acronyms and terms.

ACCA.....	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ADAA	Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs
ADAFSA	Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs
ADRI.....	A four step, cyclical model for analysing a topic, comprising: Approach → Deployment → Results → Improvement.
ADSA.....	Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
API	Academic Integrity Policy
Approach.....	The first dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on evaluating what a HEI aims to achieve for a given topic and how it proposes to achieve it.
ARD	Admission and Registration
BoT.....	Board of Trustees
Call Back Interview.....	An interview conducted by the Audit Panel towards the end of the Audit Visit for which it has invited specific people, usually at short notice, to respond to particular issues on which the Panel will require assistance.
CAT.....	Certified Accounting Technician
CC	College Council
CGFUD	Counseling and Graduate Follow up Department
CoTs.....	Colleges of Technology
CSMS.....	Centralized Student Management System
CSS.....	Computer Services Section
DC	Discipline Committee
Deployment.....	The second dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on whether a HEI's plans for a given topic are being followed in practice, and if not, why not.
DGTE.....	Director General for Technological Education
ELC	English Language Centre
EPT.....	Enhancement Practical Training
ESS.....	Educational Services Section
ETC	Educational Technology Centre
Executive Officer	An OAAA staff member assigned to an Audit Panel to provide professional guidance and support.
External Reviewer.....	A Member of the OAAA Register of External Reviewers; a person approved by the OAAA Board to participate as a member of the OAAA's various external review panels.
GAs	Graduate Attributes
GFP	General Foundation Program
HEAC.....	Higher Education Admissions Center

HEI.....	Higher Education Institution (also known as HEP – Higher Education Provider)
HoD.....	Heads of Department
HoSs.....	Heads of Sections
HR.....	Human Resources
HRIS	Human Resources Information System
HSAG	Housing, Student Activities and Graduation
HSC.....	Health & Safety Committee
IC	Investigation Committee
ICDL.....	International Computer Driving License
ILTS.....	Information and Learning Technology Services
Improvement.....	The fourth dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on how effectively an organisation is improving its <i>approach</i> and <i>deployment</i> for any given topic in order to achieve better <i>results</i> .
IT.....	Information Technology
KPI.....	Key Performance Indicator
Master Action Plan.....	Document produced by NCT in response to a request from the Panel in which planned improvements were identified together with a timeline and progress to date.
MMC.....	Media and Marketing Committee
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education (www.mohe.gov.om)
MoM.....	Ministry of Manpower
OAAA Board	The governing body of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
OAAA.....	Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (www.oac.gov.om)
OAC.....	Oman Accreditation Council (became OAAA in 2010)
OJT	On-the-Job-Training
Panel Chairperson.....	The Chairperson of the Audit Panel.
Panel Member.....	An OAAA External Reviewer who is a member of an Audit Panel.
PMS	Policy Management System
Portfolio	see <i>Portfolio</i> .
Portfolio	The report produced as the result of a self study. Also forms the main submission made to the OAAA by the HEI being audited.
PRRC	Public Relation and Reception Committee
QA.....	Quality Assurance
QAD.....	Quality Audit Department
QAFU	Quality Assurance Follow up Unit
QAM.....	Quality Assurance Manual
Quality Assurance.....	The combination of policies and processes for ensuring that stated intentions are met.
Quality Audit.....	An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the system and processes by which a HEI sets, pursues and achieves its mission and vision.
Quality Audit Report.....	A public report published by the OAAA which presents the findings and conclusions of the Audit Panel's External Review of a HEI.

Quality Enhancement	The combination of policies and processes for improving upon existing <i>approach, deployment</i> and <i>results</i> .
Random Interview	An interview conducted <i>in situ</i> by individual Panel Members during the Audit but separately from the main interview sessions.
Results.....	The third dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on the evidence of the outputs and outcomes of a topic's <i>approach</i> and <i>deployment</i> .
RMC.....	Risk Management Committee
SAD.....	Student Affairs Department
SDU.....	Staff Development Unit
SLOs.....	Student Learning Objectives
StC.....	Student Council

