

**Report on the
Quality Assurance Department (QAD) Formal Visit
25 & 26 October 2009**

Introduction

As part of its mandate to monitor and supervise quality assurance activities in colleges of technology, the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) of the Ministry of Manpower regularly conducts audit visits in these colleges to monitor and have an update of the quality assurance activities done by these institutions. To this end, the QAD had scheduled a formal visit in Nizwa College of Technology on 25 & 26 of October as part of its regular schedule of visits for the current academic year. Apart from being a regular formal visit, this visit is also important as it will also be a venue by which the two agencies can discuss varied issues related to NCT's preparation on OAC accreditation which is slated to happen in the first quarter of 2011.

Event Activities – First Day

Included in the two-day visit of the QAD are presentations from the lead staff of various focus groups that were established as part of the preparation of the college in the forthcoming accreditation. These include the following:

1. "The NCT Quality Assurance Process", presented by Dr. Ahmed Al-Ghassani, NCT College Dean;
2. "The NCT Self-Assessment Plan", discussed by Dr. Rolando Lontok Jr., NCT Head of QAFU;
3. "The NCT Experience: Checklist and Questionnaires", presented by Dr. Imran Hameed Khan, member of the NCT Survey Team; and
4. "Self-Assessment Work Progress: Student Learning by Coursework", presented by Dr. Bader Al-Khalaf, NCT AD of Academics.

The first three presentations were conducted on the first day, while that of Dr. Bader was held on the second day of the visit.

In his presentation, Dr. Ahmed discussed the quality assurance cycle of the college as it relates to the college's preparation for accreditation. He discussed the quality audits that have been undergone by the college (through the QAD), as well as the history of the development of the strategic plan of the college during the last three years. Lastly, he presented an overview of the various activities that are currently being done by the college in terms of the departments' implementation of their respective operational plans. Dr. Ahmed gave light to the queries of the QAD panel after his presentation.

Dr. Rolando's presentation focused on the activities of the college as it prepares for accreditation. He presented the stages of preparation of the college for the forthcoming accreditation as: (1) establishment of quality culture, (2) development of various plans, (3) development of data gathering instruments, (4) implementation and improvement of plans, as well as gathering of data, and (5) development of the quality audit portfolio. He explained that as the accreditation will start from the strategic plan of the college, NCT had undergone several revisions and major transformations regarding its strategic plan. After discussing in detail NCT's development of its strategic plan, Dr. Rolando discussed other important activities as outlined in its stages of preparation. Similarly, Dr. Rolando clarified some points raised by the QAD panel by answering their questions after his presentation.

The development of data gathering questionnaires as well as the plan on data gathering and subsequent analysis for use in the quality audit portfolio was discussed by Dr. Imran in his presentation entitled "The NCT Experience: Checklist and Institutional Questionnaires". In his presentation, Dr. Imran explained why NCT used a combination of checklist and questionnaires in gathering relevant data for accreditation, as well as the importance of these data and how they will be used. He also presented a framework for validating the instruments and getting the sample size of the respondents. Lastly, Dr. Imran showed the QAD Team and the other participants the checklist and questionnaires that the NCT Survey Team had developed for the purpose. A lively discussion of the issues relevant to data collection and accreditation ensued after Dr. Imran's presentation of his topic.

The last activity held during the first day of the visit was the discussion on NCT's KPIs between the QAD Team and members of QAFU. The QAD presented for discussion their suggestions on the improvement of some of the KPIs. Participants in the last activity had an animated discussion of the KPIs as well as NCT's revised strategic plan. The first day of the visit ended with an improved version of KPIs for the strategies listed in the revised NCT strategic plan.

Event Activities – Second Day

The second day started with the presentation of Dr. Bader, NCT's AD of Academic Affairs. He gave an account regarding the on-going preparation of one of the most important self-assessment group – Teaching and Learning. Dr. Bader presented an outline of the group's activities, highlighting those that are currently being done and the achievements to date. He also discussed some of the difficulties and challenges that the group experienced in carrying out various tasks in their preparation.

After Dr. Bader's presentation, two plenary discussions were conducted. The first one, which was led by the Head of QAFU, Dr. Rolando, reviewed the first day's outputs regarding KPIs. Here, the group threshed out some vague areas and came up with consensus on what to do to proceed further. Dr. Ahmed shared some of his thoughts about the development of the quality audit portfolio in the next plenary discussion. He also enjoined the others to suggest ideas on how NCT should organize and develop its own QA portfolio. The QAD Team, led by Ms. Fatma, also contributed by sharing their previous discussions with other colleges on the matter.

The second day ended with a clear view on how the college will proceed regarding its preparation for OAC accreditation, not only in terms of the development of the portfolio, but more importantly on how self-assessment groups and the survey team should operate.

Final Statement

There are still many difficulties and challenges ahead, but through collaboration, sharing and transparency – traits that are slowly being imbued in the college QA community – everything will be successfully attained.

Prepared by:



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