



Oman Academic Accreditation Authority

Report of an Audit of the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq

December 2014

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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) of the College of Applied Sciences (CAS) Rustaq. It comments on CAS Rustaq's Mission and Vision, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its systems for achieving that Mission and Vision. Quality Audit is the first stage in Oman's institutional accreditation process. It is designed to provide a level of assurance to the public about the quality of CAS Rustaq's activities and constructive feedback to the College to assist with its ongoing improvement efforts.

The Quality Audit commenced with CAS Rustaq 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 agreed 2 October 2013.

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 20 November 2013 to consider CAS Rustaq's Portfolio. Following this, a representative of the Audit Panel Chairperson and the Executive Officer undertook a planning visit on behalf of the Panel to CAS Rustaq on 8 January 2014 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 CAS Rustaq's activities. No submissions were received.

The audit visit took place over 24-27 February 2014. During this time, the Panel spoke with approximately 120 people, including governing authorities, staff, students and external stakeholders. They also visited a selection of venues and examined additional documents.

No documents created after 27 February 2014 (being the last day of the audit visit) were taken into consideration for the purposes of this audit.

The Report contains a summary of the Panel's findings, together with formal Commendations where good practices have been confirmed, Affirmations where CAS Rustaq's ongoing quality improvement efforts merit support, and Recommendations where there are significant opportunities for 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 CAS Rustaq.

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 18 December 2014.

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

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 useful because it provides some independent comment on the learning environment at this institution (particularly Chapters 2, 6 and 7 below). 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. Unlike the Quality Audit, this stage, which will take place about four years after the Quality Audit, does provide a summative assessment against external standards in the same nine areas of activity. It should be noted that Oman also operates a system of accreditation/recognition for academic program, separately from the institutional accreditation process. For more information on Oman's System of Quality Assurance in Higher Education please visit www.oaaa.gov.om.

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

CONCLUSIONS

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

Executive Summary of Findings

The College of Applied Sciences Rustaq (CAS Rustaq) is located in the Al Batinah region of the Sultanate of Oman, around 160 kilometers north west of the capital Muscat. It is one of six public colleges which form a network across the country. The colleges are governed and supervised by Oman's Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and share a common Vision and Mission. CAS Rustaq, like the other colleges in the network, was first established in 1979 as a community college and then, in 1994, it became a college of education to train Omani teachers. In 2007, as a result of a Royal Decree, the CAS colleges transitioned to their current status as Colleges of Applied Sciences. CAS Rustaq is, however, distinctive in that it is the only college in the network which still offers a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree (in English Language and Literature). Under its new mandate as a College of Applied Sciences, and in common with a number of the other colleges, CAS Rustaq offers Bachelor degrees in Information Technology (IT) and in International Business Administration (IBA). In both these areas, a range of majors are offered. Awards for all programs are conferred by CAS. In the academic year 2012-2013, the College had 1823 students, with the majority studying International Business Administration. At that time, there were around 150 academic staff and 100 administrative staff. CAS Rustaq was the last of the colleges in the CAS network to undergo OAAA quality audit.

CAS Rustaq's self-study Portfolio reflected a genuine effort by the College to undertake an evidence-based and thorough self-study. It was developed through a structured process, characterised by a high level of staff engagement. The College also drew on the prior experience of OAAA Quality Audit of other colleges in the network. The Approach, Deployment, Results and Improvement (ADRI) model (see Appendix B) was used to support CAS Rustaq's approach to the self-study and provide a format for the Portfolio. The strength of the self-study was compromised in some areas by a lack of data, analysis and evaluation of results so the rationale for the identification of formal conclusions was therefore not always clear. In addition, documentary evidence submitted reflected the need for a better system of document management in the College. The Portfolio submitted for the Quality Audit was the third annual self-review undertaken by the College. The value of regular institutional self-review is acknowledged by the Panel, although the Portfolio contained little evidence of comparative data and analysis that might result from this. More significantly, there is no clear process whereby the strengths and opportunities for improvement identified through self-study are systematically addressed and therefore no explicit indication of how these self-studies lead to quality improvement. Nevertheless, this high level of attention to self-study has been successful in establishing a strong awareness of quality assurance across the College.

CAS Rustaq is subject to the governance system of the CAS network. This is guided by the Bylaw of the Royal Decree which established the CAS Colleges. A Board of Trustees (BoT), chaired by Her Excellency the Minister of Higher Education, is the highest governing body and is supported by an Academic Council with representation from across the network. CAS Rustaq reports to a Director General of the CAS network (DG) who in turn reports to His Excellency the Undersecretary of Higher Education, both members of the BoT. Major aspects of the governance, such as review of the Bylaw, policy development and mechanisms to monitor institutional performance, are currently under review; this potentially provides opportunity for greater autonomy to be granted to CAS Rustaq in dealing with operational issues, such as aspects of human resources management, which are currently hindered by centralised processes. A comprehensive Strategic Plan (SP) has been developed for the CAS Colleges,

and CAS Rustaq has devoted considerable time and effort to developing a system of operational planning based on this. However, the next phase of the SP is overdue, although it is under development through a comprehensive and inclusive process. There is also a pressing need for a suite of CAS-wide policies covering key operational areas to be finalized and approved; these are long overdue and have left CAS Rustaq operating with interim approaches to the management of a number of areas.

CAS Rusaq benefits from a proactive approach to management which is inclusive of both staff and students. There is scope, however, for formal evaluation of management both within the College and by governing bodies to be enhanced; the formal College reports submitted to the DG are currently insufficient to support effective evaluation. There is a need for CAS Rustaq to build on the awareness of quality assurance it has embedded by better coordinating its quality assurance activities and ensuring that opportunities for improvement that are identified are systematically addressed in order to establish cycles of improvement; enhancement of the capacity and capability of its Quality Assurance Department would support this. Systems to manage health and safety as well as risk require further development.

The CAS network's IT and IBA Programs delivered at CAS Rusaq benefit from the work of its System Wide Course Coordinators who work with Program Directors from the DG to coordinate delivery. Both these programs are currently undergoing formal, major review through a new centrally managed process. Entry testing for progression to degree programs from the General Foundation Program needs to be reviewed to ensure that students' levels of English language meets the minimum national standards, and entry standards in all areas need to be reviewed periodically. Employing problem-based learning methodologies that help to prepare students for employment is a key feature of the CAS Mission; in view of this, the extent of applied, practical and problem-based work for students is still limited. The B.Ed. Program provides a well-developed scheme for student placements in schools but although placements are encouraged on the IT and IBA Programs, formal processes for this are underdeveloped. The College has adopted a range of mechanisms to deal with plagiarism although evaluation of their effectiveness needs to be informed by monitoring implementation and recording occurrences. Systems to moderate assessment are implemented with rigour, but do not include an external benchmarking component to help assure academic standards.

The College has clear aspirations to develop a strong research profile and it has the staff profile to support this. Progress in this area requires a stronger framework for research, inclusive of relevant policies, procedures and comprehensive planning. Staff also require more time for research. Steps to develop an effective funding model are underway and supported by The Research Council of Oman as a source of funding. Current work to develop a CAS bylaw for consultancy should support the College's research agenda as well as engagement with industry and the community. Overall, engagement with industry and employers as well as other higher education providers needs to be strengthened to effectively support the College's Mission (although it is acknowledged that CAS Rustaq operates in a region with limited industry). CAS Rustaq does, however, have a strong relationship with some sections of the community through the provision of training programs and workshops to employees of local organizations. The College has former graduates from its B.Ed. Program but did not have its first cohort of applied science graduates until June 2013. A formalised relationship with its alumni is now required, particularly in relation to tracking graduate destinations and supporting graduates in finding employment.

CAS Rustaq is highly supportive of students and has a strong culture of engagement and consultation with the student body which is facilitated by mechanisms such as regular open meetings and an active Student Council. A system for formal measurement of student satisfaction via surveys is being embedded. In terms of academic support services, further enhancement of electronic and paper-based learning resources is required together with more structured extracurricular learning support activities.

CAS Rustaq is bound by centralized processes for much of the management of its staff. Review of the staff recruitment processes is required to address delays in the current systems. There is a formal system for staff appraisal that considers training needs, but to enhance transparency and effectiveness, in all cases the formal results should be shared with the staff member being appraised. Both staff and the College management are keen for professional development needs to be addressed and a range of opportunities is

provided. However, formal evaluation of the effectiveness of overall provision of professional development and individual professional development activities is required. Through centralised processes, a significant number of Omani staff are supported for higher studies overseas in support of the Omanisation of academic staff. There is evidence of a positive staff climate at CAS Rustaq, although a formal system to measure this is still being established. When staff and student surveys are conducted, systematic administration of these is required which includes feedback on results and any action taken in response being provided to respondents.

CAS Rustaq has the highest student population of the network. Infrastructure developments are underway to address the challenges resulting from this; these include basic requirements such as classrooms as well as construction of a dedicated facility for social and recreational activities. In addition, a major project to develop a new student information system has been initiated by the MoHE; this is required as the current system is limited in terms of what it can do as well as its reliability, and until a new system becomes operational interim measures may be required. CAS Rustaq has a positive outlook and is well-placed to embrace opportunities to develop in light of new governance initiatives.

Summary of Commendations

A formal Commendation recognises an instance of particularly good practice.

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for establishing an inclusive and proactive approach to managing and developing the College.15
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for its established ties with the local community through the provision of training courses and workshops which are held in high regard by participants.41
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for its communication with students through a range of mechanisms, including an active Student Council, and the resulting culture of engagement and consultation with the student body which this supports.59

Summary of Affirmations

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

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the efforts of the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq to develop a comprehensive risk management framework to ensure that risks are identified and assessed against defined criteria and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support effective implementation.19
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further work is required to develop its health and safety management system and ensure that this is implemented effectively, and encourages it to build on current initiatives to achieve this.22
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further work is required to ensure that its defined set of key graduate attributes (KGAs) are systematically developed in students, assessed and subject to evaluation from relevant stakeholders, and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this.24
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a permanent, systematic approach to review its academic programs and maintain

	its curricula needs to be implemented and supports the work in progress to formalise processes to achieve this which include external input and benchmarking to ensure international standards are maintained and employability of students is supported, in line with strategic aims.....	25
5.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a comprehensive process to measure and evaluate the quality of teaching needs to be systematically applied across all programs and supports its efforts to achieve this.....	27
6.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the work College of Applied Sciences Rustaq to address plagiarism through its development of a strong approach to maintaining academic integrity across the College and encourages its ongoing evaluation of this approach.	28
7.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that an effective funding scheme for research is imperative and supports the College's work towards developing and implementing a research funding model appropriate to the needs and strategic goals of the College.	36
8.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a formal policy and associated procedures are required to direct and support its consultancy activities in line with its strategic intent to establish Centres of Specialisation and, ultimately, recognised Centres of Excellence for its degree programs, and supports the development of a system-wide consultancy bylaw as a step towards achieving this.....	36
9.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that its student information system requires improvement and supports the action being taken to develop and implement a network-wide system which will provide improved services to all stakeholders.....	44
10.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that it requires additional classrooms and supports the tendering of a project to construct these as a step towards addressing this need.	47
11.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further development of its system for seeking student feedback via surveys is required and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this so that this data can be used systematically to help drive quality improvement.	48
12.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq in its project to construct a dedicated facility for social and recreational activities, in order to encourage student participation in these as part of their overall development, and support its strategic objective to engender student pride in the CAS system.....	52
13.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq in its efforts to monitor and improve staff satisfaction and the use of a staff satisfaction survey as one element of a mechanism to achieve this.....	57
14.	The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that systematic evaluation of its general support services and facilities is required to support improvements and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this which include staff and student satisfaction data collection.....	58

Summary of Recommendations

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

1. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq ensure that its performance appraisal reports to the Directorate General of the Colleges of Applied Sciences are sufficiently robust to support effective monitoring and decision making at governance level.14
2. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq enhance the capacity and capability of its Quality Assurance Department in order to support the development, implementation and coordination of College- and network-wide quality assurance quality systems.....16
3. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq seek opportunities to work more proactively with its governing body, the Ministry of Higher Education, to ensure that there are appropriate local or network-wide policies in place to support all key activities in the College.20
4. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq further develop and coordinate its entity and activity review systems to ensure that opportunities for improvement it identifies are prioritised and then systematically addressed to support a cycle of continuous quality improvement.....21
5. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to align its General Foundation Program (GFP) with the GFP National Standards and subject entry standards in all subjects for its Bachelor programs to periodic review to ensure that the minimum standards set by the National Standards are sufficient for each of the Bachelor degrees offered by the College.26
6. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq increase its efforts to embed applied learning and problem-based instruction as distinctive aspects of its programs in line with its Mission to ground its programs in this methodology and in order to help prepare students for employment.27
7. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq enhance and formalise its management of student placements in its Bachelor of International Business Administration and Bachelor of Information Technology programs in line with its strategic aims and systematically evaluate the systems it implements in order to inform continuous improvement.29
8. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq introduce an external benchmarking component into its assessment system in order to ensure that international-standard student learning outcomes are maintained, in line with its strategic aims.30
9. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop and implement an enhanced system for tracking graduates and monitoring graduate employment rates in order to develop strategies to increase the employment rates of graduates in line with this key aspect of its Mission.31
10. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq further develop its planning for research to ensure alignment with its Strategic Plan and include strategies to support research performance as well as key performance indicators through which implementation can be monitored and evaluated.34
11. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop and implement a comprehensive approach to staff professional

- development for research in line with its Strategic Plan, and inclusive of a regular review mechanism, so that its staff benefit from on-going, appropriate development activities which are specific to their needs and lead to enhancement of research performance.....37
12. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq review and revise the way in which it plans and manages industry and community engagement to ensure all aspects of industry and community engagement relevant to its strategic goal to “build partnerships” are appropriately addressed and regularly evaluated in a coordinated manner.....38
13. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq strengthen and formalise its relationships with industry and employers in light of the critical importance of building effective partnerships with these stakeholders to achieving its Mission and supporting achievement of its Vision.39
14. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop formal relationships with other higher education institutions (outside the CAS network) for purposes of benchmarking, sharing of good practice and avoiding insularity.....40
15. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq establish an alumni association in line with its Strategic Plan in order to formalise its relationship with its alumni and maximise potential benefits of this relationship for both the alumni and the College.41
16. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq build on its work to date to further enhance the resources and services provided by the LRC, ensuring that there are sufficient, appropriately trained staff and that resources, and e-resources in particular, are sufficient and appropriate to support technological skills and knowledge development in students and their preparation for the global workforce, in line with the College Mission.45
17. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq expand its activities and diversify its approach to providing effective liaison with employers to support graduate employment.50
18. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to formally review the effectiveness of the recruitment process for both academic and non-academic staff in order to overcome the delays in recruitment of staff currently experienced by the College and to provide opportunity for other areas for improvement to be identified and addressed.54
19. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to formally review and revise the staff performance evaluation system to enhance consistency and transparency of implementation.....56
20. The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq ensure that its communication with stakeholders is supported by appropriate use of electronic forms of documentation, consistent use of terminology in formal documents, and an effective document management system.60

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The College of Applied Sciences Rustaq (CAS Rustaq) is located in the Al Batinah region of the Sultanate of Oman, around 160 kilometers north-west of the capital Muscat. It is one of six CAS Colleges which form a network across the country. These public colleges are governed and supervised by Oman's Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). CAS Rustaq, like the other colleges in the network, was first established in 1979 as a community college and then, in 1994, along with the other colleges it became a college of education to train Omani teachers. In 2007, as a result of a Royal Decree, the CAS Colleges transitioned to their current status as Colleges of Applied Sciences. CAS Rustaq has an organizational structure, headed by a Dean, which is common across the network. A board of trustees, an academic council and a Director General work at the level of the network to support the MoHE in undertaking its ultimate responsibility for the colleges.

The CAS Colleges are working to six strategic goals as identified in their current 2010 Strategic Plan (which contains indicative actions for 2011-2015). Goal1, to "align governance and management structures with the Mission, Vision and Value", is supported by three strategic objectives: optimize the effective operation of the Colleges of Applied Sciences; review central and management structures; and develop a model of governance of the CAS to be adopted by 2015.

This Chapter reports on governance and management at CAS Rustaq and specifically reports on the following: Mission, Vision and Values; governance; management; institutional affiliations; strategic plan; operational planning; financial management; risk management; policy management; entity and activity review systems; student grievance process; and health and safety.

1.1 Mission, Vision and Values

The Vision, Mission and Values statements are common for all six of the CAS Colleges as they were developed centrally by a committee established by the MoHE in 2010. CAS Rustaq states that these statements were developed via a participatory approach involving all CAS Colleges (Portfolio, p.1). This was confirmed during site visit interviews with various stakeholders. The Mission and Vision statements are:

Vision: The Colleges of Applied Sciences aspire to be among the finest institutions in Oman and the Gulf by the year 2015, focused on practical education in the core technologies and applied arts and sciences of the global era. The Centres of Specialization in the six Colleges of Applied Sciences will be equipped with state-of-the-art resources and will be fully responsive to the changing requirements of Oman's economy and society. Centred in teaching, they will also engage in applied research at an international standard; and will have made substantial progressing toward achieving the status of Centres of Excellence. While achieving an appropriate level of autonomy in their separate responsibilities as regional colleges, the six CAS are to function as an interdependent and integrated system, laying the foundations for possible future development as a university. Graduates of the CAS will be well-skilled in the linguistic, technical, professional, personal and interpersonal competencies required to perform effectively in the dynamic national and international environments of the early 21st Century.

Mission: The Colleges of Applied Sciences provide high quality programmes grounded in problem-based learning methodologies that prepare students for employment in a global world, for graduate studies and as required for the on-going development of competent citizens who contribute to Oman's economy and society. Graduates will possess the skills necessary to

integrate and apply knowledge in the workplace. Student outcomes are enhanced through active and productive partnerships in both higher education and employment.

The Mission and Vision statements are underpinned by six core values: Loyalty; Service; the Advancement of Knowledge; Creativity; Professionalism; and Partnership (Portfolio, p.2).

The Panel was informed that the realization of the CAS's aspiration "...to be among the finest institutions in Oman and in the Gulf by 2015 ..." (Vision statement) is to be assessed by a set of 117 key performance indicators (KPIs) developed by MoHE to monitor the CAS network's progress in achieving its Mission and Vision. The MoHE has recently initiated processes for the review of the CAS Mission and Vision through a participatory approach. A consultation forum was conducted in October 2013 during which internal and external stakeholders, including CAS Rustaq, had the opportunity to give their feedback on the current Mission and Vision.

The Panel found that the Mission, Vision and Values were adequately communicated to staff and students. They are displayed throughout the College, on the College's website and are included in the Orientation Booklet. Nevertheless, some students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they were not aware of the College's Vision and Mission, nor had they participated in their development. The Panel encourages the College to develop and implement formal processes to measure and enhance awareness about these strategic statements, and to ensure that there is shared sense of ownership among all internal stakeholders.

1.2 Governance

CAS Rustaq's governance system is guided by the Executive Bylaw of Royal Decree 62/2007 which established the CAS network. In line with all the six CAS Colleges, CAS Rustaq is governed by the Minister of Higher Education, the Board of Trustees (BoT), the Undersecretary of the MoHE, the Academic Council and the Director General (DG) of the CAS network. The BoT is the highest governing body and is responsible for setting strategies and policies for CAS Colleges and following up on their implementation. The BoT is chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and includes the Undersecretary of MoHE as Deputy Chairperson, the DG of the CAS network as Secretary, two Undersecretaries of relevant ministries in addition to four representatives from industry (Portfolio, p.3). The Panel found that the BoT meets regularly to monitor the performance of the CAS Colleges and take decisions on strategic issues, such as the approval of new academic programs. It also receives regular feedback on the colleges' progress via the Academic Council. There are no formal mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the BoT.

The Academic Council is chaired by the Undersecretary of the MoHE and comprises the DG of the CAS network, the Deans of the six CAS Colleges and three academic staff members. The main responsibility of the Academic Council is overseeing the CAS network academic provision and related processes. The Panel learnt that academic proposals and decisions from the six colleges are first discussed at the Academic Council, after which the Council's recommendations are forwarded to the BoT for approval.

The DG of the CAS network is responsible for following up and supervising work and progress in the CAS Colleges. As a member of the BoT and Deputy Chairperson of the Academic Council, the DG acts as a link between the CAS Colleges and the governing bodies. The Panel was informed that the CAS Rustaq College Council meeting minutes and reports regarding the progress of work at the College are regularly forwarded to the DG to allow appropriate action to be taken. In turn, the DG submits an annual report to the MoHE Undersecretary on the College's performance. The College states that a "College Performance Appraisal Report" is submitted annually to the DG within the MoHE for the purpose of monitoring the performance of CAS Rustaq (Portfolio, p.5). The Panel found that the report submitted by CAS Rustaq for this purpose was insufficiently comprehensive to constitute a sound basis for decision making by

governing bodies. Relevant stakeholders concurred with this. The Panel urges the College to enhance its annual reporting of institutional performance to the MoHE and notes that staff satisfaction data on governance and management collected by the College (an overall rating of “Good” is reported – Portfolio, p.6) can inform this report.

Recommendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq ensure that its performance appraisal reports to the Directorate General of the Colleges of Applied Sciences are sufficiently robust to support effective monitoring and decision making at governance level.

The Panel heard consistent indication of the College’s desire to have more autonomy in taking decisions relating to operational issues, such as human resources management, in order to overcome hindrance resulting from the centralised approach to governance of the CAS Colleges. The Panel also heard that consideration was being given at the system-wide level to allow for this by delegating more authority on local issues. The Panel supports intent in this area. During the audit visit, the Panel learnt of various encouraging system-wide development and improvement initiatives currently being undertaken at the governance level. These initiatives align with the current Strategic Plan (SP) for the CAS Colleges and have been informed by OAAA Quality Audit Reports of colleges in the network. They include: the second cycle of strategic planning in order to develop a new SP; monitoring of institutional performance using key performance indicators (KPIs); bylaw and policy development as well as review of the Executive Bylaw developed in 2010; establishment of a comprehensive student information system (SIS); and review and development of the governance model for the CAS Colleges. The Panel was informed that these developments will be in place at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, with ensuing implementation and evaluation. Further comment on these initiatives is provided in relevant sections of this Report.

1.3 Management

The management structure of CAS Rustaq is outlined in the College’s organizational chart. The roles of each senior position within the organisational chart are detailed in the CAS Executive Bylaw. The Dean is the highest authority in the College and is in charge of managing the College’s academic, administrative, and financial affairs. There is an Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs & Scientific Research and an Assistant Dean for Academic Support Affairs. The Dean chairs the College Council that comprises, in addition to the Assistant Deans, the Heads of Academic and Administrative Departments as well as Centre Directors. Council meeting minutes show that the Council meets regularly to discuss and take decisions on main operational issues.

During the audit visit, the Panel heard consistently about the collegial and consultative approach to management at CAS Rustaq and its role in creating a pleasant working environment in the College. The Panel found that there is strong leadership in the College and those responsible for management in the College have been proactive in contributing to and implementing important initiatives at the CAS network level, such as the introduction of the concept of quality assurance, the development of the CAS SP and a suite of essential policies. The College has an active Student Council (see Chapter 7) and staff interviewed by the Panel emphasised their involvement at different levels of decision-making and in implementing the College’s operational plans. Moreover, “Leadership” was identified as one of the main strengths of the College by external stakeholders. The Panel acknowledges that the collegial, participatory management style of the current Dean has been a great asset to the College during its development into a College of Applied Science. The Panel concurs with the College’s assertion that it has made “significant

steps towards the establishment of a broad-based platform where everybody has a voice” (Portfolio, p.xviii) and notes that this aligns with actions identified in the CAS Strategic Plan.

Commendation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for establishing an inclusive and proactive approach to managing and developing the College.

The MoHE employs a Program Director (PD) with responsibility across the CAS network for each of the CAS programs. As a result, a PD, affiliated to the DG’s office, has been assigned to each of the degree programs offered by the College, i.e., Information Technology (IT), International Business Administration (IBA) and English Language Teaching (ELT). PDs contribute to the management system by providing “first-hand support to the College management in academic matters” (Portfolio, p.5). Job descriptions for the PDs who support the College show them to be responsible for ensuring effective functioning of the degree programs.

The Panel learnt that while the IBA PD is resident at CAS Rustaq, the other PDs visit the College twice a semester, during which time they meet with stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of program delivery. In addition, PDs have regular meetings with the Heads of Departments, Deans and the DG to establish effective communications and reporting systems. The Panel notes with appreciation that detailed reports with specific recommendations, e.g. ‘Grades Moderation Report’ and ‘Academic Report’ are prepared by the PDs and submitted to the DG at the end of each semester. The Panel identified some overlapping of responsibilities between PDs and Deans with regard to decision making on academic issues. The Panel is of the view that communication between PDs and Senior Management needs to be enhanced to help ensure effective program delivery. There is evidence that formal processes to consider the respective roles of PDs and Deans have now been initiated and the Panel encourages on-going monitoring and evaluation of this activity. The Panel also notes that, while job descriptions for PDs are in place, there are no formal policies or procedures to guide their work or for the evaluation of their performance. The Panel encourages this to be addressed.

The Panel learnt that the College has recently established 23 committees to enhance the College’s performance in functional areas such as risk management, academic advising, intra-college communication and health and safety. A list of these committees, along with their main responsibilities and reporting lines was provided to the Panel. The Panel encourages the College to assess the impact of these committees on college management processes.

The College has recently undertaken initial steps to enhance communication among internal stakeholders; these include the activation of an internal e-mail system and an SMS-based system as well as the establishment of an Intra-College Communication Committee. The Panel supports these initiatives. Over the course of the audit, the need for the College to adopt a standardised and better organised document management system became apparent. More consistency and coherence in style, formatting and version control of documents across the College would support quality assurance processes in general (see Recommendation 20).

CAS Rustaq reports that CAS Rustaq management performance is monitored by MoHE through mechanisms which include the annual College Performance Appraisal report (Portfolio, p.5). Overall, the Panel found that there are clear lines of accountability within the College and that the management processes are well-understood by staff. The Panel nevertheless encourages formal evaluation of management to be strengthened at College level and included in institutional performance reports (see Recommendation 1).

The CAS Bylaw requires a Quality Assurance Department, headed by a Director, to be established in each of the colleges. The Bylaw details the main duties that this Department is to

undertake. The College reports that a Quality Assurance Department has been established and Quality Assurance Officers appointed (Portfolio, p.2). The Panel found the College to be working hard to build a quality assurance culture, with efforts to date led principally by the Dean and the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research. The College has a Quality Assurance Steering Committee (QASC), chaired by the Dean, and associated sub-committees which together have produced a series of annual institutional self-studies. There are also designated departmental Quality Coordinators. In addition, a College Internal Auditing Committee (IAC), chaired by the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research, was established for the academic year 2012-2013. However, the Quality Assurance Department *per se* is underdeveloped although it was established in 2010. An existing member of staff, relatively new to the field of quality assurance was appointed Head of this Department just prior to the audit visit (there had been no previous Head) and there are no other staff dedicated to it. Much work, however, remains to be done to develop, formally document and coordinate quality assurance systems and processes across the College and ensure that opportunities for improvement that are identified are systematically addressed and result in quality improvements (also see Recommendation 4). The Panel heard acknowledgement of the need for investment in further training of staff in quality assurance, and urges this to be acted on.

Recommendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq enhance the capacity and capability of its Quality Assurance Department in order to support the development, implementation and coordination of College- and network-wide quality assurance quality systems.

1.4 Institutional Affiliations for Programs and Quality Assurance

The MoHE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2006 with New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium (NZTEC) to provide academic expertise for the development of degree programs that are of relevance to Oman's economy. The following programs were developed for CAS: International Business Administration (IBA); Information Technology (IT); and Communication Studies and Design. The MoU specified that for the first batch of students NZTEC was to provide the learning materials, including lecture notes, modules, assignments and examinations, and oversee program implementation and quality assurance. The Panel learnt that the academic collaboration with NZTEC had provided valuable support to the CAS Rustaq (which offers the IBA and IT Programs), particularly in terms of staff development and enhancement of teaching and learning across the CAS network. The agreement was terminated in 2010 following graduation of the first batch of students. The NZTEC is deemed by the College to have been useful to the (then) newly-established CAS Colleges by giving direction in the field of Applied Sciences and providing an international benchmark (Portfolio, p.6).

The Panel was informed that the quality of the degree programs had been monitored through annual visits by NZTEC Program Coordinators as well as regular communication between the CAS network and NZTEC. After the termination of the agreement, a comprehensive review of the academic programs was conducted in view of NZTEC recommendations (also see section 1.10). The Panel is pleased to note that these recommendations have also informed the development of the CAS Strategic Plan.

The Panel found no evidence of future plans for signing agreements with other foreign HEIs or accreditation bodies for the international benchmarking of the CAS Rustaq programs. As a public HEI in Oman, there is no obligation for the College (or the network) to have an institutional affiliation for programs and quality assurance. Nevertheless, the Panel had some concern regarding the current lack of appropriate benchmarks external to the CAS network to support CAS's strategic goal to "strive for academic excellence" (also see Recommendation 8).

1.5 Strategic Plan

The Panel learnt that the current Strategic Plan for the CAS Colleges (the CAS SP) was developed in 2009-2010 by a 'Dean's Taskforce' in light of consultancies commissioned by the MoHE and in alignment with the draft SP for Education in the Sultanate as well as the Sultanate's Eighth Five Year Plan (2011-2015). The Panel was informed that the strategic planning process was initiated by the CAS Colleges, with CAS Rustaq undertaking a leading role. The Taskforce was chaired by the (former) Dean of CAS Rustaq and two out of the five committee members were from CAS Rustaq. The Panel appreciates the key role assumed by CAS Rustaq in facilitating this system-wide strategic planning initiative.

The current SP, which is common to all the six colleges in the CAS network, is a comprehensive document which identifies six strategic goals: *align governance and management structures with the Mission, Vision and Values; raise awareness of and engender pride in the Colleges of Applied Sciences; advance student learning; strive for academic excellence; build partnerships; and achieve sustainable funding resources*. These are supported by objectives, strategies and performance indicators. Responsibilities are also indicated. However, the current SP – termed "Phase 1" – is an interim document which includes performance targets relating to 2010 only, along with "indicative actions" for Phase 2 (2011-2015). At the time of the audit visit, the Phase 2 Plan was still being worked on (also see Section 1.2). The completion and rolling out of Phase 2 is therefore overdue. The Panel strongly encourages enhanced effort to launch the Phase 2 Plan.

MoHE monitors the implementation of the strategic plan through feedback from CAS with each of the six CAS network colleges responsible to follow up on the implementation of one of the six strategic goals (Portfolio, p.8). The Panel confirmed that CAS Rustaq was in the process of following up on Goal 4.

The Panel found that academic and administrative staff have attended a number of workshops conducted by the College to enhance their awareness of planning and to help them develop College operational plans aligned to the overarching CAS Strategic Plan.

1.6 Operational Planning

CAS Rustaq states that a standard approach to operational planning has been adopted across the College (Portfolio, p.8). Each department is required to draft its operational plan by extracting the relevant objectives from the SP, and identifying the strategies needed to achieve these. To ensure consistency among the Departmental Operational Plans (DOPs), a standard template is employed to list the Strategies, KPIs, Review of Results, Improvement Action as well as Responsibility for following up on each objective. The drafted DOPs are checked for consistency by the QASC after which they are forwarded to the College Council for approval. The Panel noted positively that the College has adopted ADRI (see Appendix B) as an organising principle for its operational planning.

The Panel found that the QASC has conducted extensive training on operational planning and has assisted departments in linking their operational tasks to strategic goals. Academic and administrative staff confirmed that they participated in these workshops and that they found them useful in the development of their departments' operational plans. However, the Panel found varying levels of understanding among interviewed staff on how to align DOPs to the SP. Upon review of DOPs for the academic year 2012-13, the Panel concluded that while some are well developed, others would benefit from further revision to ensure their adherence to the approved DOP template, and relevance of the selected strategies, KPIs and targets to achieving identified objectives. The Panel encourages the College to provide staff with more professional development opportunities in operational planning to ensure effective implementation of strategic objectives.

The Panel learnt that the monitoring of DOPs is conducted annually by a sub-committee of the QASC which evaluates the departments' progress towards the achievement of the targets identified in their operational plans. At the time of the audit visit, formal reports on the outcomes of these evaluations had not yet been produced. The Panel encourages the College to document the monitoring and evaluation processes for DOPs so that progress towards meeting the operational objectives can be formally assessed. Enhanced management of operational planning will provide better means for opportunities for improvement identified through institutional self-studies to be addressed systematically. The Panel encourages the College to maintain its efforts to embed a sound process of operational planning across the institution.

1.7 Financial Management

CAS Rustaq adopts the central financial system for all government publicly-funded institutions as set by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) (Portfolio, p.10). The Panel learnt that the College has a developmental budget which covers major capital expenditures and an operational budget which provides funding for the day-to-day operation of the College. The developmental budget is decided and controlled centrally by the MoHE; by contrast, the College has some autonomy in managing its operational budget. In line with the CAS network, CAS Rustaq is required to draft and forward its annual operational budget to the MoHE for approval. The Panel learnt that requests from the different departments are first discussed by the respective Head of Department, the respective Assistant Dean and the Dean. Upon approval by the Dean, the requests are then forwarded to the Director of Administration and Finance who is responsible for preparing the College's annual budget in accordance with the MoHE plans. According to the CAS Bylaw, the Dean is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the College's estimated budget and submitting it to the DG following its review by the College Council.

It was evident to the Panel that all the instructions relating to financial planning are issued by the MoF and supervised by the MoHE. The College may spend up to 8,000 Omani Rials without MoHE approval; however, project requests for higher amounts need to be forwarded, along with a good justification, to MoHE for approval. The Panel found some dissatisfaction with the current financial system within the College, as there are no specific budget allocations to some areas of responsibility; for example, there is no budget allocated for research. (Research funding is further discussed in Section 4.3). Nevertheless, the Panel learnt that there is some scope for the College to move funds from one budget category to another in order to meet emerging priorities.

Goal 6 of the CAS Strategic Plan is to "achieve sustainable funding resources". However, the College identifies that some of the strategic objectives to achieve this goal, namely "introduce partial student contribution to funding" and "develop income-generating activities" are not currently achievable as they contradict the laws regulating the activities of publicly-funded institutions (Portfolio, p. 10). This was confirmed to the Panel and some dissatisfaction was expressed with progress in realizing Strategic Goal 6. The Panel learnt that the College is currently engaging with the MoF to explore feasible options for implementing income-generating activities and services. The Panel notes that Phase 2 of the Strategic Plan needs to reflect appropriate review of Goal 6.

The College has an internal auditor who reports directly to the Director of Internal Audit Office in the MoHE. Moreover, as a public institution, the College is audited annually by the State Audit. The Panel notes, however, that the effectiveness of the current financial system has not yet been evaluated by the College. Nor is there a long-term financial risk plan in place. Whilst the Panel acknowledges there are limitations in the financial management system that are beyond the College's control, it encourages the College to evaluate the effectiveness of its financial management system in supporting achievement of its operations and strategic goals.

1.8 Risk Management

In its attempts to formalise its approaches to risk management, CAS Rustaq established a Risk Management Committee (RMC) in June 2012, mandated to develop guidelines for managing potential risks that threaten the achievement of the College's strategic goals. The RMC developed a draft for a Risk Management Plan (RMP) which was discussed in a College-wide workshop in December 2012. The RMP was revised in light of feedback from college staff and subsequently approved by the College Council in February 2013. The College notes that this initiative represents its first experience with non-financial risk management and that evaluation of its effectiveness would be premature (Portfolio, p.11).

The RMP aims to identify and address risks with the ultimate goal of improving educational processes at CAS Rustaq. It includes a list of risks identified by the different academic departments as well as College centers including the Learning Resource Centre, Admission and Registration Centre, and Students Career Guidance Centre. Proposed strategies for addressing the identified risks are also included. Upon reviewing the College's RMP, the Panel suggests that the scope of risk management at CAS Rustaq is further developed to include emerging risk areas such as strategic academic risk. The Panel is also of the view that the Plan needs to be further expanded to include clear roles and responsibilities, procedures for identifying and mitigating risks, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

During interviews, the Panel did not find a shared understanding of what constitutes a risk or the concept of risk management. Some staff members indicated they had learnt about the RMP in departmental meetings but had not actually seen it. The Panel acknowledges that the RMP is not yet fully implemented; nevertheless, it notes the need for the College to foster a risk management culture and embed risk management as part of its main operations.

CAS Rustaq identified the need to "provide further training to RMC and all staff and faculty about identifying and addressing risks" and "adopt a scale to classify the identified risks in terms of their scope, potential impact and probability of occurrence" as opportunities for improvement in its self-study (Portfolio, p.16). The Panel concurs and urges the College to integrate these initiatives within a comprehensive risk management framework that enables the staff to embed risk management processes into the College's strategic and operational activities.

Affirmation 1

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the efforts of the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq to develop a comprehensive risk management framework to ensure that risks are identified and assessed against defined criteria and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support effective implementation.

1.9 Policy Management

CAS has a strategic objective to "optimize the effective operation of the Colleges of Applied Sciences" and, in support of this, a strategy to "develop a comprehensive set of academic and administrative policies" (Portfolio, p.11). The MoHE has undertaken a number of actions to implement this strategy. The Panel learnt that an intercollegiate Taskforce comprising 37 members was established in 2012 to identify and develop 20 main policies. In addition, the Taskforce developed a CAS network Policy Framework to ensure that all policies are consistently developed, implemented and reviewed across the six colleges. A CAS Policies and Procedures Committee (PPC), chaired by the CAS DG, was established in May 2013 to finalize the policies drafted by the Taskforce. A list of the new policies being developed was provided to the Panel.

The Panel was concerned to find that some draft policies provided as supporting materials were based on policies of overseas institutions without appropriate attribution. The Panel was advised

that this occurrence was a result of the drafting process and that all references would ultimately be acknowledged. The Panel urges the College to work with the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure that this issue is addressed at the CAS network level in order to assure the academic integrity of the final versions of the policies. Any occurrence of plagiarism in approved policies would not only undermine the reputation of the CAS Colleges but could lead to other severe consequences such as the denial of national institutional accreditation.

The Panel was also concerned about impact on CAS Rustaq due to the delay in the development of the CAS network suite of academic and administrative policies. According to the CAS SP, implementation of its strategy to “Develop a comprehensive set of academic and administrative policies” were set to be completed in 2010, with an indicative action for 2011-2015 to “Apply policies and procedures in a fair and transparent manner, and ensure policies are reviewed every three years”. However, at the time of the audit visit, the identified policies had not yet been finalized and hence, main operations at the College are not guided by formal policies and procedures. The Panel learnt that the MoHE has recognised the need to advance the policy development processes. The Panel heard that the new set of policies would be finalised and approved by the Academic Council in June 2014, to be implemented in September 2014. The Panel was also informed that, as not all issues can be addressed centrally at MoHE, there is scope for the development of local policies at each College.

The Panel appreciates that the development of network-wide policies involves the entire network of CAS Colleges; the management of this process and final approval of network-wide policies is not the responsibility of CAS Rustaq. CAS Rustaq has also worked in full cooperation with others in this process to date. Nevertheless, the absence of key policies is problematic for the College and the Panel therefore urges it to be more proactive in supporting the finalisation and approval of both local and network-wide policies and preparing for their implementation.

Recommendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq seek opportunities to work more proactively with its governing body, the Ministry of Higher Education, to ensure that there are appropriate local or network-wide policies in place to support all key activities in the College.

1.10 Entity and Activity Review Systems

CAS Rustaq focused this section of its self-study around its commitment to submit its programs to on-going review and appraisal in support of the CAS strategic goal to “strive for academic excellence” (Portfolio, p. 12). The Panel’s findings about this are reported in Section 2.2.

The scope of this section of the Quality Audit (as detailed in the Quality Audit Manual) relates to systems for the review of all institutional entities and activities. In relation to this, the Panel noted the establishment of the QASC in 2010 to oversee the College’s self-evaluation processes and spread the culture of quality assurance throughout the College. In addition, a College Internal Auditing Committee (IAC) on Quality Assurance has been established to conduct annual internal quality audits. The QASC has so far conducted three self-evaluation reviews for the academic years 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 (Portfolio, p. xiv). However, the Panel found little evidence of formal documented processes to guide the work of these committees, of analysis of trend data collected over this period, or of systematic follow up of the outcomes of the reviews that have been conducted.

It was emphasised to the Panel that the concept of quality assurance was relatively new at CAS Rustaq, and hence several workshops had been conducted by the QASC to enhance awareness about quality assurance among staff and students. The Panel was pleased to note the

improvement in QA awareness, as evidenced by the active involvement of the staff in the preparation of the self-study Portfolio, as well as use of the ADRI cycle to identify good practice and areas for improvements. The Panel is keen to see that the momentum gained through the current self-review is sustained by prioritising and implementing planned actions to address the “Opportunities for Improvement” identified through the various review activities. These actions need to be fed into the College’s developing operational planning system.

Recommendation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq further develop and coordinate its entity and activity review systems to ensure that opportunities for improvement it identifies are prioritised and then systematically addressed to support a cycle of continuous quality improvement.

Further development of the Quality Assurance Department will support these efforts (see Recommendation 2).

1.11 Student Grievance Process

CAS Rustaq states that it aims to establish a fair and transparent approach to handling student grievances (Portfolio, p.13). It has implemented a number of mechanisms to enable students to voice their complaints. Academic grievances are handled in line with “Article 30: Appeals” of the CAS Academic Regulations. The College claims that these regulations are communicated to students in the Students Handbook, through academic advisors and during the orientation week (Portfolio, p.14). This was confirmed during interviews with academic staff and students. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are satisfied with the support provided to them and that they are able to voice grievances through the Students Council and in bi-annual meetings with the Dean.

To enhance the student grievance processes in the College, a Students Complaints Committee was established in July 2011 to follow up on students complaints and formalise the grievances procedures. The Committee developed a Student Complaint Form outlining the nature of the complaint, proposed solutions, opinion of concerned party and final decision. The Panel learnt that two new policies to ensure fair and prompt resolution of students’ grievances are being developed centrally at MoHE as part of the CAS-wide policy development project currently underway (see Section 1.9). One is for academic grievances and the other for non-academic grievances. Upon their approval by MoHE, the College will need to ensure effective communication of these policies to all stakeholders in order to avoid confusion with existing policies and practices. Monitoring and evaluation systems will also need to be applied to ensure effective implementation of the new policies.

1.12 Health and Safety

CAS Rustaq states that Health and Safety (H&S) is guided by its Bylaw as well as its Strategic Objective 6.5 to “increase efficiency in CAS operations and safety” and that it is “committed to providing a safe and healthy environment...” (Portfolio, p.14). It outlines the initiatives undertaken by the College to achieve this goal (Portfolio, p.15). The Panel found, however, that the Bylaw provides very limited direction in this area.

A Health and Safety Committee was established in March 2012 with clear terms of reference to oversee health and safety issues at CAS Rustaq. The main responsibilities of the H&S Committee include developing a health and safety policy and guidelines, communicating health and safety policies and procedures to all stakeholders, and supervising the implementation of all relevant procedures in the College. The Panel did not find evidence of on-going regular formal meetings

of all Committee members, but acknowledges that the Committee has developed a Health and Safety Policy - also termed a Health and Safety Plan within the College - through collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University and the national Civil Defence, and consultation within the College. This Plan was endorsed by the College Council in February 2013. The Panel noted that the first section of this Plan is essentially an emergency plan detailing the procedures to be undertaken by staff and students in cases of emergencies, followed by a brief overview of the health and hygiene services available in the College. The Panel heard that the Plan is communicated to new students and staff during the orientation week and staff induction.

Staff members interviewed by the Panel indicated that they attended workshops organised by the H&S Committee in collaboration with the national Civil Defence, and that they found them to be informative. However, staff indicated that they still require further training on health and safety aspects. Students informed the Panel that, although they are aware that health and safety training takes place, they have not attended any of these sessions mainly because of inappropriate timings. CAS Rustaq has identified the need to conduct more fire and evacuation drills, and to develop documentation for health and safety checks, procedures and inspection checklists as areas for improvement (Portfolio, p. 16). Whilst the Panel acknowledges the CAS Rustaq's initiatives to enhance its health and safety functions, it agrees that more work is needed to ensure effective implementation of appropriate policies and procedures. The Panel considers that the College needs to further develop its approach to H&S management in order to fully develop, and clearly differentiate between, policy, plans, processes and procedures. As well as ensuring key responsibilities for H&S are identified and appropriate training is undertaken, clear mechanisms for reviewing the effectiveness of the implemented processes and their continuous improvement need to be in place. The College may wish to consider the appointment of an appropriately qualified, dedicated H&S Officer to support its work in this area. Documentation provided to the Panel indicates that a new Health and Safety Policy is being developed as part of the current CAS-wide policy development project. The College will need to ensure that the introduction of this is effectively managed.

Affirmation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further work is required to develop its health and safety management system and ensure that this is implemented effectively, and encourages it to build on current initiatives to achieve this.

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

CAS Rustaq has no associated entities.

2 STUDENT LEARNING BY COURSEWORK PROGRAMS

The Rustaq College of Applied Sciences (CAS Rustaq) offers Bachelor degrees in International Business Administration (IBA) and Information Technology (IT). These programs were originally provided by a consortium of New Zealand Universities through an agreement with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to support the transition of the CAS Colleges from a network of Arabic-medium Colleges of Education to a network of English-medium Colleges of Applied Sciences. These programs are also offered by some other colleges within the CAS network (see Section 1.4). In addition, CAS Rustaq offers a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree in English Language (as it did when it was a College of Education); it is distinctive in that it is the only College in the network still to offer this program (Portfolio, p.xi). The College also has a General Foundation Program (GFP) to prepare its annual intake of school leavers for English-medium higher education.

The IBA Program has majors in International Business; Accounting; Tourism Management; and Hospitality Management and the IT Program has majors in Software Development; Computer Networks; Data Management; and IT Security. The IBA major in Accounting and the IT major in Data Management have been newly introduced following review of the original programs by CAS (Portfolio, p.6).

In the academic year 2012-2013, CAS Rustaq had around 1832 students. Approximately 43% of these students were in the IBA program, 15% in the Program and 20% in the B.Ed. Program. The remaining 22%, approximately, were in the Foundation Program. There have been on-going cohorts of graduates from the B.Ed. Program. However, the first students to graduate from CAS Rustaq's IBA Program did so in June 2013 (prior to the submission of the Portfolio) and the first cohort of IT students was not due to graduate until June 2014 (after the audit visit).

Curriculum development and program management are carried out within the overall governance and management framework of the CAS network described in Chapter 1 of this Report. Two of the six CAS strategic goals are of direct relevance to student learning by coursework: Goal 3: "Advance student learning" and Goal 4 "strive for academic excellence" (Portfolio, p.17). Comprehensive strategies to support these goals are detailed in the CAS Strategic Plan (SP). Key academic responsibilities defined in the CAS Bylaw are assigned to: the Dean; the College Council; the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research; Heads of Academic Departments; Academic Department Councils; and the Academic Affairs Committee (Portfolio, p.17). In addition, Program Directors (PDs) from the MoHE provide leadership and direction for the management and delivery of each program, with assistance from college-based System Wide Course Coordinators (SWCCs). The IBA PD is based at CAS Rustaq and the PDs for the IT and B.Ed Program visit the College on a regular basis.

Within this context, this Chapter reports on the following: graduate attributes and student learning objectives; curriculum; student entry standards; teaching quality; plagiarism; student placements; assessment methods, standards and moderation; academic security and invigilation; student retention and progression; and graduate destinations and employability.

2.1 Graduate Attributes and Student Learning Objectives

The Mission and Vision statements of the CAS Colleges articulate a range of attributes that its graduates should possess, including specific discipline knowledge and generic employability skills. In accordance with these statements, the CAS SP has an objective to ensure that student outcomes are fit-for-purpose. This is supported by strategies to ensure that programs are relevant and prepare students for employment and student outcomes are at an international standard.

The College indicates that the CAS network Key Graduate Attributes (KGAs) have been mapped to programs and communicated to stakeholders (Portfolio, p.19). The Panel found the College to have had reasonable success in communicating its KGAs to staff and students but there is inconsistency in the actual KGAs identified in relation to the different programs and explicit mapping of these in order to demonstrate where and how they are developed and assessed is variable.

The Panel heard positive views from alumni and others about the attributes of CAS Rustaq graduates, but acknowledges that at the time of the audit, it was premature for the College to have evaluated attainment of these, at least for graduates of the CAS IBA and IT Programs. The College recognises the need to seek feedback from employers on attainment and appropriateness of its KGAs once graduates from these Programs enter the job market (Portfolio, p.32). The Panel concluded that the College's work on KGAs and student learning outcomes remains work in progress.

Affirmation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further work is required to ensure that its defined set of key graduate attributes (KGAs) are systematically developed in students, assessed and subject to evaluation from relevant stakeholders, and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this.

The College reports that low achieving students may opt to study for a Diploma award in their area of study (Portfolio, p.30). The Panel did not explore this area, but strongly encourages CAS Rustaq to ensure that this exit award is structured to ensure that it meets the qualification descriptors of the Oman National Qualification Framework and that students graduate with learning outcomes which support employment.

2.2 Curriculum

The CAS SP provides clear direction for curriculum development. It calls for CAS programs to be relevant and prepare students for employment and for student outcomes to be at an international standard.

The CAS IBA and IT Programs were developed through the MoHE agreement with the New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium (NZTEC – see Section 1.4) and NZTEC also provided all course materials including assessments for the first batch of students. This collaboration, at the time the CAS Colleges were established, obviously provided significant international expertise to CAS and exposure to international standards for curriculum. The B.Ed. Program, however, has been retained from when CAS Rustaq was a College of Education. The College reports that this program was developed in 2003 with local, external input and revised in 2004 and 2005 (Portfolio, p.20).

Curriculum matters are managed by the MoHE and the College through a tiered system with the PDs and, in support, the SWCCs for each course playing key roles. The College reports that the PDs are to “ensure that the curriculum is appropriately delivered at the required standards, and to evaluate and approve any suggested changes” (Portfolio, p.20). A survey conducted in the academic year 2012-2013 showed, however, that the majority of teaching staff (66%) agree that there was a need for review of each of the following aspects of the programs: course content; lecture sequencing; course materials; and theoretical and practical skills application (Portfolio, p.21). The Panel heard mixed views regarding whether the IT and IBA Programs had sufficient practical content, but there was sufficient evidence to suggest that this area should be subject to close scrutiny in the review process, particularly in relation to the College's wish to ensure that students are prepared for employment identified in its Mission statement.

At the end of its agreement with MoHE (following graduation of the first cohort of CAS students), NZTEC conducted a comprehensive review of the CAS programs. It submitted its “CAS Degree Programmes Graduating Year Review Report” in April 2011. This review provided CAS with a number of recommendations which were considered by the PDs of the respective academic programs who, together with their program teams, embarked on comprehensive review processes. However, the Panel learnt that a realisation that each program was undergoing review by a different process prompted a change of approach. Subsequent to this initial review activity, a central committee was formed to review the CAS programs in a standardised way. This review, which aims to contextualise the programs and evaluate their course contents, practical components and assessment tools, was still on-going at the time of the audit visit. As part of this process, CAS Rustaq was tasked with reviewing the IBA program. The Panel heard that a policy was now being developed to formalise this major review process.

The College has identified the need to “develop a permanent review process to be conducted regularly” (Portfolio, p.16) as well as developing a formal mechanism for monitoring the courses delivered by the General Requirements Department (Portfolio, p.32). The Panel concurs and urges permanent processes for both major and minor (perhaps annual) review of academic programs to be formally approved and roles and responsibilities relevant to CAS Rustaq to be effectively embedded in College operations.

Affirmation 4

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a permanent, systematic approach to review its academic programs and maintain its curricula needs to be implemented and supports the work in progress to formalise processes to achieve this which include external input and benchmarking to ensure international standards are maintained and employability of students is supported, in line with strategic aims.

2.3 Entry Standards

School leavers joining CAS Rustaq enter the General Foundation Program (GFP) which aims to develop skills in English, Mathematics, Information Technology (IT) and study skills for subsequent student success in higher education, and completion of the Foundation Program constitutes entry level competences. Attainment of these standards is the minimum national requirement for students entering Omani degree programs. CAS Rustaq states that students have to “complete the Foundation Program at A level before they are registered on their specialization programs” (Portfolio, p.21), indicating that it adopts the same minimum entry standards for each of its Bachelor degree programs.

The national academic standards for GFPs identify the English language requirements to be equivalent to an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Level 5.0. The Panel was therefore concerned to find that the final assessment for English Language in the GFP, which is set centrally and common across the CAS Colleges, is equivalent to an IELTS level lower than 5.0. The Panel notes that the national standards set minimum requirements only, on the understanding that HEIs may find that enhanced levels are required to ensure students are sufficiently well prepared for Bachelor degree studies in given disciplines.

The Panel heard some concern that there were some excellent students on the Bachelor programs but that they found working in English very difficult. Moreover, the Panel learnt that not all B.Ed. English Language Teaching students achieve an IELTS Level 6.0 at the time of graduation; this is a requirement for them to be employed by the Ministry of Education. The Panel found no evidence, however, that entry standards to the different Bachelor programs had been formally evaluated. However, the Panel also learnt that the Department of English Language and Literature offers English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for Business and IT students designed for

language study in support of their main study stream and the Panel views this as good practice. At the time of the audit visit, CAS Rustaq was also entering its third year of hosting a British Council regional IELTS Centre which staff consider helpful exposure to international standards.

The Panel concluded that the setting, implementing and reviewing of student entry standards to Bachelor programs needs attention at CAS Rustaq. There is a need for the final exit exam for the English Language component of the GFP to be reviewed and revised to ensure that it aligns with an IELTS level not lower than 5.0. In addition, entry standards in all subject areas need to be reviewed periodically to ensure they are appropriate for each specific Bachelor program, and that students are sufficiently well prepared to undertake studies their respective programs.

Recommendation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to align its General Foundation Program (GFP) with the GFP National Standards and subject entry standards in all subjects for its Bachelor programs to periodic review to ensure that the minimum standards set by the National Standards are sufficient for each of the Bachelor degrees offered by the College.

2.4 Foundation Program

The CAS Colleges adopted the National Foundation Program in 2008, running a three-level program (Levels A, B and C) with each level taking one semester. A fourth level (Level D), also of one semester, was added to this program in 2011 to accommodate a large number of entrants to CAS with a very low level of English Language (Portfolio, p.13). Data from CAS Rustaq shows that over 70% of entrants for the academic year 2012-2013 were placed in Levels B or C in accordance with their entry level of English Language. 15% were admitted to Level D. The College acknowledges that it continues to receive “moderate to low” achievers (Portfolio, p.21).

The CAS SP has a strategic objective to “attract and retain capable students” with a supporting objective to “introduce measures to ensure that students admitted in the CAS have the capability to succeed”. In support of this, the Panel encourages formal, regular review of entry levels to the CAS Colleges in light of students’ performance in the Foundation Program and subsequent performance at Bachelor degree level. There is evidence of systems which support collaboration of Foundation staff across the network and CAS Rustaq staff demonstrated their active engagement with College and network-wide activities. The Panel appreciates the challenges of preparing school leavers with low levels of attainment for higher education in English and found Foundation Program staff at CAS Rustaq to be positively engaged in efforts to meet this challenge.

CAS Rustaq reports that there are no clear cut regulations regarding some academic and pedagogical aspects of the Foundation Program and that a ministerial committee has been set up to develop academic regulations for the Foundation Program that will ensure consistency and equity in the treatment of students regarding academic affairs (Portfolio, p.xii). The Panel was informed that this project was still underway. The Panel encourages CAS Rustaq, through its representation on this committee, to support these regulations being finalised and implemented in a timely manner.

2.5 Teaching Quality

The CAS SP provides clear strategic direction for teaching quality. The CAS Rustaq approach to promoting quality teaching includes Course Coordinators supervising course delivery and SWCCs, who work in consultation with PDs, providing faculty with semester course plans. Effort is made to maintain low class sizes (maximum of 25 students) and an optimum student-

staff ratio to promote a good learning environment. All staff teaching on the Bachelor programs hold Masters or PhD degrees. (Portfolio, pp. 23-24)

The Panel acknowledges apparent strength in the approach adopted by CAS Rustaq to promote effective teaching, and the Panel interviewed students who appeared generally satisfied in this area, albeit some with reservation about the amount of practical work in their courses. In addition, the Panel found evidence of peer-review activity, consistent performance review by supervisors, and use of surveys to collect data about courses and teaching for institutional self-studies. Nevertheless, there is a need for the College to further develop its measurement and evaluation of the quality of teaching so that it can be applied systematically across all programs and in an ongoing manner.

The College has identified opportunities for improvement relating to: implementing a student feedback system to evaluate all aspects of the learning process; developing an effective peer review system for teaching; and reviewing processes for measuring the quality of teaching (Portfolio p.32). It reports that CAS is planning to re-introduce a network-wide system for student evaluation of teaching (Portfolio, p.24). The Panel viewed a draft “Student Evaluation of Courses and Instructors” questionnaire developed by CAS Rustaq which has been submitted to the DG of the CAS network in support of this project.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the quality of teaching at CAS Rustaq because in the absence of formal data, the evidence is largely anecdotal. Formal data collection is required to support effective evaluation and inform action to bring about improvement.

Affirmation 5

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a comprehensive process to measure and evaluate the quality of teaching needs to be systematically applied across all programs and supports its efforts to achieve this.

Throughout the Portfolio, CAS Rustaq asserts a commitment to “applied learning and problem-based instruction”. This is emphasised in the CAS Mission: “The Colleges of Applied Sciences provide high quality programs grounded in problem-based learning methodologies ...” as well as in the SP. While the Panel found the PDs confident that the programs contained sufficient practical and applied content, the Panel found that deployment efforts indicate that the term “problem-based instruction” is interpreted and applied in a variety of ways, and to varying degrees. The Panel also found concerns that the amount of applied/practical work actually undertaken by students on the IT and IBA Programs was limited. Given that this is a Mission critical aspect of the College’s work, the Panel urges increased effort to be undertaken to ensure all students benefit from this approach to learning.

Recommendation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq increase its efforts to embed applied learning and problem-based instruction as distinctive aspects of its programs in line with its Mission to ground its programs in this methodology and in order to help prepare students for employment.

The Panel noted reference to a CAS Teaching and Learning Policy in documentation submitted for the Quality Audit although there was no reference to this in the Portfolio. A Learning and Teaching Policy is, however, identified as one of the new CAS-wide policies currently under development (see Section 1.9) and the Panel observes that this may support effective implementation of desired teaching and learning approaches.

2.6 *Plagiarism*

CAS Rustaq states that its approach to combating plagiarism is to take proactive measures and impose harsh sanctions where applicable (Portfolio, p.25). Plagiarism is another area in which the College is waiting for a CAS-wide policy currently under development to be approved (see Section 1.9). In 2012 the College Council approved College-wide adoption of a Plagiarism Policy previously developed and used in the English Language and Literature Department. This is to serve as an interim policy until the new CAS policy is approved by the MoHE.

The Panel noted that the Plagiarism Policy currently appeared well contextualized for CAS. The College has taken measures to educate students about plagiarism and staff training has been given to support use of SafeAssign™ software through the College's Blackboard™ learning management system facility to assist in the detection of plagiarism. The Panel found Bachelor program academic staff to be familiar with the Policy although the Panel heard about practices not covered in the Policy whereby students can resubmit drafts, as part of an educational process, ensuring that the final submission is plagiarism free. Plagiarism is addressed through the Study Skills component of the Foundation Program and staff on this program interviewed by the Panel showed a strong commitment to promoting academic integrity.

The Panel had some concern, however, that the College reports that it is “plagiarism-free” (Portfolio, p.25). Formal systems to monitor implementation of the Policy and report and track incidences of plagiarism are required to support credible evaluation of the Policy and its effectiveness. The Panel noted that as part of the self-study to develop the Portfolio, a course evaluation questionnaire for faculty had been conducted which asked about the percentage of students who plagiarise and the extent to which Heads of Department (HoDs) were involved with plagiarism issues. However, the results of this survey were not reported on.

The Panel recognises the efforts made by the College to address plagiarism and develop a culture of academic integrity. It urges CAS Rustaq to build on these by developing and implementing systems to ensure consistent implementation of policy for plagiarism (as well as cheating in examinations), reporting of incidences of academic misconduct, and overall evaluation of the effectiveness of its approach to ensuring academic integrity.

Affirmation 6

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the work College of Applied Sciences Rustaq to address plagiarism through its development of a strong approach to maintaining academic integrity across the College and encourages its ongoing evaluation of this approach.

2.7 *Student Placements*

The CAS SP provides direction for work placements undertaken by students during their program. For example, Goal 5 to: “Build partnerships” is supported by an objective to “enhance engagement with the public and private sector” and one of the strategies associated with this is to “operate an effective student placement function to optimize student employment opportunities”. The SP identifies many responsibilities in this area for a Programme Director (PD), Private Sector Liaison, and the College indicates that a PD for training has been appointed to facilitate student placements (Portfolio, p.26). However, the Panel's request to meet this PD was not met and the Panel found little evidence of impact of this role on placements for CAS Rustaq students.

CAS Rustaq student placements are managed by a unit in the College sometimes referred to as the SGGC (Portfolio, p.44) and called, variously: the Training and Student Career Counseling Centre (Portfolio, p.44); the Students and Graduates Guidance Centre (Portfolio, p.ix); and the Training and Student Careers Counseling Centre (CAS Bylaw). (The Panel considers that use of

different terminology like this hinders communication – also see Section 9.3.) This centre also provides a range of activities to prepare students for employment (see Section 7.5).

Placements for the B.Ed. ELT students appear to be a well-established part of their program and alumni spoke positively about this experience to the Panel. The College acknowledges, however, that student work placement is only formalised in the English Teaching Program (Portfolio, p.26). The College reports varying numbers of students who have taken up placement/training opportunities in different public and private sector organisations (Portfolio, p.26 and p.65) but notes that opportunities are not always taken up. The College does not, however, provide any detailed or program-specific analysis.

The Panel found a shared view across the College that more work is needed in this area, in line with the requirements of the SP. The College reports that there is no written policy for student placements for the IBA and IT Departments (Portfolio, p.26). The Panel viewed a document called “Guidelines for Student Internships / Training Placements within the Colleges of Applied Sciences” dated October 2009 as well as a comprehensive, although undated, CAS “Work Placements” policy document. The status of these documents, however, was not entirely clear. Further guidance about student placements and preparing for employment is provided to students in the CAS Student Handbook for Career Guidance Centres. The Panel found the College to be realistic about the challenges involved in implementing a formal student placement system for its new degree programs and still in the process of trying to finalise an appropriate approach.

The Panel concluded that a formal approach to student placements on the IBA and IT Programs at CAS Rustaq needs to be developed and implemented to encourage greater uptake of placements by students in these programs and support robust management of these. Systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of systems developed is also required. This should take into account feedback from students as well as placement hosts.

Recommendation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq enhance and formalise its management of student placements in its Bachelor of International Business Administration and Bachelor of Information Technology programs in line with its strategic aims and systematically evaluate the systems it implements in order to inform continuous improvement.

2.8 Assessment Methods, Standards and Moderation

CAS Rustaq adopts assessment methods which are aligned with its Academic Regulations, centrally developed and followed across the CAS-network. A variety of assessment methods are used as appropriate to assess intended learning outcomes and KGAs (Portfolio, p.26). It has a strategic objective to ensure that student outcomes are fit-for-purpose supported by a strategy to ensure student outcomes are at an international standard. The Panel observes that this translates into a need to measure the right things and for outcomes to meet standards that are internationally-recognised and rigorously assessed.

The standard assessment practices at CAS Rustaq include use of standardized exams, marking schemes, moderation processes and reporting mechanisms. PDs and SWCCs and Central Course Committees provide network-wide coordination and moderation as appropriate (Portfolio, p. 27). Through interviews and examination of documentation, the Panel found evidence of the assessment system operating as described. Students interviewed by the Panel appeared satisfied with the assessment system and were aware of the formal appeal system which supports it. The Panel found the SWCC system in particular to be working well in supporting robust assessment practices as well as ensuring ongoing monitoring of course delivery.

The Panel had some concern, however, about ongoing assurance that international standards of assessment are upheld. The Panel heard that implementation of the NZTEC agreement (see Section 1.4) included NZTEC providing external moderation of CAS students' work (in comparison to work from students in New Zealand) but found no evidence of an external benchmarking process having been implemented to replace this following the termination of the NZTE agreement. An (undated) document entitled "Preparation, Printing, Storage, Delivery and Security of Examination Papers Policy Statements" provided to the Panel states: "External moderation plays a key role in maintaining academic standards. This is usually undertaken by the External Examination Reviewer. This is not available in the college at the time being." The College identifies "continuously involve independent external examiners in the curriculum review process" (Portfolio, p.32) as an opportunity for improvement, but the importance of their role in the assessment process was not highlighted. A list of new CAS policies under development viewed by Panel indicates that an External Examiner Policy is being developed; the Panel considers this an important development, although it was not formally raised by the College. While there are comprehensive internal assessment moderation processes in place, the Panel considers that external input into the assessment process is required to assure appropriate standards and urges this to be addressed.

Recommendation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq introduce an external benchmarking component into its assessment system in order to ensure that international-standard student learning outcomes are maintained, in line with its strategic aims.

2.9 Academic Security and Invigilation

The CAS Rustaq approach to academic security and invigilation is to adopt CAS protocols and regulations. The deployment of this approach is to establish and follow policies and procedures for setting question papers, safeguarding question papers, photocopying examination papers, examination invigilation, examination venues, and the use of electronic devices by students; and the College reports that a standardised and effective College-wide system results from this (Portfolio, p.29).

The Panel noted that an internal Final Examinations Committee with clear terms of reference supports assessment security and invigilation processes and found staff and students it interviewed to be satisfied with processes in place. The Panel noted that relevant processes were documented in a range of different documents and encourages the College to further develop these into formal, stand-alone College-wide policies and procedures, and to expand these to include assessments other than final assessments conducted in large exam halls. The College may wish to consider allocating seats for students taking examinations to support its invigilation process (rather than allowing students to choose where they sit and who they sit next to).

2.10 Student Retention and Progression

CAS Strategic Goal 3 is to advance student learning through objectives to: attract and retain capable students; introduce measures to ensure that students admitted in the CAS have the capability to succeed; and improve student retention rates through support and remediation (SP). Hence, the CAS Rustaq approach to student retention and progression is twofold: to attract and retain capable students, and to support students who are not succeeding in their studies.

The College reports a declining number of students on probation in each academic program between Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 and a small, declining, number of students who actually withdrew; it considers this data to reflect its success in identifying students who need support and providing this in the form of student advising (Portfolio, p.31). This aspect of academic advising targets students who have fallen under probation. Academic Advising is overseen by an

Academic Advising Committee of representatives from the different academic departments and from the Admissions and Registration Department (also see Section 6.5).

The Panel considered the College's generation and analysis of retention and progression data to be limited and encourages it to look for opportunities to enhance this and its use in management decision making.

2.11 Graduate Destinations and Employability

Employability is critical to the CAS network's Mission and strongly emphasised in its SP. Strategic Goal 3, to advance student learning, is supported by an objective to ensure that student outcomes are fit-for-purpose through strategies to: ensure programs are relevant and prepare students for employment; ensure student outcomes are at an international standard; and implement a graduate tracking system. Further, Strategic Goal 5, to build partnerships, is supported by an objective to enhanced engagement with the public and private sector through strategies to: operate an effective student placement function to optimise student employment opportunities and establish a specialised career guidance system for prospective graduates. The intended output of these two goals is to ensure that students are employable and employed in the local and global workforce.

CAS Rustaq says it "hopes" its graduates turn out to be employable in the local and regional markets (Portfolio, p.31). At the time the Portfolio was developed, the College only had data on employment about the B.Ed. ELT graduates as students had yet to graduate from the IBA and IT Programs. The Panel found evidence that some graduates from the B.Ed. ELT Program are considered highly employable and for this to be a source of pride for CAS Rustaq as the only College in the network to provide this Program. However, the College does not have a robust data collection system to support effective evaluation of graduate destinations and employability; at present, data on employment is confined to surveying those students who attend graduation ceremonies. The College reports that of the 220 (out of 287) B.Ed. ELT students who graduated in the academic year 2011-2012 and attended the October 2012 graduation ceremony, less than 50% were employed (Portfolio, p.31).

By the time of the audit visit, the first group of students had graduated from the IBA Program at CAS Rustaq. In interviews, the Panel heard a range of responses about the number of these who had found employment. However, statistics on the employment of these graduates requested by the Panel showed 12 to be employed and indicated that this was less than 10% of the total number of IBA graduates. Data for the B.Ed. ELT graduates for the same year (2013) indicated around 16% to be employed.

It was acknowledged to the Panel that as yet the College itself has no formal contact with its alumni (see Section 5.5 and Recommendation 15) although the Panel heard mention of a graduate survey project being undertaken by the MoHE which was expected to yield data to inform central decision making. The Panel considers that it is important for the College to have systems that provide it with timely data on graduate destinations and employability which can inform development of local decision making and improvement strategies. The College has identified the need to improve its graduate tracking system (Portfolio, p.32) and the Panel urges this to be done in a way that will effectively promote employability, inform program decisions and developments and support wider engagement with the community.

Recommendation 9

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop and implement an enhanced system for tracking graduates and monitoring graduate employment rates in order to

develop strategies to increase the employment rates of graduates in line with this key aspect of its Mission.

Given the current entrepreneurship initiatives in Oman, the Panel considers that CAS Rustaq should ensure that “self-employment” or “entrepreneurialism” for employment creation is overtly included within its concept of employability as a measure of institutional success.

3 STUDENT LEARNING BY RESEARCH PROGRAMS

At the time of this Quality Audit, CAS Rustaq did not offer research programs per se, and so this section is not applicable to this Report.

4 STAFF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY

CAS Rustaq has clear strategic intent to foster staff research in support of the CAS strategic goal to strive for academic excellence. The CAS SP outlines its intention for academic staff to engage in scholarship, applied research and consultancy in their particular “Centre of Specialisation” (at CAS Rustaq, these relate to the IBA and IT Programs) with the ultimate aim that these centres are externally recognised as Centres of Excellence.

This Chapter reports on the planning and management of staff research at CAS Rustaq, and describes the Panel’s findings with regards to: research performance; research schemes; consultancy activities; ethics and bio-safety; intellectual property; research commercialisation; professional development for research; and the link between research and teaching.

4.1 *Research Planning and Management*

The CAS Vision statement encompasses the College’s aspiration to “engage in applied research at an international standard”, which is further translated into the CAS Strategic Goal 4 “Strive for Academic Excellence”, Strategic Objective 4.4 “Encourage a High Standard of Scholarship and Applied Research” and Strategy 4.4.2: “Develop an applied research capacity within each centre of Specialisation”. The first step towards the achievement of the College’s strategic statements was the establishment of the Scientific Research Department (SRD) in 2010. According to the Executive Bylaw, the Department is mandated to supervise the departmental scientific research programmes and report annually to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research on the progress of implementation of departmental research plans.

At the time of the audit visit, only one academic staff member has been appointed in the SRD to serve as the Head of Department in order to coordinate the scientific research activities within the College. The Panel was informed that the Head of SRD is assisted by a Scientific Research Committee which was constituted in 2011 and comprises members from the different academic departments. In line with its designated duties, the SRD developed a Research Governance Framework outlining the Department’s objectives, responsibilities, values, organisational structure and strategic plan. The Panel considers that this framework could be enhanced by setting out the principles, requirements and standards of good research practice.

The Panel was informed that The Research Council (TRC), the national policy-making agency responsible for promoting research, has developed a National Research Strategy for Oman linked to the Sultanate’s overall development plans. TRC is now viewed as an important source of funding for the CAS Colleges (see Section 4.3). Through review of documentation and interviews with staff, the Panel confirmed that research performed by staff is done on an ad-hoc basis (as reported by the College – Portfolio, p.35) and concluded that it is not consistent with the themes of the National Research Strategy or other clearly identified research goals. CAS Rustaq recognises in its self-study the need to align its research activities with its strategic objectives (Portfolio, p.42). The Panel concurs and urges the College to revise its current research plan to ensure its alignment with the College’s Strategic Plan. Further, it encourages this planning to be aligned to the National Research Strategy. The Panel learnt that a new CAS network policy for research is currently under development; once approved, this will also need to be adopted by CAS Rustaq. To support implementation of its research plans, action is needed to address issues which currently hinder research performance, such as lack of funding and time for academic staff to devote to research (see Section 4.2)

Recommendation 10

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq further develop its planning for research to

ensure alignment with its Strategic Plan and include strategies to support research performance as well as key performance indicators through which implementation can be monitored and evaluated.

4.2 Research Performance

The College states that it is committed to developing an applied research capacity (Portfolio, p. 36). Interviews and documentation scrutinised by the Panel indicate that the current level of research activity at the College is not consistent with the College's Vision of engaging in applied research at an international standard and making substantial progress towards achieving the status of Centres of Excellence (see Section 1.1). The main obstacles to conducting research at CAS Rustaq, as identified in a survey conducted by the College, are lack of funding, lack of time, lack of research culture and inadequate research facilities (Portfolio, p.37). These findings were confirmed during interviews in which it was indicated that teaching workload, inadequate research funding as well as limited interaction with local industry hamper research output. The Panel also learnt that research output is not a criterion in the performance evaluation of academic staff. Despite these obstacles, the Panel found academic staff keen to engage in research activities such as participation in conferences and publication of research papers. The College has also recognised the need to improve research facilities and enhance collaborative research with public and private sectors (Portfolio, p. 42).

A record of College research output for the period 2011-2013 examined by the Panel indicates that only 19 academic staff members (constituting around 14% of academic staff) are actively engaged in research. As indicated earlier, research is conducted on staff members' own initiative and is not aligned with an overarching College research strategic plan (see Recommendation 10). The Panel was pleased to learn, however, that academic staff are supported to attend conferences. Evidence reviewed by the Panel indicates that during the years 2012-2013, College staff have participated in 31 regional and international conferences (although it appears that only Omani nationals are supported to attend international conference and the Panel considers it would be in the interest of the College if research-active staff are supported, regardless of their nationality). The Panel acknowledges CAS Rustaq's efforts in establishing a research culture and urges it to develop and implement an action plan to address the obstacles identified in its "Staff Research" survey (see Recommendation 10).

4.3 Research Funding Schemes

The Panel heard consistently from different stakeholders that the lack of a specific research budget is a major impediment to the enhancement of research culture in the College. The College states that although it aims to "Institute Income-Generating Activities" (Strategic Objective 6.4), current law prohibits publicly-funded institutions from engaging in revenue-generating activities (Portfolio, p. 38). The Panel explored the College's plans for addressing this dilemma and securing research funding from external sources. It was informed that The Research Council (TRC) has initiated a Research Grant Program whereby research projects that are of relevance to the Sultanate's economy are allocated a budget so that they can be conducted in line with international standards. The Panel was also informed that 17% of TRC research budget is allocated to the CAS network, and that a number of CAS researchers have succeeded in obtaining TRC funding for their projects.

CAS Rustaq recognises the importance of achieving sustainable funding and establishing a research funding scheme. To this end, the College is collaborating with the Research Funding Committee at the MoHE to develop and implement competitive, performance-based funding for applied research (Portfolio, p. 37). The College is also seeking to engage in income-generating activities, such as conducting funded research for the local industries and the private sector (Portfolio, p. 42).

Affirmation 7

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that an effective funding scheme for research is imperative and supports the College's work towards developing and implementing a research funding model appropriate to the needs and strategic goals of the College.

4.4 Consultancy Activities

The College recognises the importance of consultancy of as a driver for establishing Centres of Specialization for each of the CAS degree programs (Portfolio, p.38). However, evidence indicates only a modest level of consultancy has been undertaken to date. The Panel learnt that some academic staff have been informally approached by private companies for consultancy services and it found external stakeholders to value the level of expertise available in the College; this emphasised to the Panel the need for mechanisms to be developed to enable academic staff to undertake formal consultation. The College has also identified the need to align consultancy activities in the College with a clear consultancy policy (Portfolio, p. 42). At the time of the audit visit, a written policy on consultancy activities had not yet been developed. However, the Panel found that a consultancy bylaw for the six CAS Colleges is currently being developed by the MoHE. The Panel encourages the College to work with the MoHE to expedite the development and implementation of the new consultancy policy and procedures to support realization of the CAS network aspiration to develop recognised Centres of Excellence.

Affirmation 8

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that a formal policy and associated procedures are required to direct and support its consultancy activities in line with its strategic intent to establish Centres of Specialisation and, ultimately, recognised Centres of Excellence for its degree programs, and supports the development of a system-wide consultancy bylaw as a step towards achieving this.

4.5 Ethics and Biosafety

CAS Rustaq states that it does not have any policy or procedures in relation to research ethics (Portfolio, p. 39). The Panel notes that the current academic programs do not involve experimental research on humans, living tissues or genetic material, and hence biosafety is not a concern.

The College has identified the need to develop and implement a research ethics policy (Portfolio, p. 42). The Panel agrees with this need and encourages the College, as the research culture develops, to develop and implement mechanisms to ensure ethical conduct and integrity when dealing with human subjects, and data where the primary ethics concern is privacy or confidentiality.

4.6 Intellectual Property

The College states that it is committed to support research activities and respect intellectual property rights (Portfolio, p.39). The Panel notes that the College has conducted a number of workshops for faculty and students to enhance awareness about the protection of copyright and intellectual property. CAS Rustaq reports that it has developed its own intellectual property policy, endorsed by the College Council, and that a system-wide intellectual property policy is under development by the MoHE (Portfolio, p.40). In response to a request to see these policies the Panel was provided with a copy of a single Intellectual Property Policy clearly still in draft

form. While the Panel accepts that this policy may be in draft form, it was concerned to find that it had been derived from an overseas higher education institution without attribution. In order to uphold and protect the academic integrity of the College, and the CAS network as a whole, it is imperative to ensure appropriate attribution and adhere to best practice in developing policies. This issue is also addressed in Section 1.9.

4.7 Professional Development for Research

The CAS Rustaq approach to professional development for research is informed by the Strategic Objective to “encourage a high standard of scholarship and applied research” and the corresponding strategies to “provide appropriate, enriching professional development opportunities” and “develop an applied research capacity within each Centre of Specialisation” (Portfolio, p.4 and SP). The College indicates that it has attempted to address these issues by conducting 19 professional development activities to provide the academic staff with necessary research skills (Portfolio, p. 41). Through review of documentary evidence and interviews with staff, the Panel concluded that most of these activities are general seminars and presentations conducted by College staff and are not aligned with a College-wide research professional development plan. The College has yet to implement the actions identified in the SP pertaining to the above-mentioned strategies, namely: to establish a Professional Development Committee to oversee the design of an appropriate staff development plan directed towards building research capabilities; and to introduce a program of ‘Research Skills’ to train and mentor junior staff.

Recommendation 11

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop and implement a comprehensive approach to staff professional development for research in line with its Strategic Plan, and inclusive of a regular review mechanism, so that its staff benefit from on-going, appropriate development activities which are specific to their needs and lead to enhancement of research performance.

4.8 Research Commercialisation

This area was not addressed by the College as its research profile is in the early stages of development. As the research agenda advances, the Panel encourages the College to identify opportunities for commercialisation of its services where applicable and if permitted by its Bylaw.

4.9 Research – Teaching Nexus

The College states that it has undertaken a number of initiatives to integrate research into teaching activities; these include offering a ‘Research Methods’ course as a general requirement for all students, as well as organising workshops and seminars to inform students about the research undertaken by the academic staff (Portfolio, p. 42). During interviews, the Panel heard some examples of how academic staff incorporate research in their areas of specialisation into student learning processes. However, the Panel found no evidence of a College-wide system through which research, teaching and learning are linked for the enhancement of student learning. The Panel acknowledges that research at CAS Rustaq is in its early stages of development; however, as the research agenda develops, the College will need to make the teaching-research nexus an explicit part of its research plans. The Panel encourages the College to develop a comprehensive system with clear strategies to enhance students’ engagement with staff research and, in turn, enhance the quality of student learning opportunities in the College.

5 INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The CAS Strategic Plan (SP) provides strong strategic direction for industry and community engagement through its strategic goal to “Build Partnerships” (SP, Goal 5). CAS Rustaq indicates recognition of the importance of partnership activity with industry and business as well as the local community and other higher education institutions in relation to its contribution to the social and economic development of the country (Portfolio, p.43).

This Chapter reports on CAS Rustaq’s relationships with industry, employers, professions and other higher education providers as well as its interaction with alumni and the community at large.

5.1 *Industry and Community Engagement Planning & Management*

Responsibility for much of CAS Rustaq’s industry and community planning and management is currently undertaken by three separate College entities: the Students and Graduates Guidance Centre (SGGC); the Student Services Centre (SSC); and the Community Service Committee (CSC) (Portfolio, p.43). (In the Bylaw, the SGGC is referred to as the Training and Student Careers Counseling Centre (TSCCC). The SSC is also referred to as the Student Affairs Centre in College documentation.)

The College provides no specific comment on the implementation or effectiveness of its planning and management of activities in this area but nevertheless identifies opportunities to improve this, namely: to consider consolidating all aspects of community relations under one main management body and in one strategic plan from which annual operations are drawn; to assign responsibility for its relationship with the community to a more senior level (in recognition of its importance); and for all aspects of this relationship to be managed locally rather than centrally (Portfolio, p, 46).

The Executive Bylaw provides a list of duties for the SSC (Article 38) and the TSCCC (Article 39). The current CSC is a four-member committee which was formed in 2013 through a formal administrative order which includes its terms of reference. According to the Bylaw, the SSC is concerned primarily with student affairs and activities, and the SGGC with arranging student placements (training), supporting students in gaining employment, tracking graduates, and attaining information on labour market requirements. These departments, as well as the CSC, have developed operational plans in line with CAS Rustaq’s efforts to establish an annual cycle of departmental operational planning in the College. The CSC focuses on the provision of training courses and workshops for members of the community and the Panel found strength in this area (see Commendation 2). While the Panel acknowledges that some engagement activities with other external stakeholders are taking place at CAS Rustaq, these are limited in both extent and scope in relation to strategic intent and there is no overall coordination or evaluation of their effectiveness. CAS Rustaq has identified that a revised approach to planning and management is required in this area and the Panel now urges action to be taken to address this.

Recommendation 12

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq review and revise the way in which it plans and manages industry and community engagement to ensure all aspects of industry and community engagement relevant to its strategic goal to “build partnerships” are appropriately addressed and regularly evaluated in a coordinated manner.

5.2 *Relationships with Industry and Employers*

In response to this section, CAS Rustaq reports on the work of the SGGC to address its Strategic Objective to “Enhance Engagement with the Public and Private Sector” (SP, Objective 5.1) through the following strategies: operate an effective student placement function to optimise student employment opportunities; establish a specialised career guidance system for prospective graduates; establish a regular program of industry experts addressing students; and introduce and manage careers fairs in the CAS (SP Strategies 5.1.1-5.1.4).

The Panel found evidence of some activity in each of these areas, but this tends to be limited and relatively unsystematic. The College has measured the effectiveness of its workshops for students preparing for employment by attendance, and the effectiveness of work placements (training) by the number of placements taken up (Portfolio, p.44). The Panel observes that these indicators alone are insufficient to measure the value of these activities in relation to overarching strategic intent and to inform improvement (also see Recommendation 7). The CAS network also has a Strategic Objective to: Enhance Engagement with Business and Industry in the Community (SP, Objective 5.2) through the following strategies: provide focused short courses suited to the needs of industry and business; provide a web-based job vacancy service; and encourage joint use of college facilities by the community (SP, Strategy 5.2.1-5.2.3). While the College has performed well in relation to the first of the strategies (see Commendation 2), the Panel found no significant activity in relation to the others.

The Panel heard and appreciates the fact that the CAS Colleges are regional and that the presence and extent of industry in the region of Rustaq is relatively limited. However, a range of interviews, including those with employers, student placement hosts and industry representatives, provided evidence to the Panel that engagement with industry and employers needs to be enhanced (with the exception of Ministry of Education employers of B.Ed. ELT students – see Section 5.4). An effective local interface for progress and achievement in relation to the IBA and IT Programs has yet to be established and systems to promote engagement are underdeveloped. The Panel observes that effective engagement with industry and employers is critical to the CAS Mission and Vision and central to the success of its core activities. It therefore urges the College to further develop its activity in this area.

Recommendation 13

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq strengthen and formalise its relationships with industry and employers in light of the critical importance of building effective partnerships with these stakeholders to achieving its Mission and supporting achievement of its Vision.

5.3 *Relationships with Professions*

CAS Rustaq reports that the College’s organisational structure and Bylaw have no provision for establishment and management of any relationship with professions (Portfolio, p.45) and the Panel found no formal relationships with professions exist. Given the nature of CAS Rustaq’s Mission and Vision, the Panel had some reservations about the apparent position of the College that relationships with professional bodies relevant to the academic programs offered by the College cannot be pursued. Supporting text in the SP indicates the potential value of relationships with professional bodies (p.57) although this does not translate into identified goals, objectives or strategies. The Panel encourages the College to be proactive in reconsideration of this area and to address any positive outcomes in its response to Recommendation 12.

5.4 *Relationships with Other Education Providers*

The College highlights the fact that it is part of a network of six colleges which deal with each other directly (Portfolio, p.45). The College's relationship with other CAS Colleges is evident both at governance and management level (e.g. through the Academic Council) and as well as at operational level. The Program Directors (PDs) and the System Wide Course Coordinators (SWCCs) clearly play an important role in this relationship in relation to the delivery and assessment of academic programs which run across different colleges, and the Panel also found evidence of strong cooperation between CAS Rustaq and the other CAS Colleges in relation to the Foundation Program. In addition, it was evident to the Panel that initiatives being taken at governance levels have been informed by OAAA Quality Audit Reports of CAS Colleges which have already undergone this process, and that CAS Rustaq had benefited from liaison with other colleges with respect to conducting its self-study and preparing its Quality Audit Portfolio. The Panel found clear evidence of the College's well established relationship with the regional Directorate of Education through which its school-based practical training program for its B.Ed. ELT graduates is run. This relationship is managed through a formal committee with membership from both parties.

CAS has a Strategic Objective to "Enhance Engagement with other HEIs and Accrediting Bodies (SP Objective 5.3), with a single supporting objective to "seek excellence through partnership and accreditation" (SP, Strategy 5.3.1). At present, however, the College has no formal relationship with an HEI outside the CAS network. It indicates that it has potential access to international institutions for benchmarking purposes through 23 international institutions with which the MoHE has signed MoUs, although it has initiated no contact with any of these to date (Portfolio, pp.45-46). The Panel observes that the majority of these MoUs are with foreign ministries rather than higher education institutions *per se*.

The Panel concluded that there is a need for the College to develop formal relationships with higher education providers outside the CAS network, for the purpose of benchmarking academic standards (see Recommendation 8) as well as wider aspects of higher education provision. The Panel encourages the College to consider national as well as international higher education institutions as potential partners.

Recommendation 14

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq develop formal relationships with other higher education institutions (outside the CAS network) for purposes of benchmarking, sharing of good practice and avoiding insularity.

5.5 *Relationships with Alumni*

CAS Rustaq reports that it has yet to activate an alumni association (Portfolio, p.45). Responsibility for CAS Rustaq alumni within the College rests with the TSCCC in line with the CAS Bylaw as well as the SP. The SP includes a strategy "To develop an alumni association" (SP, Strategy 5.1.5) in support of its Strategic Objective to "Enhance engagement with the public and private sector" (SP, Objective 5.1). When the Portfolio was developed, CAS Rustaq's first batch of applied sciences students had yet to graduate.

By the time of the audit visit, the first group of IBA students had graduated, and the Panel interviewed alumni from all the College's degree programs (including an IT student who had dropped out and a B.Ed. Science graduate although this program has now been phased out). The Panel found that some alumni do keep in touch with the College informally. They consider the College to be supportive and helpful and expressed enthusiasm about a formal alumni relationship with the College being established.

The Panel also confirmed, however, that at the time of the audit visit, the College had no formal contact with its alumni. The College has identified the activation of an alumni association as an opportunity for improvement (Portfolio, p.46 and p.75) but the Panel found no evidence of work in progress to achieve this. Although the CAS SP relates to the applied sciences, CAS Rustaq still runs the B.Ed. ELT Program (and gave no indication of plans to phase this out). Given the existing graduates from this program as well as the new IBA graduates, together with known challenges in the employment market in Oman and associated regional and local challenges, the Panel considers that work in this area is overdue, and urges action to be taken.

Recommendation 15

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq establish an alumni association in line with its Strategic Plan in order to formalise its relationship with its alumni and maximise potential benefits of this relationship for both the alumni and the College.

5.6 Relationships with the Community at Large

Relationships with the community are managed by CSC in line with the CAS Strategic Objective to “Enhance Engagement with Business and Industry in the Community” (S.P. Objective 5.3) and associated strategy “to provide focused short courses suited to the needs of industry and business” (SP, Strategy 5.2.1).

The College reports that between 2012 and 2013 the number of training courses and workshops provided to the community increased by over 20% and that the total number of participants increased nearly six-fold to over 1000 (Portfolio, pp.45-46). Through interviews with participants and relevant College staff as well as consideration of the CSC annual plan and the report on its activities for the 2012-2013 academic year, the Panel found strength in this area.

The Panel found that the Community English Course is becoming well established and is supported by a system of comprehensive annual reporting which takes into consideration formal feedback from participants and makes recommendations for future courses. The Panel noted, however, that all the participants in the Spring 2013 course were actually government employees (10 ministries were represented) rather than representatives from industry and business as called for in the SP. The Panel also learnt about workshops relating to the College’s other areas of specialisation including, for example, workshops on Tourism Awareness and IT related subjects such as Open Source Software and Security Aspects in Cloud Computing. The Panel heard that workshops were also subject to evaluation by participants.

The Panel found participants to have high regard for the courses and workshops delivered to the community (free of charge) by the College, and that staff feel a sense of pride about this provision.

Commendation 2

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for its established ties with the local community through the provision of training courses and workshops which are held in high regard by participants.

During the audit visit, the Panel learnt of other community engagement activities not formally reported in this section of the Portfolio. For example, the Panel heard how the hosting of a regional IELTS Centre is supportive to the community and that there are student activities such as visits to centres for elderly and disabled community members (also see Section 7.10). The Panel noted that community engagement is emphasised in the CAS Bylaw with responsibilities

identified for a range of College staff, and encourages the full scope of potential engagement in this area to be considered in the College's response to Recommendation 12.

6 ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Across the CAS system, and therefore at CAS Rustaq too, academic support services are provided in light of the CAS Executive Bylaw and Strategic Plan (SP).

This Chapter presents the Panel's findings on planning and management of the academic support services at CAS Rustaq, and specifically on provision of the following: student enrolment and records; Library; information and learning technology services; academic advising; student learning support; and teaching resources.

6.1 *Academic Support Services Planning & Management*

CAS Rustaq provides its academic support services through a combination of entities: the Admission and Registration Centre (ARC), the Learning Resources Centre (LRC), and the Academic Departments. The LRC comprises three units: the Library; the Educational and Learning Technology Services Unit (ELTSU) and the Computer Unit (Portfolio, p.89). The College states that these services are aligned to CAS Strategic Objectives to: Optimise the effective operation of the CAS (Objective 1.1); Provide a relevant student-centered learning environment (Objective 3.2) and, Support faculty in advancing student learning (Objective 4.3) (Portfolio, p.47). Enabling strategies include continually developing all LRCs as state-of-the-art learning facilities as well as ensuring that laboratories, IT & multimedia facilities and faculty offices are well-equipped.

Planning of academic support services by the relevant departments is undertaken through the College's developing operational planning system (see Section 1.6). The Panel was encouraged to find the operational plan for the LRC relatively well developed. In an evaluation of academic support services planning and management however, the majority of staff surveyed either did not know if there were appropriate operational plans aligned to the Strategic Plan or did not agree that there were; this appears to reflect the fact that the operational planning process has yet to be fully embedded. Minutes of meetings support the College's assertion that academic support services are considered regularly by the College Council (Portfolio, p.48).

During interviews, the Panel found both staff and students positive about the provision of some academic support services but of the view that others, such as the IT facilities and the student information system (SIS), required improvement. Although the Panel viewed relevant summary feedback data from a student survey, this was not specifically reported on by the College. The Panel found that formal student evaluation of academic support services (as well as other areas) needs to be further developed as part of an overarching evaluation system that systematically informs improvement actions (see Affirmation 11). The Panel notes that an enhanced quality assurance function should support this development (see Recommendation 2).

6.2 *Registry (Enrolment and Student Records)*

The SIS system used by ARC is intended to facilitate enrolment and student records. The College states that the SIS is efficient in providing students with information such as timetables, but it is limited in generating student transcripts and statistical reports. Some of the ARC functions are therefore performed manually (Portfolio, p.48). In a staff evaluation of the registry process, around 40% of questionnaire respondents found the process was not clearly documented and felt the student admissions process, records, information system and student satisfaction were not satisfactory. More than half the respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the admissions and registration services provided. As indicated above (Section 6.1), there is evidence that some relevant student satisfaction data has been collected but this has not become part of a comprehensive evaluation system yet.

The College is aware of the limitations of the current SIS system. It reports, “Because SIS is centrally managed, it is vital for the College to emphasize on [*sic*] the Ministry to improve the system’s reliability by reducing its breakdown frequency” (Portfolio, p.94). This was also acknowledged to the Panel during interviews although there was indication that there had been some upgrading of the system which had led to improvements. The Panel learnt that a major project is being initiated at the MoHE to develop a comprehensive student information system and that the project is to include training for all stakeholders to support effective implementation. As this major project is expected to take over a year to complete, the Panel encourages the College to continue to regularly evaluate its admission and registration processes and implement interim improvement measures that are possible.

Affirmation 9

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that its student information system requires improvement and supports the action being taken to develop and implement a network-wide system which will provide improved services to all stakeholders.

The College considers that its Blackboard™ system should be integrated with the SIS “to save time and increase accuracy and efficiency” (Portfolio, p.94); the Panel therefore encourages this to be considered in forthcoming developments.

6.3 Library

CAS Rustaq has stated intentions of continually improving the library, learning technologies and learning resources. However, it reports that the holdings of the Library (which forms part of the LRC) are still tilted towards the Education programs CAS Rustaq used to run and its services have yet to be aligned with the new programs (Portfolio, p.49). Staff in the LRC have developed operational plans based on the CAS Strategic Plan and they evaluate satisfaction with their services.

The Panel found the LRC to have been successful in implementing improvements through its operational planning. The College reports that 95% of the students and faculty members were satisfied with the LRC services (Portfolio, p.50); however, the Panel notes that while this survey yields helpful data about the LRC in broad terms (it is entitled “overall impression about LRC”), it does not contain specific items about the library provision *per se*. A survey with the title “Evaluating academic support services in CAS Rustaq from the perspective of its academic staff” considered by the Panel provides data on the library specifically, and shows that the library service does not meet the expectations of over 60% of the respondents. A similarly high percentage of respondents are reported as considering that the bulk of reference materials are not current. The Panel notes that an enhanced overarching quality assurance function in the College would be well placed to support better coordination of survey data (see Recommendation 2). Interviews with LRC staff revealed that the centralized CAS policy for library acquisitions prevented CAS Rustaq Library from timely or targeted additions to the collection and the College formally identifies the decentralisation of book acquisition as an opportunity for improvement (Portfolio, p.56).

A new library management system has been established to improve services; however, there is evidence of a pressing need for training and more resources to implement this. The Panel notes that workshops/training programs are undertaken periodically to support new staff and ensure that existing staff are kept updated with systems and procedures, and acknowledges that this need to be on-going and sufficient. For the LRC as a whole, the Panel found indications of intention to improve in a number of areas including: more staff with good proficiency in both Arabic and English; more space; an increased budget; the ability to work directly with their counterparts at

other institutions; more multi-media resources; timely repair of equipment; enhanced eLearning products and services; and more specialised training programs for staff.

The Panel acknowledges CAR Rustaq's efforts to systematically improve its Library and overall LRC provision through a system of planning, implementation and evaluation, but agrees that greater improvement is required.

Recommendation 16

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq build on its work to date to further enhance the resources and services provided by the LRC, ensuring that there are sufficient, appropriately trained staff and that resources, and e-resources in particular, are sufficient and appropriate to support technological skills and knowledge development in students and their preparation for the global workforce, in line with the College Mission.

6.4 Information and Learning Technology Services

The Information and Learning Technologies Services Unit (ILTSU) within the LRC provides support for both the academic and administrative operations of the College. It aspires to offer state-of-the-art services but acknowledges that it falls short of this, and formally identifies a range of recommendations for improvement (Portfolio, p.56).

Nevertheless, on-going improvements have been made to the information technology (IT) infrastructure at CAS Rustaq. Increases in internet speed and network performance are reported by the College (Portfolio, p.52) and, for example, alumni interviewed by the Panel noted the introduction of the online learning platform Blackboard™ since their graduation.

In a staff satisfaction survey, a slight majority of respondents felt that online learning management was available and functional. However, less than half the staff felt that IT and computer resources were maintained, that there was a clear replacement plan for IT equipment, or that Blackboard™ was utilised to maximum advantage. About half of the respondents indicated that IT and learning resources were satisfactory. Students interviewed by the Panel did not indicate significant issues in this area; however, formal, systematic student evaluation of academic support services is underdeveloped, as noted above.

The LRC at CAS Rustaq is proactive in its planning and identification of opportunities for improvement. These include the need for appropriate and sufficient professional development of IT technicians and support staff (Portfolio, p.56) which can be addressed in the College's response to Recommendation 16.

6.5 Academic Advising

CAS Rustaq states that among its major objectives is to: "improve student retention rates through support and remediation" (SP Strategy 3.1.3, Portfolio, p.52). In order to achieve this, it has established an academic advisory system in accordance with the requirements of the CAS Academic Regulations and Executive Bylaw. It has also established an Academic Advising Committee (ACC) with representatives from relevant departments to manage this system and report to the College Council. The academic advisory system is intended to support both performing and non-performing students. It aims to provide close individual support to students, especially to those who are under probation (i.e. those students identified by ARC whose grade point average (GPA) has fallen below 2.0) (Portfolio, p.52). Meetings between advisors and advisees are documented and formal student academic advising records are maintained and reported to department-level coordinators. Documentary and interview evidence provided the

Panel with information that the system operates as described by the College, but that it currently caters primarily for students under probation.

Records of the number of students under probation in each academic department per semester are maintained and a survey was conducted to evaluate the system from the perspective of the academic advisors. The data shows a decline in the number of students under probation in each department over time (Portfolio, p.30) and also shows that the great majority of academic advisors agree that the academic advising helps improve students' performance (Portfolio, p.53). The College concludes that the system has so far been effective in identifying students requiring special attention and attending to them in a timely manner and that as a result, the attrition rate in the College has been kept very low (Portfolio, p.31). However, the College also reports evidence of challenges in implementing the system: for example, students not turning up for meetings with advisors; too many advisees in the system; and teaching workload impacting advisors' availability (Portfolio, p.53). Results of another staff survey (not specifically for academic advisors) also indicate possible shortfalls in the system. The College identifies the need for students under probation to attend academic advising sessions and activities more regularly as a formal opportunity for improvement (Portfolio, p.56).

Overall, the College is clearly making a great effort to support student learning, progression and retention through the implementation of an academic advising system and the Panel supports and encourages further development of this. The Panel did not find evidence of a formal academic advising policy and associated procedures and encourages these to be developed to support effective implementation and evaluation. In addition, extension of the evaluation system to include formal feedback from students will help to determine more accurately the effectiveness of the system.

6.6 Student Learning Support

CAS Rustaq lists six strategies from its SP it considers relevant to this area (Portfolio, p.54). The Panel focused on one of these areas: activities to provide students with extracurricular, remedial learning support (rather than more general extracurricular learning opportunities reported by the College). It found provision of this form of learning support to be limited. There has been a concerted effort to maximise the productive use of office hours to support students and the Panel noted that there has been some review of the LRC services to students. The Panel heard that additional support classes were provided for students needing assistance with their learning, but this does not appear to be part of a formal system. The Panel considers that systems for meeting extracurricular learning support for students in general are underdeveloped in the College although its system for providing support and guidance to students on probation through its academic advising system is well-developed (see Section 6.5). The Panel noted that the CAS strategy to "improve retention rates through support and remediation" (SP Strategy 3.1.3) identifies establishing a Writing Centre in each LRC to assist students who need help as an indicative action for Phase 2 of the SP; the Panel supports consideration of this.

6.7 Teaching Resources

CAS Rustaq indicates that it works to provide sufficient and adequate teaching resources in line with the CAS SP strategy to "ensure that faculty employs state-of-the-art instructional delivery methods" (Portfolio, p.54). While the Panel notes that the action relating to this strategy is about professional development for staff, clearly appropriate physical resources are required to support this. Responsibility for buildings such as classrooms and laboratories rests with the Administration Department while the LRC takes responsibility for instructional delivery technologies and paper-based resources. The acquisition process is centralised but resource requirements are generated by relevant departments (Portfolio, pp.52-53).

The College reports significant improvements in electronic physical teaching resources in the academic year 2013-2014. These include: adoption of the Blackboard™ learning management

system; cable and wireless internet connection to all classrooms; and 12 new computer laboratories each with 30 computers (Portfolio, p.55). A survey among the academic staff to evaluate alignment of teaching resources to teaching requirements showed staff to be satisfied with state of classrooms, classroom equipment, laboratories and supplies, and laboratory equipment: all were rated above “good” on a five point scale (Portfolio, p.56). As in other areas, student feedback is sought but has yet to become systematically embedded in evaluation systems. However, students spoke positively to the Panel about the buildings and staff concurred that the College has a physical environment that encourages learning. The Panel confirmed that the tendering process is underway for a new teaching block comprising 12 classrooms and four auditoriums (also see Section 9.1). This development is set to meet a need for additional classrooms that was acknowledged to the Panel by College staff and observed by external stakeholders. The Panel therefore supports this project.

Affirmation 10

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that it requires additional classrooms and supports the tendering of a project to construct these as a step towards addressing this need.

7 STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

CAS Rustaq indicates that it considers high quality student services an indispensable component of a constructive teaching and learning environment. These services are planned and managed by the Student Services Centre (SSC) and the Admission and Registration Centre (ARC). The Panel noted that a centrally developed, well-structured Student Handbook provides helpful information to students on the services available to them.

This Chapter presents the Panel's findings on the planning and management of student services at CAS Rustaq as well as: student profile; student satisfaction and climate; student behavior; career and employment services; student finances; accommodation, catering and transportation; medical and counseling facilities; international student services; and social and recreational services and facilities.

7.1 *Students and Student Support Services Planning & Management*

SSC develops an annual operational plan in collaboration with the ARC. The College highlights as a recent, key achievement the direct participation in this by students through the Students' Activities Committee, one of the two committees which make up the Student Council (Portfolio, p.58, also see Section 7.3). The Quality Assurance Subcommittee for Students and Student Support Services conducted a student survey as part of the institutional self-study to develop the Portfolio.

The Panel confirmed students' involvement in operational planning in this area during an interview with members of the Student Council. This inclusive approach to management in the College is recognised in Commendation 1. The operational planning covers a range of activities (scientific, artistic, sports, social, cultural and media) as well as the student hostels and the Panel noted that the 2012-2013 plan has been completed by providing a review of the results achieved against the set key performance indicators (KPIs) and improvement actions have been identified.

The Panel recognises the College's efforts to seek student feedback on its student support services but found this to be work in progress. An 80-item survey has been developed which targets student services but although some results are reported, this does not appear to be part of a systematic process whereby results are analysed and inform action. The survey also includes items relating to "instructional effectiveness" and some academic support services but the reported results (Portfolio pp.62-63) do not appear to have been integrated into the College's evaluation of these areas. The Panel heard that there is a strong culture of seeking feedback from students through face to face meetings at the College, but the Panel nevertheless agrees with the College that further development of surveys remains an opportunity for improvement as identified in the Portfolio (p.74). The College may also wish to consider presenting students surveys in a bilingual (Arabic and English) format to facilitate effective communication.

Affirmation 11

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that further development of its system for seeking student feedback via surveys is required and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this so that this data can be used systematically to help drive quality improvement.

7.2 Student Profile

CAS Rustaq's enrollment capacity is determined centrally and students register through the national Higher Education Admissions Centre (HEAC). Once registered, ARC works to check each student's profile to ensure that all the information supplied by the Student Information System (SIS) is complete. The total number of students at CAS Rustaq for the academic year 2012-2013 was 1823 around two-thirds of whom were female (Portfolio, pp.58-61). The Panel heard that this is the largest student population of any of the CAS Colleges. As a public HEI, CAS Rustaq caters for Omani students but it also hosts a small number of international students (see Section 7.9).

The Panel supports the College's intention to develop a common database to consolidate students' files managed by ARC and SSC (Portfolio, p.74). It also agrees with the College that there is scope for more systematic and detailed analysis of student profile data to inform planning and decision making; this can inform the provision of student support services in particular. An improved SIS system will support these intentions (see Affirmation 9).

7.3 Student Satisfaction and Climate

CAS Rustaq states that it perceives its students as the ultimate customers and consumers of its services, and works hard to meet their requirements and maintain their satisfaction. (Portfolio, p.61). The Panel found that the College has created a consultative and supportive environment for its students. The Student Council is a formal system to address student satisfaction which the Panel found to be working well. The Student Council has been established in accordance with the CAS Executive Bylaw and comprises a Student Academic Affairs Committee a Student Activities Committee with elected student representatives. The Student Council allows for the College to follow its aim for students to be represented in College decision-making processes in alignment with the CAS strategy to "Encourage student participation in college activities" (SP, Strategy 2.2.1) in order to "Engender Pride in the CAS" (SP, Objective 2.2). The Panel found strength in the College's systems for communicating with students via the Student Council and other mechanisms (see Commendation 3).

As the College is aware however, an effective system to formally measure student satisfaction is yet to be established. It identifies as an opportunity for improvement the need to develop mechanisms to systematically evaluate and update the services offered by the College (Portfolio, p.74). While different student surveys are conducted, there is a lack of coordination, analysis of results is variable, and the use of results to inform action (and the communication of this to respondents) has yet to be embedded. This is recognised in Affirmation 11.

7.4 Student Behaviour

The CAS Executive Bylaw includes a code of conduct, termed the "Student Accountability System" that governs students' behavior. Students are informed of conduct requirements through various means, such as the Student Handbook, and at various times, such as during orientation. Responsibility for student behaviour generally rests with SSC and ARC who deal, respectively, with cases of social or academic misconduct. The College reports survey results which indicate student awareness of the Accountability System, and records which show low occurrences of misconduct.

The Panel did not explore this area in depth but found students well-informed generally and mechanisms to be in place to manage student behaviour. It notes that the formality of processes is to be strengthened by the approval of MoHE policies for Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct currently under development.

7.5 *Career and Employment Services*

In accordance with the CAS Executive Bylaw, CAS Rustaq has established a Students and Graduates Guidance Centre (SGGC – also see Section 2.7) to help potential graduates find training (i.e. placements during their program – also see Section 2.7) and job opportunities. The Centre has conducted a number of activities and considers its key achievement to be having changed students' perception about the value of training. It reports results of a student survey as evidence of this assertion (Portfolio, pp. 65-66).

The Panel found that although the College has made a start in this area, with SGGC providing a number of training workshops and facilitating student training placements, further development of the services offered is required; the employment of graduates is critical to the CAS Rustaq Mission and Vision and at the time of the audit visit, the most up to date data available indicated that most of the first cohort of IBA graduates (who graduated in June 2013) were still seeking employment. The Panel interviewed students who had clear expectations about employment and felt that the College should communicate with alumni and industry to support this.

The Panel formed the view that the activity of the SGGC needs to be expanded, and informed directly by employers with whom liaison currently appears limited. The need to enhance the management of student placements and liaise effectively with alumni is addressed earlier in this Report (see Recommendation 7 and Recommendation 15). An enhanced evaluation system is also needed to provide feedback which will helpfully inform action to improve the career and employment services provided. The student survey data reported in the Portfolio (p.66) indicates about an equal number of students satisfied and dissatisfied with the services offered by SGGC but there is no evidence of detailed feedback having been elicited and used to guide improvements.

Recommendation 17

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq expand its activities and diversify its approach to providing effective liaison with employers to support graduate employment.

7.6 *Student Finances*

As a public HEI, CAS Rustaq provides free higher education to its students. This government sponsorship also covers the provision of laptop computers and services such as photocopying. Students receive living allowances in accordance with where they live. The payment of allowances is managed by the Finance Department under authority of the Ministry of Finance and in accordance with the ARC. There is an ATM on the campus and account fees are waived. In April 2013, students' stipends were increased in light of rising inflation (Portfolio, pp.66-67).

Despite apparently high levels of financial support for students, the Panel did hear some dissatisfaction about financial assistance for male students in relation to accommodation expenses. The Panel noted that the student survey to evaluate support services has a section to elicit feedback about whether students consider their allowances to be sufficient. It encourages the College to use such mechanisms to assist evaluation of the adequacy of financial support.

7.7 *Accommodation, Catering and Transport*

CAS Rustaq provides on-campus hostel accommodation to female students only, with priority being given to those who live more than 100 kilometers from the College. This is free-of-charge. Other students receive allowances for accommodation. Transportation and catering services, which are contracted out to third parties through a formal process, are also provided to students free-of-charge. (Portfolio, pp.67-68).

The Panel recognises the extensive support CAS Rustaq provides to students in the form of student services, and found students to be appreciative of these. The Panel found the provision of on-campus accommodation to be regarded as a significant factor in improving students' learning by some female students who benefit from this. The Panel heard that at the time of the audit visit, around 1000 students were in on-campus hostel accommodation.

CAS Rustaq's developing student survey system has provided feedback on "campus life" which addresses some aspects of accommodation and catering services. The potential for this system to contribute to quality improvement is addressed in Affirmation 11. The Panel found the College to be responsive to feedback from hostel residents, but this is done on an informal basis utilising the College's open door policy. The quality of catering services, however, is subject to monitoring by a formal Restaurant Committee with members from the Department of Administration and Financial Affairs (DAFA), SSC and students.

The College has identified as opportunities for improvement the need to explore the option of extending its on-campus accommodation to more students and to provide a greater variety of food in the cafeteria (Portfolio, p.75). The Panel encourages such review and potential change to be informed by robust evaluation data.

7.8 *Medical and Counselling Facilities*

The SSC takes responsibility for students' medical services and social welfare. Medical services comprise an on-campus clinic, established in response to student demand, and transportation to public hospitals. The College has a female social advisor who deals with social and psychological issues, although this service is provided only to female students. (Portfolio, p.70)

It appeared to the Panel that the clinic runs smoothly, is adequately resourced and supported as required by the Ministry of Health (which provides this service to the College) and the College. The Panel learnt that the clinic has also provided first-aid training to the College's social advisors (see Section 7.10) and some students. A student survey has sought separate feedback from male and female students on this area and the results indicate some support for a counseling centre to be established in the College (Portfolio, p.70). Some students interviewed by the Panel reported that they seldom use the advising services as they rely on their family and social networks to solve personal problems. The Panel encourages on-going monitoring of student satisfaction with the medical and counseling services provided through systematic evaluation that is used to inform action.

The Panel did not find evidence of formal policies and procedures for the management of medical and counselling services and encourages these to be developed in order to support consistent implementation and evaluation.

7.9 *International Student Services*

The small number of international students at CAS Rustaq study under the umbrella of scholarships from the Omani government, as a first step in the promotion of higher education in Oman. At the time the Portfolio was developed, the College had seven international students, all from countries in Africa. The CAS system does not differentiate between international and Omani students; they hold the same status and receive the same services as Omani students. (Portfolio, p.71).

CAS Rustaq has elicited feedback from its international students about their experience in the College and the survey results indicate broad satisfaction (Portfolio, p.72). An interview session with one international student present highlighted no areas of concern to the Panel. The College appears aware that dedicated systems and resources may be required to deal with any enhanced intake of international students.

7.10 Social and Recreational Services and Facilities

CAS Rustaq reports its strong belief in the importance of social and recreational services for students and its desire to enhance participation rates in these (Portfolio, p.72). Responsibility for this area rests with SSC which has among its staff 18 “advisors” who specialise in different activity areas (sports, social, cultural etc). Activities and events are planned annually and the College reports a wide range of these having taken place, and enhanced participation in these during the academic year 2012-2013 in comparison to the previous academic year. (Portfolio, p.74)

The Panel found the advisors to be specialists in their areas who receive on-going training from the MoHE. Records of activities are maintained and reported annually. The need for appropriate facilities to hold activities was highlighted and it is clear that a project to construct a new SSC compound inclusive of sports halls for females and males, and spaces for different recreational and social activities will be welcomed by the College community. The Panel confirmed that the tendering process for this project is underway. As in other areas of student support services, a student survey has been conducted to elicit feedback on the social and recreational facilities provided but as yet this does not appear to have been used systematically to inform improvements.

Affirmation 12

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq in its project to construct a dedicated facility for social and recreational activities, in order to encourage student participation in these as part of their overall development, and support its strategic objective to engender student pride in the CAS system.

The Panel observes that with this new facility, extracurricular activities will likely increase in number with enhanced participation; however, quality should be monitored as well to see these activities are effective in achieving their aims, and, if planned to do so, in supporting the acquisition of the CAS key graduate attributes.

8 STAFF AND STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

CAS Rustaq states that Staff and Staff Support Services are aligned with its Strategic Plan (SP), Ministerial Orders and Bylaw (Portfolio, p.76). Its key strategic objectives are to “Support Faculty in Advanced Learning” (SP, Objective 4.3) and “Attract and Retain High Quality Academic Staff”. The College also indicates that the requirements of its staff (as well as students and the community) as “customers” drive a customer-oriented approach to College management (Portfolio, p.xviii).

This Chapter considers the planning and management of human resources (HR) at CAS Rustaq and reports on the Panel’s findings in areas such as: staff profile; recruitment and selection; induction; professional development; performance planning review; promotion and other incentives; severance; staff organisational climate and retention; and Omanisation.

8.1 *Human Resources Planning & Management*

Responsibilities for human resources planning and management at CAS Rustaq are identified in the CAS Bylaw and various Ministerial Orders and rest with different parties: planning lies with academic and non-academic departments; recruitment and selection with the MoHE; induction and professional development with the College HR department; performance planning and review with the respective Head of Department (HoD); promotion and other incentives with College Management; severance with the Minister of Higher Education; and staff organisational climate and retention with HoDs (Portfolio, p.76). The College undertakes annual planning for academic staff requirements as part of the MoHE’s central HR system for recruitment of academic staff for CAS. In the case of administrative staff, HR planning is not carried out on a yearly basis. While academic staff may be Omani or expatriate, non-academic staff can only be Omani and job vacancies are addressed through government channels as and when they arise (Portfolio page 77).

The Panel noted that HR management is required to be in accordance with the CAS Executive Bylaw which details processes for major HR management activities under “Employee Affairs”. The College reports that the current systems for HR planning and management are long standing and relatively standard across government agencies in Oman (Portfolio, p.77). However, it also reports that delays at Ministry level in “approving and releasing key staff positions” impact negatively on the College (Portfolio, p.87). The Panel found the annual HR planning in the College to be implemented as described. However, some aspects of the centralized approach to the recruitment of academic staff are clearly problematic; it was also clear that this is an area in which the College would like greater autonomy in order to speed up the process (see Recommendation 18). The Panel also heard that since the College’s transition to a College of Applied Sciences, in some areas it had been working to internal procedures for HR management but that these had not been formally approved. There is evidence that the HR Department is facing a number of challenges in trying to develop and implement systematic processes to support staff management and the College reports that there is no systematic assessment or follow up of human resources planning and management policies (Portfolio, p. 77).

The Panel learnt that the CAS Bylaw is under review (see Section 1.2) and that the new central policies under development include some relating to HR management (see Section 1.9). The Panel encourages the College to remain proactive in its involvement with these review processes to help ensure that prevailing HR planning and management systems support the College in achieving its strategic goals. In addition, further development of HR operational planning is required to ensure better alignment with the SP (also see Section 1.6).

8.2 *Staff Profile*

CAS Rustaq states that it has 231 staff and faculty members of which 58% are academic staff and 42% are administrative staff (Portfolio, p.78). In addition, at the time that the Portfolio was developed, the College indicated that 18 Omani staff were engaged in PhD and Master studies overseas (Portfolio, p.78 and p.x). Among the academic staff 66% are expatriates and the remaining are Omani (while all administrative staff are Omani).

The Panel notes that the College maintains individual and collective staff profile data [that the exact numbers appear to differ slightly in different parts to the Portfolio (e.g. p.xiii, pp.78-79 and p.x,) may reflect reporting at slightly different points in time]. The College acknowledges, however, that as yet this data is not systematically analysed and used to inform HR planning and management (Portfolio, p.87). The Panel encourages further consideration of this so that the College can ensure that its staffing profile aligns appropriately with its SP.

8.3 *Recruitment and Selection*

CAS Rustaq states that it aims to “develop an effective recruitment plan for academic staff” (SP strategy 4.5.1), so as to recruit highly qualified faculty in a timely manner (Portfolio, p.80). Recruitment of staff is conducted differently for academic staff and for administrative staff: MoHE conducts recruitment of academic staff while administrative staff are recruited through a more complex process involving the MoHE, the Ministry of Civil Service (MCS) and the Ministry of Manpower (Portfolio, p.77).

MoHE makes annual requests to the College for its academic staff requirements for the next academic year. HoDs estimate requirements and forward these to the College’s Educational Needs Committee for consideration prior to approval by the College Council. Once approved, these are forwarded to the Directorate General of the CAS network in the MoHE for approval by a Central Educational Needs Committee and the MCS. The MoHE then announces vacancies, receives applications and interviews applicants. This process is followed up to a point for Foundation Program teachers, but recruitment is then undertaken by private agencies contracted by MoHE to provide these staff. Program Directors (PDs) are involved in interviews and at times, HoDs too (Portfolio, p.80). The Panel found evidence of these processes operating as described by the College but also evidence of delays in the appointment of academic staff at the correct time. In addition, the Panel found that the recruitment of non-academic staff is also problematic in that it takes too long to meet the College’s needs. The College expressed a wish to have greater autonomy in recruitment processes. It formally identified the need to review the efficiency of the current recruitment system as an opportunity for improvement (Portfolio, p.87) and the Panel supports this requirement. The Panel noted that while other aspects of job satisfaction have been evaluated by staff (see Section 8.9), their experience of the recruitment process *per se* is not included.

Recommendation 18

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to formally review the effectiveness of the recruitment process for both academic and non-academic staff in order to overcome the delays in recruitment of staff currently experienced by the College and to provide opportunity for other areas for improvement to be identified and addressed.

8.4 *Induction*

CAS Rustaq describes a thorough staff induction process, particularly for new, expatriate staff arriving from abroad (Portfolio, p.81). This includes a Staff Orientation Booklet being issued to

all new staff. In addition, the English Language and Literature (ELL) Department operates a mentor program for new staff.

The Panel found evidence of the induction program being implemented as described. The Panel considered the Staff Orientation Booklet to be comprehensive and potentially very useful to new staff and noted that it includes a detailed “New Employee Induction Checklist” as well as a questionnaire to collect staff feedback on their induction. There is also evidence of the ELL Department mentoring program being implemented and well-received by those involved. The Panel recognises strength in CAS Rustaq’s staff induction processes and encourages the College to ensure that this system is subject to systematic monitoring and review to help ensure consistency of implementation and ongoing improvement.

8.5 Professional Development

CAS Rustaq is responsible for preparing an annual professional development/training plan for externally provided professional development activities. This is sent to the MoHE Central HR Department for approval. In addition, the College reports that departments conduct internal professional development programs in line with operational plans (Portfolio, p.82). The College reports a range of internal professional development activities taking place and that, in the academic year 2012-2013, 22 staff members were being supported to pursue further studies (Portfolio, p.82).

The Panel found a considerable number of internal professional development activities being undertaken, including a range of workshops on quality assurance. The Panel found widespread confirmation of staff taking part in these activities. Planning for these activities, however, is not generally explicitly linked to strategic aims or identified needs and systematic evaluation of activities (individually and collectively) is limited. The College reports survey data from 2012-2013 which shows relatively low staff satisfaction with professional development (Portfolio, p.85). Nevertheless, the Panel found an overall culture of the College supporting its staff in their professional development, particularly in relation to research related activities. The Panel noted positively the extent of support for staff to attain higher degrees. The great majority of those being supported are in receipt of full scholarships to study in overseas programs (Portfolio, p.82). It also heard about an initiative to provide specific professional development to Omani staff with higher degrees but no teaching experience. The Panel encourages the College to further develop its planning for professional development and evaluation in relation to strategic objectives.

8.6 Performance Planning and Review

Performance planning and review at CAS Rustaq is carried out by a procedure called “Work Performance Efficiency Assessment” (Portfolio, p.82). This formal procedure, which is detailed in the CAS Executive Bylaw, is applicable to all employees who have completed at least six months service. The outcome of this assessment is not provided to staff unless they receive a formal performance rating of “weak” (Portfolio, p.83).

The performance assessment is applied to all staff using a standard template. Employees performance is rated against a number of criteria and training needs as well as training that has been completed are identified. The processes which inform the actual assessment vary between the departments as illustrated in the Portfolio (p.83), and while this is to some extent necessary, the College would benefit from formally documenting these processes to support consistency of implementation. The Panel found evidence of the system in operation and whilst it did not hear any specific concerns during staff interviews, there was no evidence of specific evaluation of this system by staff. The College has highlighted as an opportunity for improvement the need to review its policies on performance appraisal to ensure all staff members receive feedback and that these results are linked to professional development planning (Portfolio, p.87). The Panel supports this need although it observed that the Bylaw does not appear to prohibit the results of

the appraisal being shared with those being assessed; rather, the emphasis is that those whose performance is “weak” must be informed. The Panel supports review of the process and its implementation to support the College’s aim to “develop and implement an effective faculty performance appraisal system” (SP, Strategy 4.5.2), and observes that this will provide opportunity to address the lack of transparency inherent in the current system.

Recommendation 19

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq work with the Ministry of Higher Education to formally review and revise the staff performance evaluation system to enhance consistency and transparency of implementation.

8.7 Promotion and Other Incentives

CAS Rustaq has formal procedures for the promotion of both academic and non-academic staff. Promotion of non-academic staff (all Omani nationals) is based largely on seniority and decisions are made at Ministry level. Promotion of academic staff is regulated by the CAS Executive Bylaw.

According to the Bylaw, academic staff promotion is based on performance in teaching, research and community engagement and promotion decisions are made by the Academic Council. The College reports that academic promotion becomes possible only when there is a vacancy and that no expatriate staff have received promotion since 2008, but also acknowledges that academic staff are motivated to engage in academic research in order to meet promotion requirements (Portfolio, p.84). As in other areas of HR management, the Panel encourages specific feedback to be elicited from staff about promotion and other incentives and for this to help inform revision of the Executive Bylaw currently underway.

8.8 Severance

CAS Rustaq reports that it follows the severance process set out in the CAS Executive Bylaw (Portfolio, p.85). The Panel notes that the Bylaw provides comprehensive “Service Termination” regulations to address this. CAS Rustaq provided no description or analysis of deployment of its severance system or the results of this. While the Panel found no evidence to suggest there were any concerns about severance, it encourages the College to consider this area more comprehensively in future self-evaluations.

8.9 Staff Organisational Climate and Retention

CAS Rustaq highlights the CAS Strategic Objective to “raise staff morale” (SP, Objective 4.6) through SP strategies to: improve internal and cross college communication; develop and implement an equitable workload policy; and introduce incentives for outstanding performance.

CAS Rustaq indicates that it makes great effort to bring staff together and build a “cohesive working atmosphere” (Portfolio, p.85) but does not comment specifically on the strategies mentioned above. The College reports on a 2012-2013 staff satisfaction survey which sought feedback on three main areas: work and environment; administration; and relationships with colleagues. Overall ratings in these areas indicate reasonable satisfaction (with respective ratings of 2.9, 3.1 and 3.4 out of 5) (Portfolio, p.84). The College reports that low ratings resulting from teachers having to share offices have been addressed through infrastructure development (Portfolio, p.85), but the Panel did not find evidence that feedback in other areas is used systematically to inform improvement actions, nor of mechanisms to inform respondents of action taken. Nevertheless, the Panel acknowledges the efforts being made to establish such a system. During the audit visit the Panel observed staff who were positive and demonstrated a sense of pride in the College and their involvement in its management and operations. The Panel

encourages the College to build on its efforts to support positive organizational climate in the College.

Affirmation 13

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority supports the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq in its efforts to monitor and improve staff satisfaction and the use of a staff satisfaction survey as one element of a mechanism to achieve this.

The College provided no data and no comment on staff retention in this section of the Portfolio, although reported elsewhere that staff turnover for the academic year 2012-2013 stood at 2.3% (Portfolio, p.6). Although the Panel did not come across evidence indicating that staff retention was problematic for the College, CAS Rustaq needs to ensure that monitoring and evaluation of this indicator is adequately addressed in its HR management.

8.10 Omanisation

Omani nationals make up 100% of CAS Rustaq's non-academic staff and 34% of the academic workforce (Portfolio p.86). The Panel notes that Omani staff at CAS Rustaq are supported to pursue higher degrees; 20 academic staff and two non-academic staff were in receipt of scholarships to pursue higher studies during 2012- 2013 (Portfolio, p.82). At the time of the audit visit, CAS Rustaq had 35 of its own and other CAS graduates working as academic staff as a result of a scheme to sponsor good graduates to attain higher degrees (Portfolio, p.77). The College shows the percentage of Omani academic staff in each department and a profile of their academic titles. However, no analysis of the data presented is provided. The data is not linked to any formal plans or goals regarding Omanisation and there is no analysis or evaluation; this represents a significant omission in the College's self-study.

9 GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES

CAS Rustaq states its commitment to work carefully on its support services in order to provide a positive local environment conducive to learning and to build and maintain a positive relationship with the community. CAS Rustaq's Administrative and Finance Directorate, Student Services Centre (SSC), Learning Resources Centre (LRC) and Department of Public Relations and Information are responsible for General Support Services.

This Chapter reports on the Panel's findings in relation to general support services, facilities and their management at the College. Public relations and marketing as well as communication services are also considered.

9.1 *General Support Services and Facilities Planning and Management*

Responsibility for general support services and facilities is directed by the CAS Bylaw and any complementary orders from the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and/or directives from the Dean. The Administration and Finance Directorate is responsible for general support services (including cleaning, maintenance, landscaping, and telephone services) as well as budget related issues and maintaining the College's assets register. SSC is responsible for student activities, newsletters, and student support facilities such as the hostel, clinic and cafeteria. The LRC is responsible for communications services such as the internet, intranet and notice boards and the Public Relations and Information Department is responsible for marketing. Operational planning based on the CAS Strategic Plan (SP) is carried out in each of these areas. There is also input from other stakeholders: an intercollegiate committee to oversee the planning and management of CAS services and facilities has been set up; and regular meetings with the Dean and a satisfaction survey provide for feedback from the College's "customers" (i.e. staff and students). (Portfolio, pp. 88-89)

There is evidence of significant recent and on-going action to develop the College services and facilities in line with its strategic aims, particularly with respect to physical infrastructure: development of two additional computer labs reported to be in progress (Portfolio, p.90) had been completed by the time of the audit visit and plans to establish a new SSC Compound and teaching block had reached the project tendering stage. The Panel also noted positively the establishment of an on-site clinic. A culture of consultation with staff and students in the development of services and facilities was evident to the Panel and eliciting regular, formal feedback data from them is starting to be embedded as one aspect of evaluation. The College reports survey data from staff and students showing broad overall satisfaction with general services which reflects this (Portfolio, p.90), although it was not entirely clear which survey instruments had been used to collect the data. It was also not clear what action may be taken in response to the data; this aspect of the evaluation process needs further development if it is to systematically inform quality improvement. The College indicates the need to regularly evaluate its general support services and facilities (Portfolio, p.94), and the Panel encourages this.

Affirmation 14

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority agrees with the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq that systematic evaluation of its general support services and facilities is required to support improvements and supports its on-going efforts to achieve this which include staff and student satisfaction data collection.

9.2 *Public Relations and Marketing*

The College reports that public relations and marketing are planned and executed centrally at the MoHE but that there is a Public Relations Section at College level which aspires to support the CAS Strategic Objective 2.1 to “raise awareness of the CAS through an effective marketing campaign” (Portfolio, p.91). The MoHE publishes a CAS prospectus and the Panel learnt that a central committee is taking forward a CAS marketing campaign. CAS Rustaq reports taking the initiative to engage with local schools to promote the College (Portfolio, p.91), and the Panel confirmed this engagement takes place through visits and lectures.

The College provides feedback data from its community which indicates limited satisfaction with public relations and marketing and acknowledges that the Public Relations Section is yet to meet the expectations of students and staff (Portfolio, p.91). It identifies that a coherent marketing policy and detailed planning are required at College level (Portfolio, p.94).

The Panel found students to be keen for the College to promote itself and its graduates and it encourages the College to implement a structured approach to marketing at College level, noting that this needs to be developed in line with MoHE initiatives and processes. The Panel also encourages CAS Rustaq to update its website; a need to improve the website is also indicated by the College (Portfolio, p.94).

9.3 *Communication Services*

CAS Rustaq aims to establish and maintain effective strategies and mechanisms so as to improve its internal and external communication services (Portfolio, p.92). The various means of communication at CAS Rustaq include: College wide internet/intranet; BlackboardTM; the Student Information System (SIS); Short Messaging Service (SMS); electronic and paper notice Boards; newsletters; and open meetings directed by and Intra-College Communication Committee between staff and the College management.

Survey data appears to indicate a relatively high level of satisfaction of the College community with a number of communication services, with the exception of the SIS services (Portfolio, p.93). Discontent with the SIS, the shortcomings of which are acknowledged by the College, is addressed in Affirmation 9 which recognises that action is being taken to develop a new system.

The College has developed strong systems to communicate with the student body. The Student Council, which is chaired by the Dean, has regular formal meetings each semester and the Panel heard a widespread view that this is an effective mechanism for dealing with students’ issues (also see Section 7.3). There is also a semi-formal system for consultation with students at CAS Rustaq which involves regular meetings of students in large groups with the Dean. In addition, the College has a general culture of face-to-face meetings with students to seek their feedback; this includes an (informal) open-door policy for staff. Students the Panel interviewed clearly appreciated the accessibility of the College management and the Panel considered that students at CAS Rustaq were listened to and their views taken seriously.

Commendation 3

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority commends the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq for its communication with students through a range of mechanisms, including an active Student Council, and the resulting culture of engagement and consultation with the student body which this supports.

While not relevant to communication services *per se*, the Panel noted shortcomings in College documentation which potentially hinder communication. Firstly, it was surprised by the number of documents apparently not available in the College in electronic format, and as a result

submitted to the Panel as individual scanned pages. Whilst this made scrutiny of this documentation burdensome for the Panel, from the College's perspective, action needs to be taken to reduce dependence on hard copy documents and enhance its use and management of documents by electronic means. Secondly the Panel noted quite frequent inconsistencies in the names of departments and programs in the Portfolio and supporting documentation. For example, the B.Ed. English Language and Literature program (Portfolio, p.xi) is also referred to as the "Bachelor of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Portfolio, p.19) and a "Bachelor of English (ELT)" (Portfolio, p.20) and the department responsible for this correspondingly referred to by different names. The Student and Graduate Guidance Centre (SGGC) is also referred to as the Training and Student Careers Counseling Centre (TSCCC) in the Bylaw and "The Training and Student Career Guidance Centre" elsewhere (Portfolio, p.64). Moreover, not all documents are dated and this also potentially hinders communication.

Recommendation 20

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority recommends that the College of Applied Sciences Rustaq ensure that its communication with stakeholders is supported by appropriate use of electronic forms of documentation, consistent use of terminology in formal documents, and an effective document management system.

The Panel considers that an enhanced quality assurance function in the College should help to enhance the clarity of its documentation (see Recommendation 2).

9.4 Facilities Management

CAS Rustaq states that it is committed to providing quality services and facilities (Portfolio, p.93). Satisfaction survey data, however, indicates considerable dissatisfaction among staff and students regarding general support services and facilities management. While there is evidence of the College moving towards implementing an effective system for managing this area, its operational planning needs to be more comprehensive and evaluation of results against the plan needs to inform action. CAS Rustaq has identified the need to provide additional physical infrastructure, and is doing so, although centralized decision-making and procedures relating to these take considerable time.

Although the College reports that it has developed and implemented a health and safety policy (Portfolio, p.94), the Panel found health and safety induction/training to be limited and unsystematic, and to focus primarily on fire safety. The need for enhanced attention to health and safety is addressed in Affirmation 2.

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.

ACC.....	Academic Advising Committee
ADRI.....	A four step, cyclical model for analysing a topic, comprising: pproach → 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.
ARC.....	Admissions and Registration Centre
B.Ed.....	Bachelor of Education
BoT.....	Board of Trustees
CAS.....	College of Applied Sciences
CSC.....	Community Service 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.
DG.....	Director General
DOP.....	Departmental Operational Plan
ELL.....	English Language and Literature
ELT.....	English Language Teaching
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.
GFP.....	General Foundation Program
HEI.....	Higher Education Institution (also known as HEP – Higher Education Provider)
HoD.....	Head of Department
HR.....	Human Resources
H&S.....	Health and Safety
IAC.....	Internal Auditing Committee
IBA.....	International Business Administration
IELTS.....	International English Language Testing System
ILTSU.....	Information and Learning Technology Services Unit
Improvement.....	The fourth dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on how effectively an organisation is improving its <i>approach</i> and <i>deployment</i> for any given topic in order to achieve better <i>results</i> .
IT.....	Information Technology
KGAs.....	Key Graduate Attributes
KPI.....	Key Performance Indicator

LRC	Learning Resources Centre
MCS	Ministry of Civil Service
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE.....	Ministry of Higher Education (www.mohe.gov.om)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NZTEC	New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium
OAAA	Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (www.oaaaov.om)
OAAA Board.....	The governing body of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
Panel Chairperson.....	The Chairperson of the Audit Panel
Panel Member.....	An OAAA External Reviewer who is a member of an Audit Panel.
PD.....	Program Director
Portfolio.....	see <i>Quality Audit Portfolio</i> .
PPC.....	Policies and Procedures Committee
QA	Quality Assurance
Quality Assurance.....	The combination of policies and processes for ensuring that stated intentions are met.
Quality Audit	An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the system and processes by which a HEI sets, pursues and achieves its mission and vision.
Quality Audit 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.
QASC	Quality Assurance Steering Committee
Quality Enhancement	The combination of policies and processes for improving upon existing <i>approach, deployment</i> and <i>results</i> .
Results	The third dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on the evidence of the outputs and outcomes of a topic's <i>approach</i> and <i>deployment</i> .
RMC	Risk Management Committee
RMP.....	Risk Management Plan
SCCC.....	Student Career Counseling Centre
SGGC	Students and Graduates Guidance Centre
Sic.....	Indicates that the preceding segment of the quote was copied faithfully, in spite of a mistake
SIS	Student Information System
SP.....	Strategic Plan (The Strategic Plan for the Colleges of Applied Sciences - referred to as the CAS SP)
SRD	Scientific Research Department
SSC.....	Student Services Centre
SWCC.....	System Wide Course Coordinator
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	In this Report, "the College" refers to CAS Rustaq (The College of Applied Sciences, Rustaq)

TORTerms of Reference
TRCThe Research Council
TSCCCTraining and Student Careers Counseling Centre

NOTES

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