



**Oman Academic
Accreditation Authority**

**Report of an Audit of
Salalah College of Technology**

August 2010

Audit Report Number 011

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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 Salalah College of Technology (SCT). It comments on SCT's Mission and Vision, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of their systems for achieving its 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 SCT's activities, and constructive feedback to SCT to assist with its ongoing improvement efforts.

The quality audit commenced with SCT undertaking a self study of its Mission, Vision and systems. The results were summarized in their *Quality Audit Portfolio* (the 'Portfolio'). This document was submitted to the OAAA by the due date of 31 August 2009.

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 19 October 2009 to consider SCT's Portfolio. Following this, the Audit Panel Chairperson and Executive Officer undertook a planning visit on behalf of the Panel to SCT on 15 November 2009 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 SCT's activities. No submissions were received.

The audit visit took place over 15-17 December 2009. During this time, the Panel spoke with approximately 100 people, including governing authorities, staff, students and external stakeholders. They also visited a selection of venues and reviewed additional materials.

No information provided after 17 December 2009 (being the last day of the audit visit) was taken into consideration for the purposes of this audit, other than one pre-existing item specifically requested by the Panel in advance.

The Report contains a summary of the Panel's findings, together with formal Commendations where good practices have been confirmed, Affirmations where SCT's ongoing quality improvement efforts merit support, and Recommendations where there are significant opportunities or improvement not yet being adequately addressed. The Report aims to provide a balanced set of observations, but does not comment on every system in place at SCT.

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 29 August 2010.

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.oac.gov.om>). Full details of the quality audit process are available in OAAA's *HEI Quality Audit Manual* (available from <http://www.oac.gov.om/qa/HEI/>).

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, unlike the Audit, provides 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.oac.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 summarizes 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

Salalah College of Technology (SCT) is located in the Dhofar region of Oman, approximately 1000 kilometres south from the capital Muscat. It offers programs up to the level of Higher Diploma in Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies and at the time of the audit had over 2500 students enrolled, mostly from the local region. SCT is one of seven public Colleges of Technology (CoTs) in Oman and is overseen by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). All the CoTs share a common Mission, Vision, Bylaws and Strategic Plan. Although there are many areas of commonality between the seven CoTs, each College undergoes a separate quality audit. The conclusions in each resulting Report may therefore vary from one College to another.

SCT submitted a comprehensive Portfolio which reflected an inclusive, reflective development process. The self-review was clearly analytical, based on the ADRI (see Appendix B) model, involving staff from all departments across the College with support from the MoM's Quality Assurance Department (QAD). A large amount of informative documentation was also made readily available to the Panel.

All CoTs share the same governance structure which is supervised by the MoM. Although the management structure in each College is essentially the same, there are variations in how the management style of each institution is developed. The Panel concluded that SCT needed to develop a mechanism to review and evaluate the effectiveness of its governance and management structures. The College has developed a large number of committees to support its management activities. Although committees can be one useful management approach, the College should strike a balance between their potential for effectiveness and the burden that a large number of committee memberships has on staff. All seven CoTs share a common Strategic Plan, with each College developing its own sub-goals. SCT should ensure that its sub-goals are further developed in consultation with its external stakeholders, such as College Board members, in order to reflect the local context.

The College is developing an inclusive approach to operational planning but its approach to financial management should be reviewed to strengthen the link between its strategic objectives and resource provision. The Panel supports SCT's efforts in developing its risk and policy management systems. The College has entity and review mechanisms in place, as evidenced in the Strategic Plan Accomplishment Report. It needs to consider developing a more robust system for data collection and analysis in order to inform its review systems. SCT needs to build on the work of its Health and Safety Committee and develop and implement a comprehensive health and safety plan.

In the area of student learning by coursework, the College has developed a list of graduate attributes in order to align the skills of its graduates with those needed in the workplace. However, the College should ensure that these attributes are familiar to the College community and their attainment is more systematically evaluated both internally and externally. The Panel acknowledged that the College is making efforts to align its Foundation Programs with the national standards for General Foundation Programs.

In terms of its program curricula, the College intends to include industry members in its in-house curriculum review committee but the process for curriculum review seems to be lengthy and may have an impact on the currency and relevance of the programs. SCT is working on developing a plagiarism policy

and will need to ensure college-wide compliance with this. On the Job Training (OJT) is a key feature of the learning experience at SCT and is well regarded by students, staff and employers. The College needs to monitor graduate destinations and employers' satisfaction with students more formally.

As mentioned above, the CoTs share a common Vision, Mission and Bylaws. The Panel noted that research was included in the Vision and Bylaws of SCT but has not been included in the Strategic Plan. This leads to a lack of clarity in the College's approach to research and its role in the college-wide community. SCT needs to clarify its position with regard to its research and consultancy activities.

SCT has managed to secure funding for its facilities from local industry, which reflects the strength of its relationships with industry partners in the region. However, there is no overall operational plan in this area which would coordinate efforts and maximize the impact of these activities. The College needs to consider opportunities for benchmarking activities either through professional bodies or through its association with other higher education institutions, including other CoTs. The Panel supports the College's efforts to develop its alumni activities and to engage with the community at large.

In the area of academic support services, the College's registry services are centrally monitored and are consistent with other CoTs in the network. However, SCT should consider the risks associated with data storage and back up. At the time of the audit visit, the library was in the process of being refurbished but its services and collections need to be supported by adequate funding. The Panel supports the College's efforts to enhance its IT facilities, such as through its IT Helpdesk activities. The Panel also recognizes the positive contribution that SCT's academic advising system is making to the student learning experience.

Students whom the Panel met were happy overall with their learning experience at SCT and felt that they were very much part of a College community. The College's Student Affairs Department (SAD) oversees student support services including medical facilities, student orientation and graduate follow-up. It is also tasked with organizing sports and facilitating social, cultural and religious extra-curricular activities. Although the SAD appears to satisfy most students in the various areas under its remit, feedback from students would indicate that they are dissatisfied with the provision of medical and cafeteria services. The College has also not been able to provide sport facilities other than football. This is an area the SCT needs to review.

The College has formed a number of committees to deal with Human Resource (HR) areas such as recruitment, induction, appraisal and staff development. However, there is no overarching HR plan or systematic approach to analyzing staff requirements. Staff are recruited through either the Civil Service Ministry or through private agencies (particularly academic staff). The Panel found that there were no mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of the agencies and their activities and this needs to be addressed. SCT has established a well-received staff induction process; however, it needs to ensure that professional development opportunities are provided in line with staff needs for all academic and non-academic staff. There is disparity in the performance review processes of staff recruited by Ministries and those by agencies; this needs to be reviewed by the College in order to establish a transparent appraisal system at all levels. SCT should also take the opportunity to consider its approach to rewards, incentive and severance which may contribute to the high staff turnover in some areas of the College.

Although SCT has developed operational plans for the various departments involved in general support services, the Panel found a lack of an overall plan for the ongoing maintenance of building and facilities. The approach to facilities maintenance needs to be revised in order to meet the College needs. At the time of the audit, the College campus was undergoing renovation and this should have a significant impact on the provision of services. Although there are plans to establish a Marketing Unit, SCT needs to develop a comprehensive public relations and marketing strategy to support a more proactive approach in this area. The Panel acknowledged the efforts the College is making to improve its communication strategies within the College.

Summary of Commendations

A formal Commendation recognizes an instance of particularly good practice.

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for its successful On the Job Training program. 19
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for working with local industry to acquire financial support in order to improve the facilities on campus..... 24
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for developing an effective academic advising process to support students' learning experience. 28
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology's efforts in the provision of career and employment services for students. 31
5. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for developing an effective staff induction process which provides a helpful foundation for new staff..... 34

Summary of Affirmations

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

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Salalah College of Technology that department staff need to be consistently involved in the development of operational plans and supports its efforts to do so. 12
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Salalah College of Technology that it needs to develop a comprehensive approach to risk management and supports its efforts in doing so..... 13
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to develop and implement a policy management and review system and supports its initial steps in this area. 14
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority affirms that Salalah College of Technology needs to review its existing Foundation Program and supports its efforts to align the program to Oman's National General Foundation Program Standards. 17
5. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to develop a plagiarism policy which is disseminated to all staff and students and supports its efforts in this area, while recognizing that the College needs to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently. 18
6. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to encourage greater vigilance and compliance with examination rules and regulations and supports the measures that it has taken to address the issues in this area..... 19
7. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to strengthen its relationship with its alumni and supports its efforts to develop in this area. 25
8. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to enhance its IT support services and acknowledges its efforts to do so. 27

9. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to improve its facilities and supports its current efforts to renovate the campus..... 37
10. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to review its channels for communication and supports its current initiatives, such as improving the College website..... 38

Summary of Recommendations

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

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a review system to measure the effectiveness of its governance and management structures..... 11
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its current committee structure and consider alternative mechanisms to support its approach to the management of the College..... 11
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology involve external stakeholders in guiding and articulating its strategic direction, such as in the development of the College's strategic sub-goals..... 12
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop comprehensive medium and long term forward financial planning mechanisms in order to strengthen the link between the College's strategic objectives and resource provision..... 13
5. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology strengthen its rigour of methods for data collection and analysis in order to provide information that reliably informs continuous improvement..... 14
6. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop, communicate, implement and monitor a comprehensive institutional health and safety plan..... 15
7. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its graduate attributes and ensure that they are embedded in its curricula and that the attainment of these attributes are evaluated systematically both internally and externally and on a systematic basis..... 16
8. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology monitor its curriculum review mechanism in order to ensure that course content is current and meets labour market needs in a timely manner..... 17
9. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology, as a matter of urgency, take measures to reduce the high level of exam absenteeism, whilst maintaining consistency across assessment processes..... 19
10. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology clarify its position with respect to research and consultancy..... 22
11. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a comprehensive and appropriately resourced operational plan for industry and community engagement to enable it to pursue its strategic directions in this area..... 23

12. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology urgently review the adequacy of its library resources and services to meet the needs of staff and students as well as develop and implement mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of these services to underpin continuous improvement..... 27
13. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop a consistent approach to analyzing and responding to issues raised in students' surveys and to ensure that students are informed of actions taken as a result of their feedback..... 30
14. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review the provision of resources for student support services, especially in the area of extra-curricula activities. 32
15. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its current Human Resource system and develop a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to meet its strategic objectives. 33
16. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the recruitment agencies used and provide feedback on this to all stakeholders. 34
17. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop its professional development program further so that it is adequately linked to strategic goals, staff needs and is available for all academic and administrative staff..... 34
18. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a consistent and effective performance planning and review process for all staff at all levels. 35
19. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a clear, transparent system of incentives and reward that is clearly communicated to all staff..... 35
20. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology, as a matter of urgency, explore and address the issue of high staff turnover, particularly amongst academic staff..... 36
21. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement an overall maintenance schedule and reviews it on a regular basis..... 38

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Salalah College of Technology (SCT) is one of seven public Colleges of Technology (CoTs) in Oman and is overseen by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). All the CoTs share common Mission, Vision, Bylaws and Strategic Plan. The Panel found a lack of consistency between the overall Vision, Bylaws and the Strategic Plan, particularly in the area of research which the College needs to address (see Chapter 4 of this Report). This following 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*

The current Mission Statement, Vision and Values (MVV) of SCT are the outcomes of a workshop conducted by the MoM in May 2005, with the participation of all the CoTs. The Deans of these Colleges were subsequently asked to contribute their college's views regarding the MVV. Based on these views, the MVV for SCT were finalized (Portfolio, p.1).

“College Mission Statement: The mission of the SCT is 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 economic development” (Portfolio, p.1)

“College Vision: SCT intends to become the “College of Choice” for students and for the industry by providing demonstrably high quality teaching, learning and research that make a significant contribution to ongoing national economic development” (ibid).

The Panel noticed the difference between the CoTs Bylaws (2004), and the SCT MVV with respect to research activity. For example, while research is included in the Bylaws and the Vision Statement, it does not appear either in the Mission Statement nor in the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (see Chapter 4). SCT needs to ensure strong alignment between the MVV and the Strategic and Operational Plans to provide guidance for its activities in the Salalah region, such as in the area of library provision (see Recommendation 12).

1.2 *Governance*

All seven CoTs are overseen by a Board of Trustees (BoT), chaired by the Minister of Manpower. A Deans' Council has also been formed which reports to the BoT. A College Dean is responsible for dealing with the day to day running of SCT (Portfolio, p.4). The BoT provides guidance to all CoTs which produce quarterly and annual reports for the MoM Directorate General for Technological Education; these reports are considered by the Deans' Council, and matters of importance are referred to the BoT. It was not clear to the Panel how feedback is provided to the Colleges on the outcomes or desired actions resulting from their reports.

It is intended that the SCT College Board makes decisions and determines policy at the local level. The Panel heard that the College Board meets once or twice a year. SCT states that it intends to improve the level of activity of the College Board and to ensure the inclusion of at least one female member (Portfolio, p.3). The Panel considers that SCT needs to be clear about how these measures will be used to enhance the quality of governance, and endorses further similar developments.

The Panel found that the external members of the College Board, who are appointed by the Minister of Manpower, were not always aware of the purpose of the meetings, nor of their wider role in College governance. The College is urged to take steps to improve the induction of College Board members and to provide clear advice on the expectations of their role, in order to maximize their potentially important contributions. SCT also needs to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) and use them to measure the effectiveness of its governance and management structures, bringing greater focus on reviewing how these structures interact and support the strategic direction of the College.

Recommendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a review system to measure the effectiveness of its governance and management structures.

1.3 Management

The management of the SCT is the responsibility of the Dean and the College Council. The College Council comprises the same membership as the College Board but without the external representation. The Dean is supported by three Assistant Deans, the Heads of the Educational Technology Center (ETC) and the English Language Center (ELC) (Portfolio, p.4). The Panel heard that the Dean's performance is not formally monitored and that his effectiveness is judged by the overall achievements of the College. The Assistant Deans and Heads of Department (HoDs) are appraised by the Dean. As indicated in Recommendation 1 above, the College needs to review its mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of its management structure.

The Panel noted the very large number of committees, established locally by the College Council. It is stated in SCT's Quality Audit Manual that sub-committees make recommendations to the College Council (p.23). However, the sample of minutes of College Council meetings and Committee Annual Reports considered by the Panel suggest that there is no clear link between the recommendations of sub-committees and decisions made by the College Council. The Panel concluded that some tasks delegated to sub-committees could be more effectively dealt with by members of the management team. The Panel is of the view that SCT should consider benchmarking its committee structures with those of other institutions, such as other CoTs, so that it might benefit from their experiences.

The Panel considered that the large number of committees imposes a burden on academic staff who are expected to participate in many of them as well as to complete their teaching and other administration duties. Staff reported that they served on at least two committees with some participating in as many as six. The Panel heard conflicting evidence about whether academic staff were given teaching relief for committee work. SCT needs to reconsider the role of the committees in the overall management activities of the College.

Recommendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its current committee structure and consider alternative mechanisms to support its approach to the management of the College.

1.4 Institutional Affiliations for Programs and Quality Assurance

As one of the seven CoTs under the MoM, quality assurance at SCT is overseen by the MoM's central Quality Assurance Department (QAD). It has no official institutional affiliations with

other educational organizations and offers Omani qualifications as specified and awarded by the MoM.

1.5 Strategic Plan

All CoTs have a common Strategic Plan with eight goals developed by the MoM after the consultative process with the CoTs mentioned above and informed by the Colleges' Mission, Vision and Values. Implementation of the plan commenced in 2006. SCT, like the other CoTs, developed complementary sub-goals to reflect local needs and priorities supported by its own strategies and KPIs. SCT has developed 35 sub-goals. The latest Strategic Plan (2009-2012) for SCT was reviewed by the QAD in April 2009 and subsequently presented to the College Council. The Panel heard that, at the time of the audit, the Strategic Plan had not been presented to the College Board and that there had been no input by external Board members into the development of the SCT sub-goals. The College needs to ensure that its strategic objectives are informed by its external stakeholders and that its College Board is fully involved in the strategic planning process.

Recommendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology involve external stakeholders in guiding and articulating its strategic direction, such as in the development of the College's strategic sub-goals.

SCT has produced the first Strategic Plan Accomplishment Report 2006-2008. The Panel did not find wide awareness of this report or the fact that a detailed Action Plan had been prepared to follow up on matters identified therein. In order to complete a robust review cycle, the results of this Report need to be widely communicated and an Action Plan should be developed with all key stakeholders.

The Accomplishment Report underlines the inconsistencies between the College's Vision and Bylaws and its Mission and Strategic Plan with regard to research at SCT (as noted in 1.1. above). The Report states that a Research and Consultancy Committee has been established and its terms of reference are given in the College's Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) (Section 3.8.5), although staff interviewed by the Panel were unfamiliar with this committee. The Accomplishment Report also states that research is a criterion for promotion, but the Panel did not find evidence of this in the promotion processes. SCT needs to ensure that its future accomplishment reports are a true reflection of its achievements, relate to all areas of activity and are used to inform a Strategic Plan review cycle.

1.6 Operational Planning

Each department prepares an Operational Plan based on the Strategic Plan. The Panel considered the Operational Plans which seem to be well aligned to the Strategic Plan. The Panel found, however, inconsistencies in the level of involvement of staff in the development of these plans. In some departments, staff were consulted but in others they had no input to the development of these plans. In the Portfolio (p.9), SCT states its intention to increase the involvement of staff in operational planning and to widely publicize the plans to improve awareness. The Panel found evidence to show that SCT is making progress in this area.

Affirmation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Salalah College of Technology that department staff need to be consistently involved in the development of operational plans and supports its efforts to do so.

1.7 Financial Management

Operational budgets and development budgets are allocated by the MoM. However, SCT has had some success in achieving financial support from organizations in the local community, for example for the development of new laboratories (see Section 5.2).

The operational budget is kept relatively constant (with a possible small percentage increase) on an annual basis, regardless of the number of students which is determined by the MoM. This budget is provided by the MoM and is not linked to the Strategic Plan, but is allocated in activity bands, between which, the Panel was informed, there is small scope (up to 5%) to shift funds. Within SCT, there is not a robust system for prioritizing needs and linking budget allocations to the Strategic Plan and the departmental operational plans.

Development budgets are set according to a five-year plan and allocated by the MoM, based on submissions from the Colleges. The Panel learned that while SCT had been successful in obtaining MoM funding for a new building, there had been no provision for furniture and equipment, and this may delay usage of the new building. This suggests that there are issues of timeliness and the lack of a comprehensive approach to forward financial and development planning which are likely to impact on the quality of the student experience.

Recommendation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop comprehensive medium and long term forward financial planning mechanisms in order to strengthen the link between the College's strategic objectives and resource provision.

1.8 Risk Management

SCT states that it has created a new committee with the responsibility for developing policies and guidelines to deal with Risk Management (Portfolio, p.6). The Risk Management Committee first met in October 2009.

During interviews, it was found that there is uneven knowledge and understanding of the concept of risk management and a lack of a high level strategic approach. However, documents presented to the Panel show some progress in identifying risks at departmental level as a result of the work of the Committee. The Panel acknowledges this progress but believes that further work is required throughout the College. The areas of data backup (see Section 6.2) and facilities maintenance (see Section 9.4) need to be included in this.

Affirmation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with Salalah College of Technology that it needs to develop a comprehensive approach to risk management and supports its efforts in doing so.

1.9 Policy Management

SCT states its intention to develop a comprehensive Policy Management System, and in March 2009 established a Policy Management Committee chaired by the Dean (Portfolio, p.12). Examination of the minutes of committee meetings indicates that the Dean has not been able to attend all meetings. The minutes also record that the plagiarism policy and succession planning policy have been drafted and that the approval process for all policies is via the College Council. The Panel reviewed the plagiarism policy but found that awareness of the policy was not uniform amongst staff. However, many students were aware of and understood the policy (see Section 2.5).

The Panel supports the intention of the Policy Management Committee to upload policies on the College intranet to increase awareness and suggests that clear guidelines for initiation and approval of policies should also be provided. In addition, plans for implementation and monitoring of compliance would contribute to a more effective policy management system.

Affirmation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to develop and implement a policy management and review system and supports its initial steps in this area.

1.10 Entity and Activity Review Systems

A number of self study groups met during 2008-2009 and the results of their work were presented to the College Council and subsequently formed the basis for the SCT Portfolio. The College states that the work of these self study groups is ongoing (Portfolio, p.6) and the Panel encourages SCT to ensure that this process continues, beyond the need to prepare for the OAAA audit. The QAM, developed by the College, with support from the MoM's QAD, is a comprehensive and informative document that provides assistance to members of the College in guiding their activities.

SCT has carried out a wide range of surveys to obtain feedback on many aspects of its operations. Although the system for handling course feedback questionnaires is well established (see Section 2.4), the Panel was concerned that the quality of the results of other surveys might be compromised as there was little evidence provided about the sampling procedures, for example sample size and possible bias. The Panel was also concerned that the survey results had not been adequately analysed and used to inform future planning or continuous improvements. In addition, a carefully designed system will help the College to monitor student retention and progression (see Section 2.9).

Recommendation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology strengthen its rigour of methods for data collection and analysis in order to provide information that reliably informs continuous improvement.

As one of seven CoTs, SCT is well placed to benchmark its activities against the other Colleges. This might include a range of academic and administrative matters, such as retention and pass rates for students, exam absenteeism, policies including plagiarism and assessment, human resource management systems and professional development. The College notes its intention to carry out benchmarking activities in the future (Portfolio, p.23, p.26 and p.28) and the Panel supports this. Sharing experiences and exchanging ideas would be beneficial to all seven Colleges.

1.11 Student Grievance Process

SCT has student grievance processes in place which seem robust and which were found to be well understood by students. The Panel noted the planned introduction of particular processes for female students as a sensitive response to their special needs and endorses this intended action.

1.12 Health and Safety

While the QAM contains the terms of reference for a Health and Safety Committee and relevant policies and procedures, these are not particularly comprehensive and do not appear to have

achieved a high level of compliance. Furthermore, it is not clear to whom the Health and Safety Committee reports, although it is able to advise the Dean.

Through the work of the Risk Management Committee, a number of departments identified risks in the area of health and safety. Some of these risks were lack of first aid availability, poor workplace cleanliness, lack of signage on emergency exits, lack of fire alarms and extinguishers, poorly ventilated offices and tripping hazards. The Panel noted the intention of SCT to run stress management sessions for staff and recognizes that this is a positive initiative. However, the Panel also heard that staff induction did not include reference to health and safety and that a fire drill had never been conducted. The College needs to develop and monitor a comprehensive health and safety plan which is communicated to all stakeholders.

Recommendation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop, communicate, implement and monitor a comprehensive institutional health and safety plan.

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

SCT does not oversee any associated entities. Therefore, this section does not apply.

2 STUDENT LEARNING BY COURSEWORK PROGRAMS

SCT offers programs in three areas of specialization: Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies to Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma levels. This Chapter reflects the Panel's findings in the areas of student learning by coursework programs such as graduate attributes; curricula; teaching quality; On the Job Training (OJT); assessment methods and student retention and progression.

2.1 *Graduate Attributes and Student Learning Objectives*

The College lists its ten graduate attributes as: professional competence in the global environment, application of knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving, competency in using information technology, discipline, effective communication, interpersonal skills, life-long learning for self development, social responsibility and entrepreneurial skills (Portfolio, p.19).

Although the College states that the graduate attributes are evaluated both internally and externally (Portfolio, p.18), the Panel saw no evidence of a clear, systematic link between these, the curriculum and the assessment of learning outcomes. Some attributes, such as application of knowledge, may be monitored through examination results, but others, such as social responsibility, are more difficult to measure. The Panel was informed on several occasions that feedback from industry and employers indicated that students were attaining the attributes, including during OJT. However, the College needs to ensure that these attributes are embedded in the curricula and are appropriately evaluated in terms of assessment as well as feedback from employers. These attributes also need to be benchmarked and reviewed periodically.

Recommendation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its graduate attributes and ensure that they are embedded in its curricula and that the attainment of these attributes are evaluated systematically both internally and externally and on a systematic basis.

2.2 *Curriculum*

The College offers specialisations in Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies up to Higher Diploma level. The Panel were informed by students that they wished to be able to take the Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) at SCT, as currently it is only offered at the Higher College of Technology in Muscat. Many current students interviewed by the Panel felt that they would be unable to move to Muscat to complete their studies. The Panel understands that whilst there are no immediate plans for a B.Tech to be offered at the College, the BoT is looking at all the Colleges of Technology with a view to deciding where the B.Tech could be offered in the future.

The current academic programs at the College were developed centrally by the MoM, taking into account the local labour market requirements (Portfolio, p.21). According to the College:

Each course offered in the specialisation program has a set of goals, objectives and outcomes designed and approved by MoM. These are common for all COTs (Portfolio, p.21)

New specialisations may be introduced following a feasibility study submitted to the MoM for approval. The Panel was informed of plans to introduce new programs in 2009 and 2010. However, academic staff at the College have little flexibility in changing the curriculum; for

example, the Panel was informed that it might take one to two years to implement minor changes to the syllabus and up to six years to change text books. This raises concerns about the currency of the programs, as there are continuous changes in some of the technical subjects to which the College may not be able to respond in a timely way. SCT needs to consider its approach to curriculum review in order to ensure that its program content is relevant and kept up to date.

Recommendation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology monitor its curriculum review mechanism in order to ensure that course content is current and meets labour market needs in a timely manner.

Although the College intends to include at least one member from industry on its departmental Curriculum Review and Development Committee (Portfolio, p.23), this had not been implemented at the time of the audit visit. The Panel believes that the College would benefit from this external input to its curriculum development process.

2.3 Student Entry Standards and Foundation Program

The College Bylaws outline the student entry standards and these are common across all CoTs (Portfolio, p.22). Students are admitted to SCT through a centralized process administered by the Higher Education Admission Centre. On entry, they are placed in one of four levels (pre-elementary, elementary, intermediate or advanced) of the Foundation Program, determined by the results of a placement test conducted by the College's English Language Center. Generally, the specialization department is also allocated at entry to the College although, exceptionally, students may change their specialization. Registration for the specialization takes place only after the student has passed Mathematics, IT and English language exams, including achieving a minimum grade in TOEFL or IELTS as prescribed by the MoM. Thereafter, each department decides on admission to different programs, dependent upon a student's performance, preference and on the number of places available.

Oman has recently introduced National General Foundation Program Standards and SCT is in the process of aligning its programs to these standards. The Panel was informed that staff are currently piloting the new Foundation program.

Affirmation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority affirms that Salalah College of Technology needs to review its existing Foundation Program and supports its efforts to align the program to Oman's National General Foundation Program Standards.

2.4 Teaching Quality

SCT states:

"3. The college understands the importance of excellent teaching and actively encourages all its departments to promote sharing of good ideas and best practices among staff (SP Strategy 1.1.1). It also arranges guest lectures and industrial visits for the students (SP Strategy 1.1.2).

4. The college uses a variety of teaching methods to develop cognitive, interpersonal and information technology skills to international standards to ensure that its graduates are best suited to the demands of the labour market. (QAM sections 4.1 and 4.2).

5. The college also proposes to use benchmarking in teaching, learning and assessment with institutions of repute (SP Strategy 1.1.4)” (Portfolio, p.26).

In addition, the College states that it is committed to providing high quality teaching, through the employment of qualified and experienced staff who use a variety of teaching methods to prepare their students for the labour market and who have opportunities to share best practice (Portfolio, p.25).

The vast majority of academic staff are expatriates, recruited through approved private agencies. The Panel was concerned about the high turnover of such academic staff (see also Chapter 8), which detracts from the College’s claim that each department “has sufficient and qualified staff as per the specialization requirements” (Portfolio, p.28). At the time of the audit, most teaching staff were qualified to at least Master’s level. While the Panel was satisfied that staff received appropriate induction to the College (see Section 8.4), it was concerned that there was an apparent lack of a comprehensive approach to professional staff development. In order to maintain levels of teaching quality, it is important for staff to be enabled to further develop their knowledge and skills in their discipline areas and in current pedagogical approaches (see Recommendation 17).

Generally, students appreciated the teaching that they received; they found the lecturers to be accessible, helpful and concerned for their students. The Panel noticed that there was a sound method for collecting feedback from students on their teachers but was concerned that there was no follow-up response to students on the outcomes of the questionnaires. This is an area the College needs to address (see Recommendation 5).

2.5 **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined by the College as:

“the act of claiming that academic work is one’s own when in fact it is taken directly from other sources (published work or another person’s work) without this fact being stated” (Portfolio, p.28).

At the time of the audit, the College had formed a sub-committee which was in the process of developing a plagiarism policy (Portfolio, p.28). The Panel recognizes the importance of this initiative. In interviews, it was found that that teachers often develop their own mechanisms for dealing with the problem, indicating that the College is in need of a consistent approach. The Panel urges SCT to produce and promote guidelines, along with the plagiarism policy, so that staff and students clearly understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, and introduce procedures for dealing with those who have plagiarized. SCT has recognized the need to develop and disseminate a plagiarism policy as an opportunity for improvement and the Panel supports the College’s efforts in this area.

Affirmation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to develop a plagiarism policy which is disseminated to all staff and students and supports its efforts in this area, while recognizing that the College needs to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently.

2.6 **Student Placements**

OJT is an integral part of the curriculum and gives students exposure to workplace practices, which is important in technical subjects. It is coordinated and monitored by the OJT coordinator (Portfolio, p.29). The College has good relations, developed over a number of years, with employers in the area; currently ninety-five local employers offer OJT placements. The Panel

noticed that the College is facing problems for getting OJT placement of some business students. The College claims that this is because female students generally refuse to work in private sector but the SCT is looking for strategies to overcome this problem. Each student has two assessors: one from the College and one within the workplace; these meet initially to prepare the student's schedule and then periodically over the eight weeks of the placement.

The Panel received generally positive feedback from organizations involved with OJT and there was evidence that many companies employ former OJT students. The Panel found that employers fully supported OJT and students and employers were highly satisfied with this program. There was consistency across departments in handling OJT and it is clear that OJT is monitored and evaluated by the College in order to make improvements.

Commendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for its successful On the Job Training program.

In the future, SCT should consider how to more firmly link its OJT activities with its graduate attributes (see Section 2.1).

2.7 *Assessment Methods, Standards and Moderation*

Foundation students are assessed on their writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. Their assessed work is marked independently by two staff members and the average mark taken, unless there is a large discrepancy, in which case they are marked again. In other levels, students are assessed through coursework, including assignments, practical work, project reports, presentations, quizzes, mid-semester examinations and end of semester examinations. Thus, students are exposed to a variety of assessment methods. Moderation within the academic departments is made through the Moderation Committees (Portfolio, p.32).

Teachers provide feedback on the students' work, except the end of semester examinations; students reported that they received written feedback promptly, quite often within a week of completing the assessment task. However, the Panel was concerned that a high proportion of students miss the regular examination. The Panel suggests that the College addresses this area, for example through producing strict guidelines in the Examinations Policy and Procedures for when absence is acceptable and that the approach to the development of the retake examination is reviewed.

Recommendation 9

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology, as a matter of urgency, take measures to reduce the high level of exam absenteeism, whilst maintaining consistency across assessment processes.

2.8 *Academic Security and Invigilation*

The Examination Committee is responsible for overseeing academic security and invigilation (Portfolio, p.33). There are procedures in place for ensuring security of examination papers and for on-line tests and examinations. However, the College has recognized the need for greater vigilance and for maintaining data on cheating (Portfolio, p.35) and has made efforts in this area through training of staff.

Affirmation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to encourage greater vigilance and compliance with

examination rules and regulations and supports the measures that it has taken to address the issues in this area.

2.9 *Student Retention and Progression*

SCT's data (Portfolio, p.36) reveals that there is poor progression from the Foundation Program to the specializations and there is little information provided about retention within the specializations. Although academic advisors monitor individual student's progress, the College does not yet have in place data collection methods that are easy to use and this includes tracking of overall trends in its students' performance (see Section 1.10). A system that links students' progress with their entry qualifications would assist the monitoring process, as would clear records to identify those who are withdrawn, failures or on probation. Some students are designated as fast-track. Again the College needs careful monitoring of such students' progress (see Recommendation 5).

2.10 *Graduate Destinations and Employability*

It was noted above (Section 2.2) that some graduates from the College complete their education by taking the B.Tech at the Higher College of Technology in Muscat and that many students would like the opportunity to stay in Salalah to complete their B.Tech. The Panel was informed that many students enter the job market immediately on graduation from the College and that they have all experienced the work environment through OJT (see Section 2.6). The College recognizes that it would be beneficial to maintain closer links with its alumni and this would help it to collect data on graduate destinations and establish stronger links with local industries and businesses (see Section 5.5). There had been some difficulties in finding jobs in recent times due to the global recession; however, graduates reported favorably on the efforts made by the Career Center in helping them to find jobs and in follow-up contacts.

The Panel received generally positive feedback with respect to the quality of the graduates from the representatives of industry. The quality of the technical skills of the graduates of SCT was emphasized whereas on the business side the predominance of theoretical knowledge was criticized. Although SCT is developing and improving its relationship with employers (see Section 5.2), there is a need to monitor graduate destinations and employer satisfaction more formally.

3 STUDENT LEARNING BY RESEARCH PROGRAMS

At the time of the quality audit, SCT did not offer research programs *per se*, so this Chapter is not applicable in this Report.

4 STAFF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY

SCT is primarily an institution focused on teaching activities although the Vision Statement clearly implies that SCT intends to provide demonstrably high quality research (Portfolio, p.1). However, research is not mentioned in the College Mission Statement (Portfolio, p.1) and the College states that this topic does not apply to it (Portfolio, p.40). The Panel was informed that SCT did not see itself as a research institution and that it was aware that the College Vision and Bylaws were out of step with the Strategic Plan which has no focus on research. The Panel was informed that the BoT plans to review the Bylaws in order to encourage consultancy and to fit more closely to the teaching environment of the College. The Panel acknowledged that staff participation in research and consultancy is relevant to maintaining currency of staff knowledge and skills as well as to contributing to national economic development which is part of the College's Vision. The Panel encourages SCT to clarify its position with respect to research and consultancy.

Recommendation 10

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology clarify its position with respect to research and consultancy.

The sections on Research Planning and Management; Research Performance; Research Funding Schemes, Consultancy Activities; Ethics and Biosafety; Intellectual Property; Professional Development for Research; Research Commercialisation and Research-teaching Nexus have not been included in this Report as they are not relevant to SCT at this stage of its development .

5 INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

According to the Strategic Plan, SCT aims to:

“foster an open and fruitful relationship with public and private sector organizations and with the Community at large” (Strategic Goal 5, Portfolio, p.41).

Although the College does have interaction with industry and the community at large, there is no overall Operational Plan in this area which would coordinate efforts and maximize the impact of these activities. This Chapter explores the College’s relationship with industry, employers, professional bodies, other higher education providers, its alumni and the community at large.

5.1 *Industry and Community Engagement Planning and Management*

The College states that it has industry representation on the College Board and has an Industrial Link Committee in each department (Portfolio, p.41). SCT also has links with industry through the deployment of its OJT activities (see Section 2.6). The Panel supports the College’s efforts to develop its engagement with industry, for example through including at least one member from industry in the Departmental Curriculum Review & Development Committee (Portfolio, p.23). The College’s sub-goal in this area is to:

“Engage with local and regional communities through a marketing strategy encompassing both outreach and in-college events and activities” (Strategic Plan, p.16).

However, although strategies to support this sub-goal have been identified, the Panel found a lack of overall planning and focus in this area. Industry and private sector are involved in SCT’s planning and management structure via the membership of three representatives on the College Board. The Panel found, however, no evidence that the external members of the College Board had been involved in the preparation of the Strategic Plan (concerning the sub-goals, see Section 1.5), the development of the curriculum or the Portfolio. The establishment of an Industrial Advisory Board, as intended by SCT, should be accompanied by clear and distinctive terms of reference for this Board. The Panel concluded that SCT needs to develop a single operational plan in order to achieve its Strategic Goal in relation to engaging with the community and ensuring that resources are aligned to support this goal.

Recommendation 11

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a comprehensive and appropriately resourced operational plan for industry and community engagement to enable it to pursue its strategic directions in this area.

5.2 *Relationships with Industry and Employers*

SCT claims that it maintains and improves its relationship with industry and employers through promoting interaction, providing short term courses, OJT activities and having industry representatives on the College Board (Portfolio, pp.42-43). However, as mentioned in Sections 1.2 and 5.1, the industry representatives on the College Board need to have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them in relation to their roles and should be encouraged to be more active in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

SCT has invited guest lecturers from industry to deliver talks for staff and students and has organized industrial visits for students. The goal to educate highly qualified graduates can only be attained if the College provides appropriately qualified teachers as well as with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment. In this context, SCT has sought and received substantial support from industry which has provided the financial resources for the establishment of specialized labs and a W-Lan network.

Commendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for working with local industry to acquire financial support in order to improve the facilities on campus.

These activities should be intensified and diversified in order to strengthen the links between industry and the College.

5.3 Relationships with Professions

SCT acknowledges the importance of maintaining currency with new developments in different professional fields but has no formal relationship with any professional bodies (Portfolio, p.44). The Dean and one member from the Business Studies Department are currently members of the 'Economic Sector' in the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Salalah. Due to the early stage of development of professional bodies in Oman, especially in the regions outside Muscat, there are few professional bodies in Oman that the College can establish relationships with. Nevertheless, taking into account the College Mission (see Section 1.1), the Panel believes that it is important for SCT to develop links with professional bodies in the wider region or internationally in order to get feedback, benchmarks, approval or even possible international accreditation of its programs.

5.4 Relationships with Other Education Providers

SCT has service arrangements with International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), CISCO Network Academy and Oracle Academy International. It plans to explore the possibilities for articulation agreements and informal collaborative agreements with local education providers such as the College of Applied Sciences in Salalah and Dhofar University, mainly in the areas of sport and cultural activities (Portfolio, p.45).

As SCT is one of seven CoTs under the MoM, there is an opportunity for some level of benchmarking with other CoTs (see Section 1.10). Moreover, closer relationships with other Colleges through activities such as staff and students exchange, mutual recognition of learning achievements and benchmarking of the academic as well as the administrative processes may help to improve the College's own performance.

5.5 Relationships with Alumni

The Career Center (CaC) of SCT maintains a database where information about the alumni is kept. The CaC offers alumni interviews, job placement tests and counseling and provides the alumni with information about vacant jobs. SCT plans to celebrate an "Annual Alumni Day", to create a link for alumni in its website, to develop a formal Alumni Charter and to start fund raising activities through the alumni (Portfolio, p.46). The Panel found that the College has taken steps to strengthen its relationship with its former students through developing an alumni database and mechanisms to maintain regular contact with them. The Panel supports the College in these activities.

Affirmation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to strengthen its relationship with its alumni and supports its efforts to develop in this area.

5.6 Relationships with the Community at Large

As an important provider of technological education in a region distant from Muscat, SCT recognizes that it needs to maintain a positive and fruitful relationship with the community at large (Portfolio, p.47). SCT fosters this relationship by offering seminars and lectures to the community, by celebrating a cultural week, cooperating with some Ministries in activities in the areas of health, sport, culture and tourism. The relationship with local secondary schools is based on mutual visits, either through staff of the College visiting the schools or school classes visiting the College. However, the Panel found that the College needs to develop an Operational Plan to support activities carried out in this area (see Recommendation 11).

6 ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

SCT states that its overall Strategic Goal in this area is:

“providing excellent student services” (Portfolio, p.50).

The College has an Operational Plan in the area of academic support services, developed by the Deans, Assistant Deans and HoDs. Academic support includes registry, Library and IT services and the provision of teaching resources. This Chapter also considers the areas of academic advising and student learning support.

6.1 *Academic Support Services Planning and Management*

SCT advises that the plan for the College Academic Support Services (AcSS) is formulated by the Dean, Assistant Deans, and the Heads of the academic and non-academic departments. It is incorporated into the College Strategic Plan on which the departmental Operational Plans are based. The College states that “proper coordination among the heads of the various offices and departments allows for a smooth and timely manner in providing academic support services” (Portfolio, p.50). However, the Panel noted the College’s concerns that the policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the AcSS issues need to be updated. The Panel supports the College’s efforts in this area.

6.2 *Registry (Enrolment and Student Records)*

Admission to the College is determined by the MoM, which provides the central database in which all student records are stored. The Admission and Registration Department handles the student registration services and the records management system within the College. Lecturers have their own accounts and passwords, so are able to enter marks directly to the central system. Copies of students’ marks are also kept at the College in the Registrar’s office and by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA). Academic advisors update their advisees’ records each semester. The Panel was informed that there are technicians in each department to assist the lecturers with any technical difficulties related to registration.

The College acknowledged (Portfolio, p.53) that there had been some difficulties with the procedures for on-line registration as the MoM central server had not been adequate to successfully support the processes. This is an issue that is being addressed centrally. The Panel was concerned with the risks involved in having students’ records held centrally at the MoM; for example there could be problems with the leased line or errors in data entry that could not be corrected easily. The College noted these concerns but was satisfied that there were procedures in place to overcome any difficulties, such as back up Excel files kept in the Department of Student Affairs and having authorized people to make changes when errors occurred. The Panel suggests risks associated with data storage are considered as the College develops its approach to risk management (see Section 1.8).

6.3 *Library*

The Library is situated in the IT Department building and caters to all staff and students. The College states that it aims to provide library learning resources that meet the needs of its students and staff in terms of both quality and quantity (Portfolio, p.53). At the time of the audit visit, the Library was being extended and refurbished, so it was difficult to gauge how effectively the space is used. The Panel noted that there were a number of internet-ready computers, although there were no facilities to print from these nor did they give access to electronic resources, such as databases.

The Panel was informed that the Library has no budget of its own and so the librarians were unable to plan for updating the book stock or other learning resources. Departments give a list of their requirements, mainly texts, which are then forwarded to the Administrative and Financial Affairs Department. The learning resources were mainly books; the Library lacked journals, although there were a few mass audience periodicals, mainly in computing. This may well have a detrimental effect on staff abilities to keep abreast of developments in their subjects. SCT needs to review the adequacy of its library provision in order to meet its strategic objectives.

Recommendation 12

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology urgently review the adequacy of its library resources and services to meet the needs of staff and students as well as develop and implement mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of these services to underpin continuous improvement.

6.4 Information and Learning Technology Services

As one of its strategic sub-goals, the College aims to:

“support learning in technological education by making available high quality, modern and cost effective IT services and training...” (Portfolio, p.55).

This requires academic departments to identify their own needs and the Educational Technology Center (ETC) to be responsible for providing and training teaching and technical support staff and to oversee the computer network throughout the College. When new requirements are identified, an application has to be made to the Information Technology Committee; maintenance and upgrading of equipment and software are as finances allow.

Staff development includes occasional training provided on an ad hoc basis from external sources; the Panel noted staff concerns that they required more technical training to keep up to date with the latest developments in their fields. Academic staff indicated that technical support within the academic departments was satisfactory; for example there was a person in each department responsible for the relevant web pages. Nonetheless, it was not clear to the Panel whether there was any coordination between the departments in developing the College’s website and intranet service. A staff survey indicated that improvements could be made to the e-learning service and the College website. The Panel supports SCT’s initiatives to improve its current IT services, such as establishing an IT Help Desk.

Affirmation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to enhance its IT support services and acknowledges its efforts to do so.

6.5 Academic Advising

SCT recognizes the importance of the role of the academic advisor in monitoring their advisees’ academic progress, assisting them in course selection, providing advice regarding academic goals and acting as a campus resource guide (Portfolio, p.58). The Panel noted that students had a high regard for their teachers generally and advisors in particular. It was clear from discussions with past and present students that the academic advisors were approachable and deemed to be a valuable resource when students encountered problems whether academic or not. The College monitors feedback on the academic advising process and is keen to build on its effectiveness.

The Panel heard from various stakeholders that academic advising was one of the strengths of the College.

Commendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for developing an effective academic advising process to support students' learning experience.

6.6 *Student Learning Support*

The College has interpreted student learning support as the provision of extra-curricular academic facilities, such as the departmental associations which organize various activities including exhibitions, competitions, seminars and workshops (Portfolio, p.59). The Panel noted a more traditional example of student support in the Student Access Center (SAC) run by staff in the English Language Centre. Students could visit the SAC at prescribed times for assistance in improving their English reading and writing skills.

The Panel was initially concerned about help available for academically weak students. Each semester, the HoDs are informed of students on probation. The Student Progress Committee plans the support for these students, which might be counseling through the academic advisor system (see Section 6.5) and/ or supplementary classes, although it is noted that these are not always well attended. The students that the Panel met felt that the College adequately supported those who were in danger of failing.

6.7 *Teaching Resources*

The main teaching resources at the College are listed as classrooms and computing and engineering laboratories with their appropriate equipment. It was noted that the College needs additional classrooms and laboratories (Portfolio, p.62). At the time of the audit visit, new buildings had been constructed but not equipped; it was unclear to the Panel when these new facilities might be ready for use as no funds had been allocated for their provision.

Currently, the College has thirty-five classrooms, mainly in the ELC and the Business Studies Department as much of the teaching in Engineering and Information Technology takes place in laboratories. These are maintained by qualified technicians, who also assist in practical classes. The Panel considered the teaching resources, especially with the new buildings (once completed and well equipped), support the strategic goals of the College and that this is expected to be enhanced when the new buildings are operative.

7 STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

SCT, in line with its Vision of “providing demonstrably high quality teaching, learning and research” (Portfolio, p.1) has set its Strategic Goal to:

“Provide excellent student services that support learning in technological education” (Portfolio, p.65).

The College has established a Student Affairs Department (SAD) to provide student support services. The SAD is required to maintain students’ records and provide various services such as medical facilities, student orientation and graduate follow-up. It is also tasked with organizing sports and facilitating social, cultural and religious extra-curricular activities (Portfolio, p.65).

7.1 *Students and Student Support Services Planning & Management*

The SAD is responsible for the provision of important services which are essential for ensuring smooth academic processes at the College. The Panel found that the SAD is handling admission, registration and student data-base maintenance activities in a satisfactory manner, and its OJT processing has received wide appreciation from the students. However, the provision of medical services and organization of extra-curricular activities needs attention. The College has established a system of collecting feedback about the effectiveness of its planning and management measures on the basis of KPIs but many questionnaires had a poor response rate. The College should consider alternative, additional methods of collecting feedback (see Section 1.10). The SAD prepared an Annual Report which is a useful tool to gauge the needs of the student body and take measures accordingly. There is a need to analyze carefully the responses and take effective measures for improvement.

7.2 *Student Profile*

A consistent increase in the number of admissions of both genders joining SCT over the last three years is indicative of the appeal which the College enjoys among students and their parents (Portfolio, p.67). The College presents a detailed picture of the student population (Portfolio, p.36 and p.102), which stood at 2536 students during the academic year 2008/2009. SCT data shows the growth in the student numbers in the Foundation Program between 2006-07 and 2008-09 (from 723 to 1122 students). In spite of an increase in the number of Foundation Program students over the years, the number of students in specialization programs has decreased over the same time period (from 1498 to 1414) (Portfolio, p.36). There is also an indication that the student population decreases significantly as students move from Foundation stage to higher levels (also see Section 2.10).

Moreover, there is no evidence of student flow as they move through the specializations. The Panel found no indication that the College has carried out any investigation on the progress of students. The College’s plan to introduce new disciplines, in particular those which are relevant to female students, is a step further to retaining more students in the specialization phase. This plan needs to be supported by evidence that there is a need for these new specializations, for example, using data from a survey among the female students so that the College might be informed of their preferences before commencing the new disciplines.

7.3 *Student Satisfaction and Climate*

The College claims to continuously endeavor to provide “excellent academic, non-academic and extra-curricular facilities in the College to foster a climate that is conducive to students’ learning” (Portfolio, p.68). The College also has in place processes for monitoring and responding to

student satisfaction and study climate. The Panel welcomed the satisfactory facilitation to physically challenged students. While SCT makes use of surveys to collect student feedback, sampling methods and response rates are poor and the analysis is of variable quality (see Section 1.10). The Panel suggests that SCT may consider other supplementary ways of collecting opinions and notes that the College is planning suggestion boxes at adequate locations and introducing an online system of collecting feedback and suggestions.

Notwithstanding the problems with data collection and analysis, the surveys conducted by the SAD show a high level of general satisfaction among the students about the student support services but a low level of satisfaction in the fields of waiting areas (particularly for females), student cafeteria, medical services, and extra-curricular activities. The same points were highlighted by students during various interview sessions.

In interviews, student support staff claimed that each service conducts its own survey and that results are discussed in meetings with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and student representatives in order to improve the areas of concern. During interviews, the Panel was informed that students, generally, are not advised about responses to their feedback. Sharing of results of the surveys with the students will give them a greater sense of participation and involvement in decision making.

Recommendation 13

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop a consistent approach to analyzing and responding to issues raised in students' surveys and to ensure that students are informed of actions taken as a result of their feedback.

During interviews with different level students, the Panel heard that many students, who were otherwise eligible, were not able to join B.Tech programs at the Higher College of Technology in Muscat as they felt it was too far from Salalah. The students put across an almost unanimous request for initiating Bachelor level programs at SCT.

7.4 Student Behaviour

The College Bylaws include guidelines to encourage the students' responsible and healthy behavior (Portfolio, p.69). These are supplemented by the Student Disciplinary policies and guidelines formulated by the College. In addition, the College Investigation Committee has been formed and a students' Appeal System has been formulated. SCT states that the Student Handbook containing essential information in Arabic has been uploaded on the College website and is also handed over to the students during their induction week at the College (Portfolio, p.70). SCT claims that 100% of students are aware of the behavioral requirements at the campus and the number of violations by the students over the years has been very low (Portfolio, p.70); although no evidence to the contrary was found, the Panel has noted above its reservations about the collection and analysis of feedback data (see Recommendation 5). There were a significant number of cases of cheating during mid and final semester exams of 2008-09, which need to be curtailed (see Section 2.8). The formation of the Student Consultative Committee and proactively advising / counseling students are expected to improve the situation further. Although no case of sexual harassment has ever been reported over the years, the College plans to introduce policies, procedures and guidelines on this issue which should be a good pre-emptive measure.

7.5 Career and Employment Services

The College has set up a CaC to provide advice to students in career and job opportunities (Portfolio, p.71). The Center has also played a key role in helping to coordinate OJT and organize job fairs with local employers. Documentation reviewed by the Panel showed that there

has been significant activity in this area through supporting students in making contact with employers, preparation for interviews and career placements. SCT is using its alumni database to approach graduate students with job availability information, using Short Message Service (SMS) to provide a valuable service to the College graduates. The College claims that its 'Online Job Database' has been uploaded on the College website (Portfolio, p.72) and this was a work in progress at the time of the audit visit. Feedback from interviews suggests that the CaC is performing its duties effectively and to the satisfaction of key stakeholders. The Panel acknowledged that the CaC is playing a significant role in career and employment services.

Commendation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology's efforts in the provision of career and employment services for students.

7.6 *Student Finances*

The College receives funds from the MoM as per defined rules and regulations to provide financial services to eligible students including monthly allowances, financial support for their graduation projects and transportation for OJT students. The SAD prepares and sends the lists of eligible students to MoM, so as to ensure that they receive the allowance in time (Portfolio, p.73). Students informed the Panel that although they had no complaints in regard to receiving the allowance in time, they felt that the prescribed rate of the monthly allowance was insufficient for their expenses on food, accommodation and transportation.

The Panel was informed that students from low income backgrounds face difficulty in meeting their essential expenditure. The SAD tries to help them by either arranging part-time employment or getting direct financial support from private sector organizations in an informal way. However, there is no formal arrangement to provide financial support to needy students. Although SCT has approached local banks to discuss the possibility of negotiating loans, these discussions are still in their early stages.

7.7 *Accommodation, Catering and Transport*

The College has no hostels and does not provide any accommodation for students. The SAD provides information and guidance to students for renting accommodation. This was confirmed by the students during interviews. Although College has expressed the intention to arrange a few buildings on contract to provide students with accommodation, it does not seem to have a concrete plan to solve the apparent student accommodation problem. SCT does not provide any transportation to the students for travel between their accommodation and the College. The provision of accommodation and transportation needs to be reviewed.

Catering services are offered through a private company and quality and hygiene of the provisions is regularly checked by relevant College staff (Portfolio, p.74). However, the Panel was informed that students were not satisfied with the catering services. The College needs to seek feedback from the students about their complaints in this regard and take appropriate action (see Recommendation 13). Although three out of four cafeterias are reserved for the students, the College acknowledges that the current space is insufficient. The cafeterias for female students are some distance from the classrooms and during busy periods these students have to wait in the sun. The College administration expects that the problem will be solved once the new College building is ready.

7.8 *Medical and Counselling Facilities*

The College claims to be committed "to provide excellent medical services in the campus" (Portfolio, p.75). However, the resources and expertise available at the campus are very limited

and the clinic is only capable of handling routine and simple cases. More serious cases are referred to a local hospital. Students interviewed by the Panel felt that clinic opening times were not adequate. In order to provide satisfactory medical coverage to its community of around 2800 students and staff, SCT needs to review the current arrangements and take appropriate remedial action.

The counseling service with a full time counselor is provided for students who have social, emotional or psychological problems. The academic advisors support students facing academic problems, especially those who are on probation (see Section 6.5). Feedback from surveys and interviews indicate that students are largely satisfied with the counseling and advising facilities. The College has plans to further improve these facilities.

7.9 *International Student Services*

As there are no international students studying at SCT, these services are not applicable.

7.10 *Social and Recreational Services and Facilities*

SCT claims that it encourages the students to organize and participate in various social and recreational activities. Different clubs and societies have been established for this purpose (Portfolio, p.76). Despite the College's claims, there is a common perception among the students and staff that the SCT does not provide adequate services/facilities in this regard. Results from the College's student satisfaction survey show that students complained about insufficient religious, cultural, social and recreational activities (Portfolio, p.77).

The College administration expects that with the development of the new College infrastructure will allow the establishment of indoor/outdoor sports facilities including a gymnasium. The Panel is aware that most of the improvement plans are still at the developmental stage and suggests that students be fully involved in the planning and arrangements for these new facilities and resources.

The College has highlighted the problem of the lack of Ministry funding for student services in relation to the number of students admitted and has identified initiatives to improve funding in this area (Portfolio, p.66). However, these plans have not yet been implemented. This lack of funding may adversely affect the services provided to the students. In order to overcome this problem, the College needs to review the provision of funds for its student activities in order to meet the needs of its student body.

Recommendation 14

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review the provision of resources for student support services, especially in the area of extra-curricula activities.

8 STAFF AND STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

SCT aims to develop staff:

“offering opportunities for professional and personal growth and rewarding hard work and fostering leadership skills and innovative thinking” (Portfolio, p.79).

The College has formed a number of committees to deal with Human Resource (HR) areas such as recruitment, induction, appraisal and staff development. This Chapter considers the key aspects of staff and staff support services including recruitment; induction, professional development; performance planning and review; severance and staff organizational climate.

8.1 *Human Resources Planning and Management*

HR guidelines are laid out in the College Bylaws. Planning and management in this area is assisted by various committees including Recruitment Committee, Induction Committee, Staff Appraisal Committee, and Staff Development Committee (Portfolio, p.79). Although SCT states that it is planning to improve the efficiency of its HR Committees, the Panel found no evidence to show that this was in progress or that there was a clear approach to planning in this area. The College recognizes that it has no formal procedure for conducting needs analysis to ascertain staff requirements (Portfolio, p.80). SCT needs to review its approach to HR planning and management in order to ensure it is able to meet its strategic objectives.

Recommendation 15

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology review its current Human Resource system and develop a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to meet its strategic objectives.

8.2 *Staff Profile*

In 2008-2009, SCT had a total number of 260 staff members comprising 182 academic staff, 30 technicians and 49 administrative staff. The staff profile shows that SCT has a wide diversity of staff in terms of nationality. A quarter of the academic staff and 23% of the administrative staff are female (Portfolio, p.81). As mentioned in Section 8.1, the College does not have a formal procedure for assessing staff needs or aligning the staff profile to capability requirements. SCT indicates in the Portfolio that there are plans to develop such a procedure but there is no evidence of concrete plans for improvement. This is an area the College needs to address.

8.3 *Recruitment and Selection*

For recruitment purposes, the College has two approaches both of which are managed centrally through the MoM. All senior and administrative staff are recruited through the Civil Service Ministry and the majority of academic and technical staff are recruited through private agencies. The College identifies its staff requirements at department level (see Section 8.1) and reports them to the MoM for action. The College is involved in the short listing of candidates and participates in staff interviews. According to SCT, 162 of the 260 staff had been recruited through agencies (Portfolio, p.81). The College is facing difficulties in recruiting qualified staff in some specializations and completing the recruitment formalities in a timely manner: it has plans to address these problems. The Panel was concerned that there are no formal indicators for monitoring the agencies' performance, and believes that this is an area that needs to be addressed, in order to maintain teaching quality.

Recommendation 16

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the recruitment agencies used and provide feedback on this to all stakeholders.

8.4 Induction

According to SCT, great emphasis is placed on the effective induction of its staff (Portfolio, p.84). The Panel considered a sample of induction materials and spoke to staff who were appreciative of the induction and mentoring they had received. The College has collected feedback on the induction process and has made improvements over the years. The Panel found that SCT has an effective staff induction process in place offering both college-level and department-level induction events twice a year. These introduce new staff to the working environment at the College, facilities available, local culture, social life and recreational facilities.

Commendation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends Salalah College of Technology for developing an effective staff induction process which provides a helpful foundation for new staff.

As mentioned in Section 1.12 above, the College needs to ensure that staff induction includes reference to health and safety issues.

8.5 Professional Development

The College has a system in place for identifying professional development needs through HoDs (Portfolio, p.86). Although evidence was provided to show that staff development workshops have taken place, these seem to be run on an ad hoc basis and are not part of an overall, forward-looking, planned approach to professional development. The College would benefit from moving from a deficit focused training model to a more developmental one, in line with its intention to focus on “recent developments in the specialisation areas, modern technological developments” as outlined in the Portfolio (p.86).

The Panel was informed that as the College was in Salalah rather than Muscat, there were limited opportunities to provide staff development for administrative and technical staff. There had been some funding for academic staff to attend conferences but this was very limited. The Panel found that there was an overall lack of planning and focus in this area which needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 17

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop its professional development program further so that it is adequately linked to strategic goals, staff needs and is available for all academic and administrative staff.

8.6 Performance Planning and Review

SCT recognizes the need to provide proper promotional avenues for staff (Portfolio, p.94). Several forms of staff appraisal activities are conducted at SCT including student evaluation of teaching, peer-appraisal, appraisal by superior, and self-appraisal. SCT claims that there is a link between the staff appraisal and professional development programs (Portfolio, p.86) but the Panel was unable to find evidence to support this claim (see Recommendation 17). Staff recruited through the Civil Service and staff recruited by agencies seem to be subject to different

performance planning and review systems. The Panel also found there was no clear policy or procedure on how the College Dean and Assistant Deans are managed in the area of performance planning and review. SCT is urged to address these issues.

Recommendation 18

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a consistent and effective performance planning and review process for all staff at all levels.

8.7 *Promotion and Other Incentives*

College staff do not have equal opportunities for promotion and incentives (Portfolio, p.89). Whilst promotion criteria for employees recruited by MoM are available, those for agency-recruited employees are not. The Panel found that the majority of staff are not aware of the promotion policies of the College. The College states that it “plans to explore the possibility of introducing a performance based incentive scheme for its staff in consultation with the MoM” (Portfolio, p.90) but at the time of the audit this was still at the discussion stage. The Panel encourages the College to implement a more transparent and equitable system for promotion and incentives for all staff.

Recommendation 19

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement a clear, transparent system of incentives and reward that is clearly communicated to all staff.

8.8 *Severance*

Employment termination rules and regulations are in place and the College presented data to show that employees are aware of these (Portfolio, p.91). SCT plans to improve some aspects of staff severance practices such as devising a separate severance procedure for support staff and a formal procedure for exit interviews. Staff recruited through the Civil Service and staff recruited by private recruitment companies seem to be subject to different severance systems. This is an area the College needs to address in order to have a clear, transparent approach to severance in place.

8.9 *Staff Organisational Climate and Retention*

SCT states that it provides a healthy environment for its staff, through offering cultural and social events, sports activities and an established staff club (Portfolio, pp.91-92). The College has carried out staff satisfaction surveys but it is not clear that staff are informed about changes made in relation to their feedback. In addition to the establishment of the Investigation and Disciplinary Committee for Staff, there needs to be clear procedures in place for appeals.

The Panel was concerned about high staff turnover at the College, particularly amongst academic staff in the English and Engineering Departments. The Panel was informed that this was in part because of the uncompetitive remuneration on offer and that SCT has no control over this. Staff also indicated that the high workload was a contributing factor. There are plans to increase the number of Omani academic staff and open a Staff Development Center in order to attract and retain staff. There are also unofficial plans to conduct exit interviews but no progress had been made on this at the time of the audit. The Panel found no evidence of systematic analysis of the real causes of the high staff turnover problem or consideration of the possible solutions to address the problem.

Recommendation 20

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology, as a matter of urgency, explore and address the issue of high staff turnover, particularly amongst academic staff.

8.10 Omanisation

Omanisation of administrative and academic staff at SCT is governed by MoM policy. The majority of administrative staff at SCT are Omani, recruited through the Ministry. Currently, only 12% of the academic staff at SCT are Omani but the Ministry has in place a special program that aims at selecting Omani graduates and supporting them to pursue Master's degrees in preparation to recruit them as lecturers in the CoTs. The Panel found no clear policy regarding Omanisation of staff employed by the recruitment agencies.

9 GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES

SCT has the following Strategic Goal:

"We will ensure that college facilities are managed well, effectively used, and developed innovatively" (Portfolio, p.95).

SCT has developed operational plans for the various departments involved with general support services and facilities. These areas include public relations and marketing; communication services and facilities management.

9.1 General Support Services and Facilities Planning and Management

The responsibilities for general support services and facilities lies with the Educational Service Center (ESE), the Student Affairs Department and the Administrative and Financial Affairs Department (AFAD) and are defined in the College's Bylaws (Portfolio, p.95). Moreover, each of these Departments has developed an annual Operational Plan approved by the Dean.

The Panel found little evidence of a plan for the continued maintenance of buildings and other facilities. The departments are asked to routinely submit their requirements to the Quality Assurance Unit. These are passed to the Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs to be presented to the Dean who tries to satisfy the needs within the budget or with the help of the Ministry. As there is no budget allocated directly to the departments in most cases the requests for support with respect to equipment, furniture or maintenance cannot be prioritized within the departments. The provision of resources needs to be reviewed to ensure that the College's activities are fully supported (see Recommendation 4).

The College is undergoing a major renovation of its campus which should be completed in 2010. This should have a positive impact on the provision of facilities and these efforts are supported by the Panel.

Affirmation 9

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to improve its facilities and supports its current efforts to renovate the campus.

9.2 Public Relations and Marketing

Most of the marketing activities of all CoTs are carried out by the MoM centrally using print as well as electronic media. The role of SCT is to supplement these activities locally. At present the marketing activities of SCT are restricted to visits to the main schools of the region and the use of print and electronic media, including its own website, to promote special events in the College and to generate some brochures and posters. SCT has submitted a proposal to the MoM for the establishment of a Marketing Unit (Portfolio, p.97).

Currently, the College does not have a comprehensive Marketing and Public Relations Strategy and the Panel considers that such a document would inform improvements in this area and raise the profile of the institution. The Panel suggests that the College develop a consistent marketing strategy in order to intensify the marketing activities of the College.

9.3 *Communication Services*

Communication within the College is based on channels such as meetings, newsletters, SMS, e-mails and the College website (Portfolio, p.98). There is no overall e-mail service for the students but SCT plans to introduce such a system. SCT has identified a number of opportunities for improvement in the area of communication such as further training on web applications (Portfolio, p.99). The College website has also been revised but it could benefit from further improvements. The Panel supports efforts made in this area.

Affirmation 10

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees that Salalah College of Technology needs to review its channels for communication and supports its current initiatives, such as improving the College website.

The Panel noted that much of the College's documentation (such as QAD reports and policies) is produced in either Arabic or English. Since many staff in the College community are not bilingual, SCT should ensure that everyone has access to relevant documentation whether Arabic or English speaking.

9.4 *Facilities Management*

The Panel was informed that when maintenance is needed a request is submitted to the Head of Section and then through the HoD to the AFAD. The Panel found evidence that maintenance takes place only on a case to case basis and the response to requests is often slow. As noted in Section 1.12, the risk management exercise highlighted many maintenance issues that have an impact on health and safety. The Panel believes that such matters require more urgent and systematic attention than the current apparently ad hoc system provides.

Recommendation 21

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that Salalah College of Technology develop and implement an overall maintenance schedule and reviews it on a regular basis.

APPENDIX A. AUDIT PANEL

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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.

AcSS	Academic Support Services
ADAA.....	Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs
ADAFAs.....	Assistant Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs
ADSA	Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
ADRI.....	A four step, cyclical model for analysing a topic, comprising: Approach → Deployment → Results → Improvement.
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.
B.Tech.....	Bachelor of Technology Degree
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.
CaC	Career Center
CoT	College of Technology
CRDC	Curriculum Review & Development 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.
ELC.....	English Language Center
ETC.....	Educational Technology Center
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.
HEI.....	Higher Education Institution (also known as HEP – Higher Education Provider)
HoD.....	Head of Department
HoS	Head of Section
HR.....	Human Resources
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> .
KPI.....	Key Performance Indicator
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)

OFI.....	Opportunity for improvement.
OJT	On the Job Training
OQF	Oman Qualifications Framework.
Panel Chairperson.....	The Chairperson of the Audit Panel.
Panel Member	An OAAA External Reviewer who is a member of an Audit Panel.
Portfolio	see <i>Quality Audit Portfolio</i> .
Quality Assurance.....	The combination of policies and processes for ensuring that stated intentions are met.
QAD.....	Quality Assurance Department
QAM.....	Salalah CoT Quality Assurance Manual
Quality Audit 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.
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 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 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> .
SA	Student Affairs
SAC	Student Access Center
SAD	Student Affairs Department
SCT	Salalah College of Technology
System	In this Report, <i>system</i> refers to plans, policies, processes and results that are integrated towards the fulfilment of a common purpose.
The College.....	Salalah College of Technology

